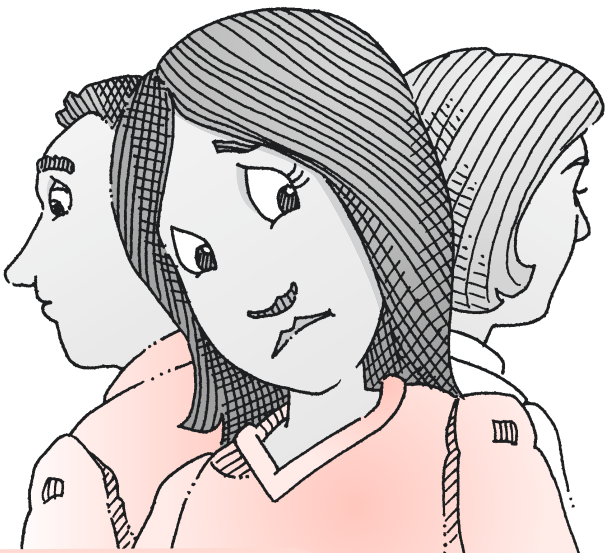


# Coping With Divorce



**W**e're getting a divorce." Each year, more than one million kids hear those words from their parents.

Maybe you weren't too surprised. If your parents fought a lot, you might have wondered if they would get a divorce. But if you're like a lot of kids, you may never have had any idea that your parents were separating.

Whether you were prepared for it or not, the divorce is a reality. And you're going to have to learn how to handle it.

It isn't easy or fun, but kids do survive divorce. In fact, they usually go on to have pretty normal, happy lives. Here are some ways you can cope with your parents' divorce.

## Know that it's not your fault

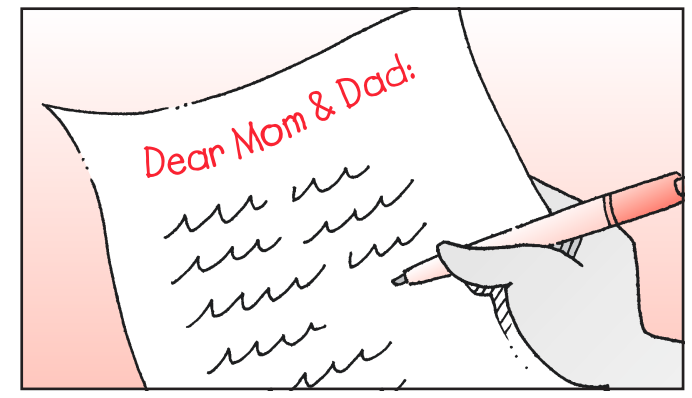
**K**ids often blame themselves when their parents split up. They think if they had only gotten better grades, if they'd kept their room neater, if they'd helped out more, their parents would still be together. Not true.

Divorce is something adults have decided they need to do. You didn't make the divorce happen, and you couldn't have stopped it.



## Know that your parents won't stop loving you

**F**or reasons nobody understands, parents do sometimes stop loving each other. Sometimes, two people have very different goals in life or start to care about different things. So they argue, or they just get sadder and sadder. When that happens, they may decide they have to live apart. But even if parents don't love each other enough to stay married, they *never* stop loving their kids. If you're worried, ask them. They'll tell you the truth—they love you as much as ever, and maybe even more.



## It's normal to feel sad

**T**here's no other way to say it—divorce is crummy. So if you're feeling sad or lonely or worried or angry ... well, you're a normal kid.

Of course, your mom and dad probably have all those feelings, too. You may feel like you need to "protect" them by hiding the way you feel. Don't.

It's always best to talk about your feelings. If you have trouble talking, you might try to write your parents a letter. Or draw a picture. But get your feelings out in the open. That way, you *and* your parents can start to deal with them.

# Coping With Divorce



## Tell your teachers

**R**ight after a divorce, you might have trouble concentrating in school. Your teachers will help you if you let them know what's going on. Your grades may drop a little after the divorce, but usually that doesn't last very long. If you're still getting poor grades a year or more after the divorce, though, you need to get help.

Your teachers may be able to suggest ways to get the help you need. Some schools have groups where kids whose parents are going through a divorce can talk about their feelings and share ideas.

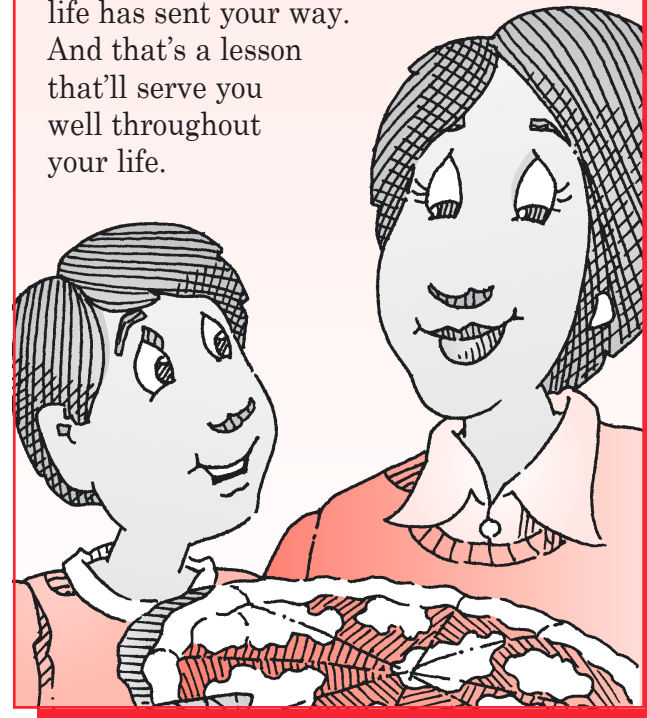
Remember that teachers aren't mind readers. You have to tell them about the divorce before they can help. Ask to speak to your teacher privately before or after school. If it's too hard to talk about the divorce, try writing a note.

## Things will change

**A**fter a divorce, you might live with one parent. Or you might spend time with both parents, but at different houses. You might have to move to a different house or a different school. If you've had one parent at home all the time, that parent might have to get a job. And, to be honest, both your parents may worry more about money than they did before.

Those are things you aren't going to be able to control. But you can make some *positive* changes during the divorce. For instance, you'll have more one-on-one time with each parent, so you can start new traditions. Declare one night Popcorn and Movie Night. Have a contest to see who can make the greatest new pizza. Or have a picnic in the living room—even if it's winter outside.

As you make positive choices, you'll learn that you *can* handle the changes life has sent your way. And that's a lesson that'll serve you well throughout your life.



## Get organized

**H**aving two houses can be a real pain. You want to wear your red shirt, but it's at your Dad's—and you're at your Mom's.

It's not much of a problem to wear another shirt. But it can be a *big* problem if what's at the other house is your math homework or your science book.

Work out a system to make sure you have what you need for school each day. Plan ahead. Don't rely on your brain—write stuff down. Check your assignment notebook or your planner at the beginning and the end of every day.

Color-coding can help. Use a red book cover and notebook for math, blue for science. That way, you'll be less likely to have your book but not your notebook when you get to class.

The organization skills you'll develop will help you throughout your life. You're just getting a little head start on everybody else.

## It gets better

**M**ost kids from divorced families do just fine. They go on to be good students. They have friends and they have fun.

**You'll get there, too. Divorce is always hard, but with the support of your parents and teachers, it is something you can handle.**