

Dealing with Divorce

My parents are getting a divorce and I'm not sure what to do. Part of me is so sad, yet part of me is so angry. How can I ever forgive them?

Are your parents perfect? Mine aren't. They never were. But it became noticeable as neon when they were divorced. I was a sophomore in high school. I remember it well. It was the most painful experience in my life.

My parent's divorce was so painful for me for several reasons. The loyalty, love and trust I had for them all seemed challenged. Seeing them hurt each other hurt me. I didn't know whose side to be on. Somehow it didn't occur to me that I didn't have to choose sides. I felt so involved. My whole world was changing. Home was no longer my sanctuary. The tension and tears were ruthlessly real.

Often anger and bitterness are a big part of divorce. If your parents are separating, it's impossible to ignore the anger. I found it helpful to have someone neutral to talk to. I had a guidance counselor at school and some friends who helped me see that feeling sad about the divorce was normal and even healthy. My mom also encouraged me by saying, "great pain can produce great character".

Looking back now, there are some things I wish I had done differently. I wish I had not listened to them expound on each other's faults. I always felt guilty afterwards. It wasn't helpful for me to understand why they were separating. It fed my fear of love. Nagging questions haunted me.

- If they break their promises to each other—will they break their promises to me?
- If their love died, will they stop loving me?
- How can I be sure anyone will always love me?
- How can I ever love someone with total abandonment without risking destruction if they change their mind?

These questions were very frightening. I thought maybe that life wasn't worth living if there was so much pain. The pain and questions led me to search out God in a whole new way. I learned He is the only one who never changes. He is trustworthy and loyal to those who love Him. In God I found comfort for my pain and a hope that love can prevail. I trust Him and believe He has an ideal for relationships. I found a man who also loves God and our prayer together is that we will continue to love each other and keep our vows.

Through God, I've seen how imperfect I am. I have forgiven my parents and hope my own children will be able to forgive me for all my imperfections. If your parents are divorced and you're having trouble forgiving them, remember that it is a process. Perhaps you can try something that I found helpful. Make a list of all their good qualities and the special memories you have of them. Then guard your mind against negative thoughts. Cherish what's left of your family.

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