

Pacific Beach Middle School
Counseling Center

Teens and Divorce

Why Parents Divorce:

There are many reasons why parents get a divorce:

- They drifted apart
- One may have changed and their partner could not adapt
- No longer love each other as they did at one time
- Due to a problem such as: alcoholism or drug abuse

Common ideas teenagers have about divorce:

- It is their fault
- Wonder if they could have helped prevent the split
- Wish they could have prevented arguments by cooperating more within the family

The decision of divorce has nothing to do with the children, only the parents.

When parents divorce, you may feel:

- Angry, upset, sad
- Protective of one parent or blame one for the situation
- Abandoned, afraid, worried, guilty, anxious
- Relieved
- Happy to have one-on-one time with each parent

All of these feelings are normal

The changes that may occur due to divorce:

- Moving or changing schools
- Spending time with both parents separately
- Dealing with some parents' negative feelings toward one another
- Money issues may arise
- Travel between parents
- Live with one parent and visit the other

Try to figure out a routine that works for you

What can you do?

- Talk to your parents-keep open communication
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and tell them what you are feeling

- Let your parents know what will make the divorce easier on you, like:
Not to put you in the middle, let them know that fighting over issues regarding you does not help, compromise is needed.
- Have someone to talk to (Close friend, a school counselor, mental health professional, etc.). Sometimes the feelings that come along with divorce are overwhelming, you need an outlet
- Find positive ways to deal with stress: Listen or play music, play sports, read, write in a journal.

What can parents do?

- LISTEN: Put aside your hurt for a moment and really listen to your child- validate his/her pain-it is real.
- SET BOUNDARIES: Your child is feeling slightly out of control; help them feel more in control by setting clear, consistent boundaries.
- TELL THE TRUTH: Don't give your child false hope of the parents getting back together; let them know what will happen.
- KEEP THE PEACE: Don't put your child in the middle, talk bad about the other parent, or try to get the child to "take" sides. Try not to argue in front of the child.
- BE ALERT TO HOW YOUR CHILD IS DEALING WITH DIVORCE:
 - Young children may react by becoming more aggressive, uncooperative, or withdrawn.
 - Older children may feel deep sadness and loss which in turn may negatively affect their schoolwork and may increase behavior problems
 - Teenagers and Adults may have trouble with their own relationships and experience self-esteem problems.

Additional Resources:

Center for Young Women's Health

<http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/divorce.html>

Divorce Wizards

<http://www.divorcewizards.com/kevin.html>

Stand Tall by Joan Bauer

Tangled Web by Shirley Brinkerhoff

Losing Louisa by Judith Casely

For Better, For Worse: A Guide to Surviving Divorce for Preteens and Their Families by Janet Bode

Divorce by Anne Charlish

For more books go to: <http://www.lib.ci.tuscon.az.us/teenzone/divorce.htm>