

# Dealing with Separation and Divorce

Parental separation or divorce usually causes many changes. Such big changes can be difficult to handle. You may feel many emotions including anger, sadness, confusion, guilt, and relief. At this time, it's important to believe in your ability to cope. There are also people who can and want to help you. Here are some points to keep in mind.

► **It is NOT Your Fault**

Parents split up because they do not want to be together or can no longer get along with each other. You are not responsible for how your parents handle their relationship.

► **Express Your Feelings**

Talk to a friend, an adult you trust, or your parents about how you feel. It is normal to have lots of strong emotions during this time. There is no right or wrong way to feel. It is better to share your feelings rather than keep everything inside.

► **Keep the Peace**

Ask your parents to treat each other with respect when they are in front of you and tell them you will not take sides in their disagreements. You have the right to love both parents and to have both parents involved in your life.

► **Take care of yourself**

You can lower your stress in many ways like talking with a friend, exercising, eating healthy meals, getting enough rest, and writing in a journal. Lowering your stress level will help you deal with difficult situations. Ask for help if you are having a hard time dealing with the changes.

► **Look for the Positives**

You might be surprised by the good things that happen after your parents separate or divorce. Your parents may be happier. You may become more mature after coping with this difficult experience. The strength within yourself will help you deal with changes throughout your life.

► **Be Organized**

If you take turns living with each parent, make a list of things you need to bring with you when you move. Get two combs and toothbrushes so you have them at both places or make sure you take them with you. Decorate your space or room and make it comfortable. Tell your parents when you would like to change the visiting schedule.

► **Stay Connected**

It's normal to miss a parent that you don't see very often. Try to set up a regular time to contact your parent by email, phone, or by writing a letter. Have special things that remind you of your parent. If your parent does not keep in touch with you, remember it is not your fault.

**Resources:**

- ◆ Families Change- A Teen Guide to Parental Separation and Divorce: [www.familieschange.ca](http://www.familieschange.ca)
- ◆ Dealing with Divorce. TeensHealth: [http://kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_mind/families/divorce.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/families/divorce.html)

*Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing [feedback@ahwg.net](mailto:feedback@ahwg.net) or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.*