



What is KidWorks?

KidWorks is a safe, supportive place for children who have experienced the divorce of their parents and its consequences. In the eight-week program provided without charge at **KidWorks**, children and their parents can share their experiences and express their feelings through play, drama, art and other creative activities under the supervision of trained, caring listeners.

Why provide support services for children of divorce?

With an attitude of “being strong” and “getting over it” toward children and families dealing with divorce, our society places value on happiness, success and health. Children of divorce may feel “different” from their peers at school, church and sports. They may also feel the pressure to not tell anyone (even in their family) how they think or feel. At **KidWorks**, the shared circumstance of loss and major changes in their lives frees children to explore, identify and express themselves and to heal from the trauma of divorce. Children of divorce who internalize their personal experience and do not have adequate support may experience depression, school adjustment problems, substance abuse, or other coping problems.

Who should come to KidWorks?

Children ages 5-18 and adults who are trying to cope with the results of divorce will find others like themselves at **KidWorks**. Groups are divided 5-8, 9-12, 13-18 and adults. Parents or guardians accompanying **KidWorks** children have a support group of their own to discuss the special needs of their children, effective parenting skills and the needs of parents dealing with the aftermath of a divorce.

What will a program participant do at KidWorks?

Group sharing, art activities, puppets, drama, and play, are some of the activities that trained facilitators will companion children through. Facilitators are trained to listen to children and respond in an encouraging, supportive manner. Children can paint, draw, and recreate stories.

What is the difference in support for children of divorce and counseling?

Support services are not treatment. They are not counseling. Support is listening, being present to children as they share thoughts & experiences, express feelings and ask important life situation questions. Support includes trusting that a child will share and heal when given a safe environment in which to do this work. It can even be fun. Children of divorce are not “broken” and do not need “fixing.” They need to be given a place where they feel comfortable enough to express their deepest hurts.

Children and families needing additional special services will be referred to licensed professional counselors in **CounselingWorks**.

For More Information Contact:

Larry Barber, KidWorks Director or Beverly Ritz, KidWorks Program Coordinator

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Divorced With Children

A Presentation for Divorced Parents
and Those Ministering to Divorced Parents & Their Families

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Divorced Parents in a Two-Parent World

The two-parent world is quickly becoming a single parent world:

- The number of single parent families in the United States has doubled in the last 25 years.
- Currently over 16 million children in the U.S. live in single parent homes.
- The Census Bureau estimates that 59% of U.S. children will spend time in a single parent home during their minor years.

The world and the church still often treat single parents as if they are incomplete in some way:

- "Just one?"
- Most activities are still couple or two-parent family oriented (classes, seminars, small groups, sermon series, social activities).
- Single parents are expected to fit in easily with singles' activities. People who find themselves single parents have different situations and needs. Divorced or abandoned singles, widowed singles, abandoned or single adoptees do not have a lot in common with never married singles.
- Society and the church community apply pressure on the single parent to find their soul mate. "Didn't God say it was not good for a single person to be alone?" (Genesis 2:18)
- Society and the church community sometimes perpetuate the stigma of the divorced parent as a failure or, at worst, the product of what some still treat as the unforgiveable sin.

God has a place and a plan for single parents and their children:

- God shows his care for a single parent and her son. (Genesis 21:9-21 , The story of the handmaiden Hagar and her son Ishmael).
- God is Father to the fatherless, Nurturer to the motherless and Companion/Comforter/Counselor to the lonely.

- When God is in lives and in the home, single parent families can be “complete.”

Myths about Children of Divorce

MYTH: Children who grow up in a household following divorce are more likely to struggle in school, get into trouble with the law, develop serious social problems, and have failed relationship after failed relationship

FACT: The majority of single parent families have raised well-rounded, successful children. Many negative predictions for children raised by a single divorced parent have more to do with economic hardship than the lack of an intact family and household.

With hard work, unconditional love, positive discipline, good parenting skills, faith and a lot of prayer, single parents of divorce can raise capable, content, successful Christian children.

MYTH: Children of divorce will never have healthy relationships themselves.

FACT: Children raised by loving and involved divorced parents seem to put more energy into maintaining their relationships.

MYTH: Children of divorce have lower self-esteem.

FACT: Children of divorce raised in home where they are loved and taught Christian value have a better chance of feeling good about themselves and life in general. The greater incidence of low self esteem in children happens in two-parent and single-parent homes where emotional chaos and/or abuse exist and family members rarely express love for one another.

