

Excerpts from *The Divorce Workbook for Children* . . .

(From Activity 1: Getting Through Your Parents' Divorce)

You Need to Know: Going through a divorce can be a hard thing to do. There are a lot of things to think about, a lot of changes to make, and a lot of feelings that come up for everyone involved. It will be easier for you to get through this experience if you remember to do two things: express your thoughts and feelings and find people to help you.

When Marcus found out his parents were getting divorced, he couldn't believe it. He had heard about divorce but he never thought it would happen in his family. For a few days, it seemed like he had just had a bad dream. He thought that if he didn't talk about it, maybe it wouldn't really be true. He thought his parents might be playing a joke on him.

But when he asked them, they said it was true. His mom would be moving out of their house and going to live with his grandparents for a while. Then his parents would go to a lawyer and sign legal papers. After that, his parents wouldn't be married anymore.

When Marcus saw his mom packing her suitcase, he realized it was true. He got very upset. He yelled at his mom and threw a pillow at her, and he ran into his room. He yelled some more and kicked his bed. Then he started crying. He didn't know what to do. He wanted to change things back to the way they used to be. He didn't want his parents to get divorced and he was afraid of all the feelings that were happening inside him.

Marcus's parents came into his room and sat beside him on the bed. They asked him to talk about what he was feeling. They said they would teach him ways to handle his feelings. They said that they would help him through the divorce, and so would his grandparents, his Scout leader, and his teacher at school.

(From Activity 3: Divorce Is Not Caused by Kids)

You Need to Know: Many kids think that there was something they did, or didn't do, that caused their parents to get divorced. But this is never true. Divorce occurs because of something that happens between the adults who get divorced - not anybody else.

When Kayla's mom and dad told her they were getting divorced, Kayla thought of all the things she had done that might have made them do it. She knew they were often upset with her for not keeping her room clean. Maybe if she hadn't been so messy, they wouldn't be getting divorced. She thought about her allergies and all the times her parents had to take her to the doctor and how much they had to pay for her allergy

medicine. She thought maybe if she didn't have allergies, they wouldn't be getting divorced. She remembered one time when she had missed the school bus and her mom and dad had argued about who would drive her to school. Maybe if she hadn't been late, they wouldn't be getting divorced.

Kayla felt bad about the divorce and she felt worse because she thought she might have caused it. One day her mom found her crying in her room and asked her what was wrong. When Kayla told her, she and her mom and dad had a talk. Her mom and dad explained that the divorce was about them, not about Kayla. Their problems were between the two of them and not between them and her. Their divorce had nothing to do with anything Kayla had ever done.

(From Activity 6: Things That Stay the Same)

You Need to Know: When your parents get divorced, there are a lot of things that change, but there are also many things that stay the same. You can help yourself feel safe and calm by remembering the things that stay the same.

When Jeremy's parents got divorced, he felt like his whole life had changed. At first it seemed like everything was different:

- His dad wasn't at his place at the dinner table anymore.
- His mom started working full-time, so Jeremy had to go to an after-school program.
- He couldn't run into his parents' bedroom to kiss them both good night.
- Instead of sleeping late on Saturday mornings, he had to get up and mow the lawn.
- There was a big, empty place in the garage where his dad's truck used to be.

Jeremy told his mom that he didn't like the way everything was changing. He felt scared and nervous. He wished that things could stay the same. His mom listened to him and said, "It might seem like everything is changing, but there are really many things that are staying the same. If you think about the things that are staying the same, you won't feel as scared or nervous." Then they sat down together at the kitchen table and made a list of all the things that were staying the same. Jeremy realized that his mom was right; if he focused on the things that were staying the same, he felt a lot better.