

Curriculum Guide –Divorce Care for High School

The High School Divorce Care Group curriculum is taken from two different books:

- ▶ "*SOULutions: Relational Healing for the Next Generation*" by Cathy Morrill
- ▶ "*Kids Hope for Teens*" by Gary Sprague.

Each Support Group will last approximately 13 weeks. The following is a summary of the material that will be discussed. A lesson schedule is also provided.

Section 1 - How it feels

This section focuses on the confusing array of feelings divorce can produce and how young people can identify these feelings and view them more objectively. Participants will read through the stories of young people who have suffered through divorce. They will have a chance to identify with these stories, and talk about their own feelings, in turn.

This section also provides an overview of the grieving process: Everyone will experience a personal loss at some time, whether through divorce, death, or separation from a loved one. Regardless of the type of loss, most individuals go through a staged, grief recovery process. This section reviews the stages of grief and helps teens identify what stage they may be in.

This section will assure young people will learn that they are not alone in their experience. They will begin to identify specific emotions and feelings related to their parents' divorce. Further, they will come to clearly understand that they are not at fault for the divorce of their parents. In turn, they will begin to more efficiently work through their emotions related to their parents' divorces – together and individually.

- **Chapter 1: Stages of Grief Recovery**
- **Chapter 2: Other Unpopular Feelings**
- **Chapter 3: It Isn't My Fault!**

Parental Tip: Allowing your child to feel anger and frustration is important. This helps your child engage fully in the grieving process – which helps enable your child to move on successfully. We encourage you to encourage your child to talk about what they are angry about, and be open to hear them fully without judgment or a defensive reaction.

Section 2 - Individual Roles

Developing a sense of identity is an important part of formative teen years. Divorce can damage one's sense of identity and sense of worth in a profound manner. This section focuses on self identity by forcing group participants to ask who they are apart from their struggles, sin and wounds. Study chapters help teens realize that our value should not be determined by our situation, performance, looks, popularity or our pasts – but on who God says we are, and His love for each one of us. With this realization, we can each come to appreciate the unique self God has created, and to acknowledge our weaknesses and failures in the light of His grace.

- **Chapter 8: Who Am I? (*SOULutions*)**
- **Chapter 9: Masks (*SOULutions*)**

Section 3 – God Roles

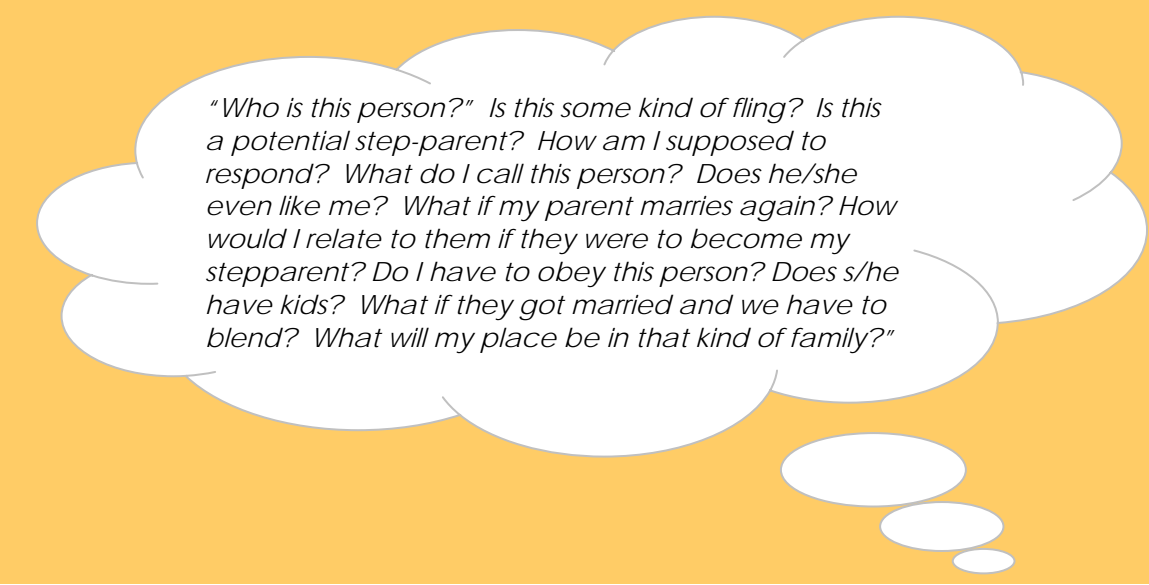
After better understanding their identities as children of God, the next section focuses on the role God wishes to play in our lives. Often, people carry distrust toward God because of dysfunctional earthly relationships (sometimes even wounds carried from other Christians.) We will look at the characteristics that God the Father has and why He is essential to the healing process.

- **Chapter 3: God the Father (SOULutions)**

Section 4 – Family Roles/ New Family Set-Up

Overwhelming changes occur once a divorce has taken place. This may mean teens have to deal with a totally different “family unit”; new family arrangements, different homes for one or both parents; changing work arrangements (new jobs or working a lot); visitation arrangements, and other uncomfortable circumstances. This section focuses on how to create balance and manage these difficult changes as they arise – step by step.