Being the Best Divorced Parent You Can Be

Realize you can not do it all:

- Remember that you are one person. You can not possibly do everything that both parents in a family do. If your former spouse is

uninvolved or absent from the lives of the children, find family members and friends who can be role models of the opposite sex parent for your child. You can not be both mother and father to your children.

- Solicit and accept help from others. As you do accept help, you are helping to build a support system for your family. Find people who have skills and knowledge that you lack.
- Take advantage of community and church resources.
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks or activities from your and your children's schedules. Limit your children's activities to those which they love most. This includes extracurricular activities for your children such as karate, ballet, art classes, little league, soccer, etc.
- Live within the limitations of your income. Economize and only use credit cards for real emergencies. Pay off as many of your outstanding debts as you can.
- Give your children responsibilities around the house that are appropriate for their ages and their abilities. This will help relieve you and give you more time to spend with your children.
- Learn to say "no" to requests from others at work, at church or in organizations that will take away your time with your children.
- Lower your expectations. Remember a healthy, Christian family is more important than an immaculately clean house, a shiny car, the best lawn in the neighborhood, etc.
- Make time for fun with your children.
- Make time for yourself away from the children. If you are with your children 24/7 with no alone time for yourself, you may begin to resent your children and what you "have to do" for them.
- Unless your former spouse is endangering the children in some way, make the time they spend with their other parent as positive and accepted part of their child. They need both parents, whether you get along or not. Don't speak badly about your ex in front of the children or use them as spies to find out "dirt" on your ex.

Place a high priority on meeting your children's needs:

- Children need security. Assure your children that you (and your involved ex) plan to be with them for many years to come. Also let them know that there are others who will always be present for them and you.
- Children want to know their needs will be addressed. Let them know they will be cared for. They will always get what they need.
- Children need to feel needed. Explain to them that they are an important part of the family.
- Children sometimes feel guilty. Make sure they know that they are not responsible for the divorce or the changes that continue to follow for your family. When you take out your anger or frustrations on your children, they may feel they are responsible for whatever is going wrong.
- Children need to trust their parent. Always keep your word.
- Children like order and predictably. Establish a schedule and try to stick to it. There is security in knowing that there is a schedule, there is order and the rules of the house still apply.
- Children need to feel they are an important part of the family. Give them chores to do.
- Children need rituals and routines. Establish family traditions not just on holidays and special occasions, but during the rest of the year. Make a big deal of birthdays and family activities. But don't end up giving them "things" because of your guilt, your need to show your love, or the need to have their approval.
- Children need to express themselves and know that they have been heard. Set up scheduled times for communicating with them. Family meals at the dining room table can be a stabilizing factor for your family.
- When it is appropriate, ask for their opinions and suggestions on family decisions.
- Set up a family communications center (cork board or dry erase marker board).
- Children need role models. Being strong for the children is not as important as providing them with role models of how Christian adults deal with life situations (good and bad).

Be aware of symptoms of dangerous situations for your children:

- Self destructive behavior
 - Threats or attempts to commit suicide; cutting themselves (usually requires hospitalization)
 - Eating disorders (counseling)
 - Shoplifting (counseling)
 - Fast driving and incredible risk-taking (counseling)
 - Physical and violent encounters (counseling, removal from dangerous situations)

- Behavior to medicate their pain
 - Drug and alcohol misuse (hospitalization, 12 step program)
 - Promiscuous sexual behavior (counseling)

- Clinical depression (may require medication, counseling and/or hospitalization)
 - Isolation
 - Exhaustion
 - Lethargy
 - Loss of interest in normal activities or achievement (at home or school)
 - Despondency
 - Anxiety and an inability to relax

Be prepared for your children's future well-being

- Write or update your will. Name a guardian for your children should something happen to you.

- Obtain adequate life insurance or disability coverage to replace the loss of income in the event of your untimely death or disability.

- Save money as possible for your children's college funds.

SUCCESSFUL DIVORCED PARENTS:

- Accept the responsibilities and challenges of single parenting without being overwhelmed by its challenges. They seek solutions rather than complain.

- Are committed to their families. They try to be the best parent they can be by placing the needs of their children first.
- Foster open communications with their children. Their children feel safe to talk about any topic or emotion without the fear of being judged or ridiculed.
- Strive to be as organized and dependable as they can be for their children.
- Take time to take care of themselves. They understand that they need to be healthy physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually in order to be good single parents.
- Maintain the family traditions as best as they can. They understand that traditions give their children security and meaning in tough times.
- Have a positive attitude toward parenting and life in general.

