



REMEMBER

- Much of our theology is based on God the Father and 80% of kids in broken homes live with mom alone. Make sure that your language doesn't actually push kids away from God by linking him to a confusing picture of a father.
- Divorce robs kids of the feeling of security and safety. It leaves them questioning their belonging. We as the body of Christ can offer a safe place where they can belong. Invite them into that place even before they know Jesus, and be the family of God with them.
- Your healthy relationships can demonstrate new possibilities for them. Remind them that their future doesn't need to be determined by their family's past. Dare to invite them to watch you, and see what God can do with lives that are surrendered to him.

"Even if my father and mother abandon me the LORD will hold me close." Psalm 27:10



RECOGNIZE

- 1 in 3 youth (age 10-14) are living in a lone-parent family, in a stepfamily or without their parent.
- Family breakup can create a huge obstacle for young people to get past. The effects vary but can include behaviour problems, attachment issues, abandonment fears, speeded up or slowed down maturing and a shaken sense of security. People who come from divorced homes are 70% more likely to suffer from anxiety, worry and tension.
- Some of the emotions you may see around family breakup are sadness, anger, worry, confusion, guilt, and sometimes relief. For many young people, the stress of family breakup shows itself in their bodies through ongoing headaches and other health concerns.
- Adolescents with divorced parents are more likely to engage in risky behavior such as sexual involvement, drinking and drug use and are more likely to begin these behaviours earlier than their peers.



RESPOND

Because divorce has become so common, we forget the huge impact it can have on youth who walk through it. They may not act out because of it, but no matter their age, chances are that they will deal with some complex and often confusing feelings for years.

- **Bring it up** and talk about the fact that divorce can impact people in all sorts of ways. Let them know that it's ok to not know how they feel and that they may find themselves experiencing a variety of feelings over time.
- **Be a listening and empathic ear**, careful not to take sides or feed the negative emotions that the youth may express about one or both of the parents. Focus on normalizing their emotions and exploring ways to manage them.

- **Help them express their grief** If the family breakup is recent. Show them through example how it looks to express emotions in a healthy way and not bottle up negative emotions; think together about ways of letting the inside feeling out.
- **Invite them** into trust through community. Because of this significant disappointment in their parents and loss of security, youth may adopt a strong sense of independence as a self-protection measure - seeming not to need anyone or anything.
- **Be consistent.** Be an example of a healthy adult who can be trusted to do what they've said they'll do.
- **Teach them** ways of coping with stress. The challenges of family break up can add additional stress to the already stressful life of an adolescent. Be intentional about recognizing this reality and equipping them with practical stress management skills.



RESOURCES

andrewroot.org/tag/divorce/ - Excellent articles looking more deeply on the effects of divorce on a young person's soul and how the church and youth workers can respond. Comes from his book, Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being.

www.kidshelpphone.ca/ (search: divorce) - Helping youth think about the feelings they are dealing with around family break up and custody.

familieschange.ca - A great resource for helping young people and their parents navigate the realities of family breakup with helpful information and connections to resources in your province.



BROKEN HOMES

lifeteams
resources