

I just learned that my parents are getting divorced.

I just learned that my friend's parents are getting a divorce.

Let's face it, divorce is not fun! Worse, divorce is not something that usually happens "out of the blue." Parents may have argued for a long time before deciding that ending the marriage was best for everyone. Many students want to know what is "normal" or what is happening during this time. Here are a few things we've figured out from talking to kids.

- Not one child feels exactly the same as someone else. When you learn your parents are getting divorced, you may be relieved that the arguing and fighting will end; you may also fear the future. *Who am I going to live with? Will I have to move and make new friends? Will my friends make fun of me? When will I see my other parent?*
- You may think you could have done something to change what is happening. Believe me, there's nothing you could or should have done. Divorce is between your mom and dad. You have nothing to do with their decision to live apart.
- You may believe you can "fix" things by acting better, making straight A's or doing more chores around the house. Although this would be cool if it were true, what you do can not fix the problems between your Mom and Dad.

I feel stuck in the middle...

- In the process of your parent's divorce, you may feel like you have to choose a side. Good news: You don't. If you overhear your parent saying something that makes you feel uncomfortable, leave the room or when alone again, remind them that you love them both.
- Bottling everything up inside will not help. Think of your body as a balloon. You can only put so much air into a balloon before it pops. The same can be said for our bodies. We have to discuss what is bothering us. Think about people other than your parents you can talk to - grandparents, friends, teachers, and most importantly, your school counselor.
- Ask your teacher or school librarian to recommend books with characters who have experienced what you are experiencing. You may feel alone right now, but you're not. Many kids have been right where you're at *right now*.
- It may seem hard to believe but each day will get better and better. Whatever you do, don't give up!

In the end, what can I expect?

- Your parents may live separately but they're still *your* parents. When anything concerns you, ask if you can visit with them. If you find talking difficult, write your parent a letter.
- Sometimes parents want to know details when you return from visitation. If you ever feel you are being *pumped for information* or being pulled in two different directions, speak up! Explain to your parents that you love them both and that you want to have a good time without worrying about hurting the other's feelings.
- Your parent will move on and most likely meet someone new. This can be an uncertain time and make you feel many of the emotions you felt when your parents first divorced. Just like then, remember to talk about your concerns, fears and worries.
- If you happen to be a friend of someone going through the pain of their parent's divorce, just be there for them and listen when they need to talk. Be the kind of friend you would want to have if you were in their situation.

WORD SEARCH

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