Rights of Children of Divorce

Adapted from a decision of the Wisconsin Supreme Court expanded by Judy Branch, M.S.C.F.C.S. and Lawrence G. Shelton, PhD

- The right to be treated as interested and affected persons, not as pawns or possessions.
- The right to love each parent, without feeling guilt, pressure or rejection.
- The right to love, care, discipline and protection from both parents.
- The right not to be asked to choose sides or decide where they want to live.
- The right to express their feelings about the divorce, such as anger, sadness or fear.

- The right to a positive and constructive on-going relationship with each parent.
- The right not to have to make adult decisions.
- The right to remain children, without being asked to take on parental responsibilities or to be adult companions or friends to their parents.
- The right to the most adequate level of economic support that can be provided by the best efforts of both parents.
- The right not to be drawn into the painful games parents play to hurt each other.
- The right not to be put in the middle of parents' battles.
- The right to learn appropriate behavior from their parents' examples.
- The right to make friends and participate in school and community activities.
- The right to succeed in school and prepare themselves for independence.
- The right to know their origins and to form a personal identity based on their experiences.

Advice for Divorced Parents

How To Keep Your Children Out of The Middle

By Heather Resneder, MA, MFT-A
Counselor, CounselingWorks
Program Coordinator, GriefWorks

Research and common sense have come to the same conclusion: Ongoing parental conflict is harmful to children. The impact is even greater when the children are caught in the middle of their parents' battles. Here are some simple things you can do to help keep your children out of the middle.

Don't discuss any issues pertaining to the children in front of them or if they are within hearing distance of either parent.

Do discuss child-related issues directly with the other parent and when children are not present and out of earshot.

Don't ask them to carry or relay messages, verbal or written.

Do talk directly to one another, without using the children to relay messages.

Don't ask them to play "detective," meaning don't use them as a source of information about the other parent's personal life.

Do obtain information about one another from sources other than the children.

Don't ask them to keep secrets from the other parent.

Do encourage children to speak freely to both parents.

Don't respond to their reports of disparaging remarks about you by the other parent to any extent. The less you say, the less you participate in putting them in the middle.

Do resist the urge to respond to their reports of disparaging remarks that the other parent has made about you. Less is more. The less you say the more you help them stay out of the middle.

Don't discuss any financial or legal matters related to your divorce with the children nor have them read any related documents.

Do keep all discussions of financial and legal matters between adults.

Remember communication is more than words. Your facial expressions, attitudes and actions convey messages stronger than anything else.

If you feel overwhelmed by your responsibilities as a divorced parent, now is the best time to talk with a Christian counselor for guidance that can make your parenting job less stressful. To set up an appointment, please call Kristina at 972-960-9981 or email your contact information to kstephens@christian-works.org.

Ask about **KidWorks, the eight-week support program for children of divorce, ages 5-18, and their divorced parents. For more information about the free services provided at **KidWorks**, call 972-960-9981.**



KidWorks

serving Kids In Divorce

Resources for Parents:

Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce, the Sandcastles Way,
by M. Gary Neuman, L.M.H.C.

Growing Through Divorce, by Jim Smoke

Helping Children Survive Divorce, by Dr. Archibald D. Hart

Helping Children Cope with Divorce, Revised Edition, by Dr. Edward Teyber

Hope No Matter What: Helping your Children Heal After Divorce, by Kim Hill, Lisa Harper

Successful Single Parenting, by Gary Richmond, Harvest House Publishing

From One Single Mother to Another, Heart Lifting Encouragement and Practical Advice by Sandra Aldrich

Parenting On Your Own, by Lynda Hunter

Transcending Divorce, Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart, by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

The Wilderness of Divorce, Finding Your Way, by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Books for Children:

When Mom and Dad Separate, Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief from Divorce,
by Marge Heegaard, Ages 7 to 12

Was It the Chocolate Pudding? A Story of Little Kids About Divorce, by Sandra Levins, Ages 4 - 9

Helping Kids Heal Series: With My Mom, With My Dad, A Book About Divorce,
by Maribeth Boelts

Dinosaurs Divorce, A Guide for Changing Families, by Laurene Krasny Brown and Marc Brown (Suitable for ages 5 to 10)

Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce

The following can be ordered from Christian Book Distributors:

Two Homes for Tyler: A Story about Understanding Divorce

Speaking of Divorce, How to Talk with Your Kids and Help them Cope

Elf Help for Kids: When Mom and Dad Divorce

Can Anyone Fix My Broken Heart? Hope for Children of Divorce

Help Is Here for Facing Fear!

WebSites:

www.kidsindivorce.org

www.divorce-parenting.com

amazon.com – “divorce parenting”

www.focusonthefamily.com