

Divorce

Do you know someone whose parents are divorced? Are your parents separated or divorced? Chances are that you can answer yes to one — or maybe both — of those questions. And you are not alone! About 1 out of every 2 or 3 marriages ends in divorce.

A divorce happens after a husband and wife decide not to live together anymore and that they no longer want to be married to each other. They agree to sign legal papers that make them each single again and allow them to marry other people if they want to.

Divorce Is Hard for Everyone

It might sound simple, but it's not easy for a husband and wife to decide to end a marriage. Often they spend a long time trying to solve problems before deciding to divorce. But sometimes they just can't fix the problems and decide that a divorce is the best solution. Change is a natural part of life, but when it happens to your family, it is sometimes really hard to deal with.

Sometimes both parents want to divorce, and sometimes one wants to and the other one doesn't. Usually, both parents are disappointed that their marriage can't last, even if one wants a divorce — and to live apart — more than the other.

Sometimes it hurts kids' feelings when one parent wants to leave the house where they live. It is hard not to take it personally. It's important to remember that divorce happens between the husband and wife, and even though it affects the whole family, it doesn't mean that a parent who leaves the house doesn't care about the kids.

Many kids don't want their parents to divorce. Some kids have mixed feelings about it, especially if they know their parents weren't happy together. Some kids may even feel relieved when parents divorce, especially if there's been a lot of fighting between parents during the marriage.

It's important to remember that divorce doesn't change one important fact: A dad or mom who lives somewhere else is still your dad or mom. That's forever. That will never change.

Kids Don't Cause Divorce!

People divorce for lots of different reasons. Usually, parents divorce when they have too many problems and they just can't seem to fix them, no matter how hard they try. Sometimes anger builds and parents fight a lot or say mean things to each other. Sometimes they stop talking to

each other because they're mad at each other, and sometimes they meet someone else that they fall in love with and want to live with.

Adults have their own reasons for divorce. Whatever the reasons are, one thing is for sure: Kids don't cause divorce.

Still, many kids believe they're the reason their mom and dad got divorced. They think that if only they had behaved better, gotten better grades, or helped more around the house, the divorce wouldn't have happened. But this isn't true. Divorce is between moms and dads only!

Even if you once heard your parents argue about you, or your friend next door thinks his parents broke up because he got in trouble at school, these things don't cause a husband and wife to end their marriage.

You might feel you're to blame for your parents' divorce, but you are not the cause. And the fact that your parents decide not to stay married is not your fault.

Kids Can't Fix Divorce!

Just like the divorce is not a kid's fault, getting parents back together is not up to the kid, either. And most likely, this doesn't happen, although plenty of kids wish for it and even try things they think might work. Acting like an angel at home all the time (who can do that?) and doing really well at school may make your mom and dad happy, but it doesn't mean they'll get back together.

The opposite is also true. Getting in trouble so your mom and dad will have to get together to talk about these problems is not going to make the divorce go away either. So, just be yourself and try to talk through the feelings you have with a parent, another family member, friend, or teacher or counselor.

Reviewed by: D'Arcy Lyness, PhD

Normal reactions to separation and divorce

Although strong feelings can be tough on kids, the following reactions are normal for children following divorce.

- **Anger.** Your kids may express their anger, rage, and resentment with you and your spouse for destroying their sense of normalcy.
- **Anxiety.** It's natural for children to feel anxious when faced with big changes in their lives.
- **Mild depression.** Sadness about the family's new situation is normal, and sadness coupled with a sense of hopelessness and helplessness is likely to become a mild form of depression.

Reference: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/family-divorce/children-and-divorce.htm>

<http://kidshealth.org/Nemours/en/kids/divorce.html#>