With the freedom that divorce brings new parents, there are also new opportunities to form other relationships. This can be very awkward experience for a teenager – especially when parents begin dating like they are. This drives a dizzying array of questions:



“Who is this person?” Is this some kind of fling? Is this a potential step-parent? How am I supposed to respond? What do I call this person? Does he/she even like me? What if my parent marries again? How would I relate to them if they were to become my stepparent? Do I have to obey this person? Does s/he have kids? What if they got married and we have to blend? What will my place be in that kind of family?”

Such unanswered questions can drive a teenager crazy! This section explores difficult topics and helps guide young people through the process. It also sympathetically assists young people by bringing about the understanding that it does take time and patience to adjust to the myriad of changes caused by divorce.

- **Chapter 5: We’re a Single Parent Family Now (“Kids Hope for Teens”)**
- **Chapter 8: I Visit Them Every Other Weekend (“Kids Hope for Teens”)**
- **Chapter 9: My Parents are Dating Just Like Me (“Kids Hope for Teens”)**

Section 5 – Functional Relationships

When it comes right down to it, males and females are different! We show affection in different ways, communicate differently, and think differently. Very often society uses this truth to drive a wedge between males and females. However, God made us different for a reason: He made us to need and serve each other. In this chapter we will learn of the roles that God intended for men and women to have, and how we can function better in relationship with one another.

- **Chapter 16: Restoring Male and Female (*SOULutions*)**

Section 6- Dysfunctional Relationships/Patterns

This section deals with very serious issues that can tear relationships – and families – apart. Children who suffer from divorce often wonder why God could let bad things happen to them. They wonder if God is punishing them for some elusive sin, or mysterious shortcoming. They often wonder where God is when they need him, and suffer in silence while feeling abandoned.

Very often, there are other issues present in families that cause shame and guilt for teens. For example, it may be embarrassing to admit Dad is sleeping with someone, that Mom has a drug habit or that there is abuse in the family. Many people keep such issues quiet their whole lives, out of shame or loyalty. However, over time, such secrets, and the emotions tied to them, begin to gnaw at people from the inside. This results in shame, guilt, repressed anger and a wealth of other unhealthy emotions that can threaten mental, spiritual and physical well-being.

To regain health, people need to break the silence and identify the issues that have caused pain and/or separation. The subject matter covered in this section can be difficult chapter for teenagers, and often, for parents. However, engaging in healthy discussion about the dynamics that impact family relationships is a very good first-step toward relational healing.

The reading stresses that while God does not promise to save us from all pain on this earth, He does promise to suffer with us and to offer us grace and strength. Further, God says in Revelation 21:3-4 that when we get to Heaven, He will wipe every tear from our eye, there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. The section stresses that, while we live in a fallen and sinful world, we must lean on Christ for strength: By doing so, God can turn what is meant for our harm into something that helps us learn and grow.

- **Chapter 11: Hurts Band-Aids Can't Cover (*"Kids Hope for Teens"*)**
- **Chapter 14: Adultery (*"Kids Hope for Teens"*)**
- **Chapter 7: Addiction (*SOULutions*)**
- **Chapter 14: Abuse (*SOULutions*)**

Section 7 – Forgiveness /Next Steps

The simple message of this section is this: Forgiveness heals! This section first focuses on the definition and process of forgiveness. Many times people believe the act of forgiving someone equates to letting an individual “get away” with wrong doing. However, this is a total misperception. The choice to forgive someone actually sets the forgiver free! This is true regardless of whether the offending party asks for forgiveness or not. Forgiveness allows Jesus to work freely in our hearts and to free us from hurt, resentment, bitterness and anger, so we can move on with our lives. When we forgive someone, we exercise the mercy Jesus showed us on the Cross.

This section focuses next on what’s next for group participants. As we forgive others and move on past our hurt and pain, we are not only happier and healthier -- we can become a testimony to others. This breeds radical faith and radical living.

- Chapter 15: Forgiveness (*SOULutions*)
- Chapter 20: Radical Living (*SOULutions*)

Reading Schedule (Based on 13-week Care Group)

- ▶ **Week 1** Introduction/Orientation (*Kids Hope for Teens*) & Icebreaker
- ▶ **Week 2** Chapter 1: Stages of Grief Recovery (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
- ▶ **Week 3** Chapter 2: Unpopular Feelings (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
Chapter 3: It Isn't My Fault (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
- ▶ **Week 4** Chapter 8: Who Am I? (*SOULutions*)
Chapter 9: Masks (*SOULutions*)
- ▶ **Week 5** Chapter 3: God the Father (*SOULutions*)
- ▶ **Week 6** Chapter 5: We're a Single Parent Family Now (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
- ▶ **Week 7** Chapter 8: I Visit Them Every Other Weekend (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
Chapter 9: My Parents are Dating Just Like Me (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
- ▶ **Week 8** Chapter 10: New Parents and New Siblings (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
- ▶ **Week 9** Chapter 16: Restoring Male and Female (*SOULutions*)
- ▶ **Week 10** Chapter 11: Hurts Band-Aids Can't Cover (*Kids Hope for Teens*)
Chapter 14: Adultery (" Kids Hope for Teens")
- ▶ **Week 11** Chapter 7: Addiction (*SOULutions*)
Chapter 14: Abuse (*SOULutions*)
- ▶ **Week 12** Chapter 15: Forgiveness (*SOULutions*)
- ▶ **Week 13** Chapter 20: Radical Living (*SOULutions*)
(End of Class)