

Divorce



Divorce and Separation

Purpose

To learn that people can hold strongly differing views.

To understand that family units can be different and can change.

To manage and control strong feelings

Entrance of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow introducing the concept of 'Divorce' for the pupils to enter assembly to (10 minutes)

What is a Family Unit?

Traditionally, a family unit used to be thought of as a husband, wife and children. Anything different to this was thought to be outside the 'norm'.

However society's views have changed considerably over the last few decades and the idea that there is only one 'usual' family unit has been dismissed.

Many people have just one parent all or part of their lives and quite a number of families have two parents of the same sex.

What can be very upsetting is when that unit, however it was originally made up, changes. This is often when two parents can no longer happily live together or indeed, when a one parent family is later joined by another partner.

It is these changes which are often difficult and upsetting to deal with.



Were Things Better in the Past?

In previous times, in many countries, beliefs and religions, it was very difficult or even impossible to divorce. Marriage was held as a sacred, as well as legal commitment and a bond that was not to be broken. Of course, this did not necessarily mean that the marriages were happy ones and children were often trapped within very difficult circumstances.

In 2018 42% of marriages in the UK ended in divorce and one in every three children under the age of 16 experiences their parents splitting up. This shows how very common separation and divorce is.

Divorce and Separation for Young People.

Separation means that one partner has left the marriage (and usually the home) but in the eyes of the law, the two are still legally married.

Divorce means that the marriage has been legally dissolved and the partners are no longer legally bound together.

Separation often leads to divorce, but not always. Sometimes, time apart from each other gives the couple a change to think calmly and carefully about what they want for the future. They may decide that they want to stay together.

Equally, in a very small number of cases, a couple who divorce very occasionally decide to remarry each other.



Marriage Counselling

Some couples go to marriage counselling or mediation which means that they go to talk to each other with an independent person present to help to keep the conversation calm and fair. Sometimes, through these discussions, the couples have the chance to say what has been bothering them and the opportunity to listen to the others' point of view. This understanding can help to solve the problems in the marriage. The key organization for this type of discussion is called Relate.

So Where Does This Leave the Young People?

Quite often, parents try to hide their marriage problems from their children because they love them and don't want them to be upset.

Unfortunately, because young people tend to be very good judges of character and have an understanding that things are not right within the family, this lack of communication can cause more problems than it solves.



'Normal' Responses to Family Problems

Firstly, there is no 'normal'. Feelings can vary from intensely upset to really relieved depending on the circumstances and the individual child. Different children within the family unit may view things in completely different ways, siding with opposite parents or coping with change in a different way.

What you feel is totally individual to you and may include:

- Sadness
- Distress
- Worry
- Fear about the future
- Feelings of bereavement and a sense of loss
- Anger
- Relief
- Confusion
- Hopefulness
- Guilt
- Blame
- Uncertainty
- Disappointment

It is important not to keep these feelings bottled up. You need a chance to discuss them. Sometimes this is very difficult to do with a parent. You may feel that you have to choose their side, their point of view. You may feel that this makes you betray the other parent. You may feel too angry with your parents to be able to calmly express what you want to say.



An Outside Ear

This is when you may find it easier to talk to an outsider; someone who is trained to carefully listen; someone who won't take sides; someone who won't be hurt by what you have to say.

School including Seasons for Growth / Rainbows Bereavement

GP

childline.org.uk

youngminds.org.uk

nspcc.org.uk

kidshealth.org.

gingerbread.org.uk

...and many more.



The key messages are:

- You are not to blame
- You are loved
- It's not about you, but it does affect you
- There are no bad questions.
- There is no wrong way to feel
- Make a list of what you want to ask about before you see them
- You do NOT have to discuss the meeting with anyone else - including a parent
- You do not have to take sides
- All change is difficult but it doesn't have to be bad



Things that Don't Help

Playing one parent off against the other

The blame game

Taking it out on friends (or enemies!)

Kicking off in school

Refusing to talk



Practical Issues

One of the biggest concerns for young people is what might happen next?

In divorce, the courts will help to ensure a good and fair process for everyone within the family (although some of the members may not agree with this.)

They help to decide on:

Money matters, including settling who owns what from the marriage and how the children will be supported financially in the future

Who the children live with - young people should have a say in this.

Access arrangements for the other parent to see the children regularly

When the marriage will end and why.



How to Help the Grieving Process

A. It's okay to feel exactly how you are feeling. No one grieves in exactly the same way as someone else.

B. How long will I feel like this? There is no specific time scale for feelings, however, the old saying is indeed true 'Time heals' and these feelings will eventually pass.

C. Speak with others. Sometimes you do not want to talk with relatives because you are concerned that you might upset them more. This is usually untrue and others who mourn want to talk about their loss. However it is sometimes easier to talk with friends or a member of staff at school. You might even consider speaking with a trained counsellor.

D. Try to get out walking, exercising or doing some other activity.

E. Celebrate memories and be thankful for the time you had together remembering that you will be making new memories in the future.

All is Well.



The Different Religions Say About Divorce:

Some Christian religions are against divorce and believe that 'what God has put together, let no man put asunder (break apart)'.
Other Christian groups allow for divorce.

In Islam, divorce is allowed where 'marital harmony cannot be attained.'

In Buddhism, the concept of marriage is a legal rather than a spiritual one and so there is no opinion about divorce.

In Hinduism, divorce can occur if there is a state of hatred or violence.

In Judaism, again divorce is accepted as a fact of life, albeit an undesirable one. Shalom Bayit (domestic harmony) suggests that it is better to divorce than to remain together in bitterness and hatred.

In Sikhism, views are varied regarding divorce.

Let's Pray:

Dear God

Give those who are in the middle of a family split, strength and courage to face the changes that are occurring in their lives and to know that a resolution will come about in the end.

Amen

Putting it into Practice:

Keep a diary of how you are feeling each day. It is often helpful to look back and realise that you are changing as time goes on and you are dealing with your feelings.

Exit of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow reminding pupils of the key issues raised in the assembly about the concept of 'Divorce' for the pupils to exit assembly to (10 minutes)



Collective Worship and Putting it into Practice for the Rest of the Week

Day 2

Dear God

Give an understanding and wise heart and mind to those involved in a family divide. Help them to hear and understand different points of view and to meet others' ideas with thoughtfulness and openness.

Amen

Within your friendship group or class, role play a short drama where one person within the family group speaks with an external counsellor. It is really good to have a chance to take on different roles in the scenario - each of the parents, or different children within the family so that you can think about things from different points of view.

Day 3

Dear God

Send peace, love and calm into the homes of those experiencing challenging situations. Remind children that they are loved and cherished and that they take no part of blame in any marriage breakup.

Amen

Write an open letter to your parent(s) to tell them how you are feeling. It is often better to do this on paper so that you have a chance to really think about what you want them to know and so that they have a chance to read it over a number of times.



Day 4

Dear God

Remind us of how much we are loved and by how many people. Reassure us that separation and divorce does not mean that we won't see loved ones anymore, just that we will need to get used to a different way of interacting.
Amen

Visit a website that helps with divorce and bereavement. For example on [childline .org.uk](http://childline.org.uk) there are numerous online activities to help with the feelings of sadness, stress and anxiety.

Day 5

Dear God

Generally people do not like change, we are creatures of habit.

Help us to accept that things do not always stay the same, but that change can be a good thing. Give us the strength to face change positivity.

Amen

Create collage split into two halves.

On the right hand side, add things that link with happy memories from the past.

On the left hand side, create a mood mural of positive things that you want to do in the future to help you look forward and remind you that there are good times to come

