

Curriculum Guide – Divorce Care for Middle School

“Kids Hope For Teens” consists of 5 different sections. Below is a short summary of each section and the chapters it consists of. The purpose of these summaries is so that you may discuss with your teen their feelings about the divorce.

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 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!**
- **Chapter 4: I Am Not Alone!**

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 – Things That Change

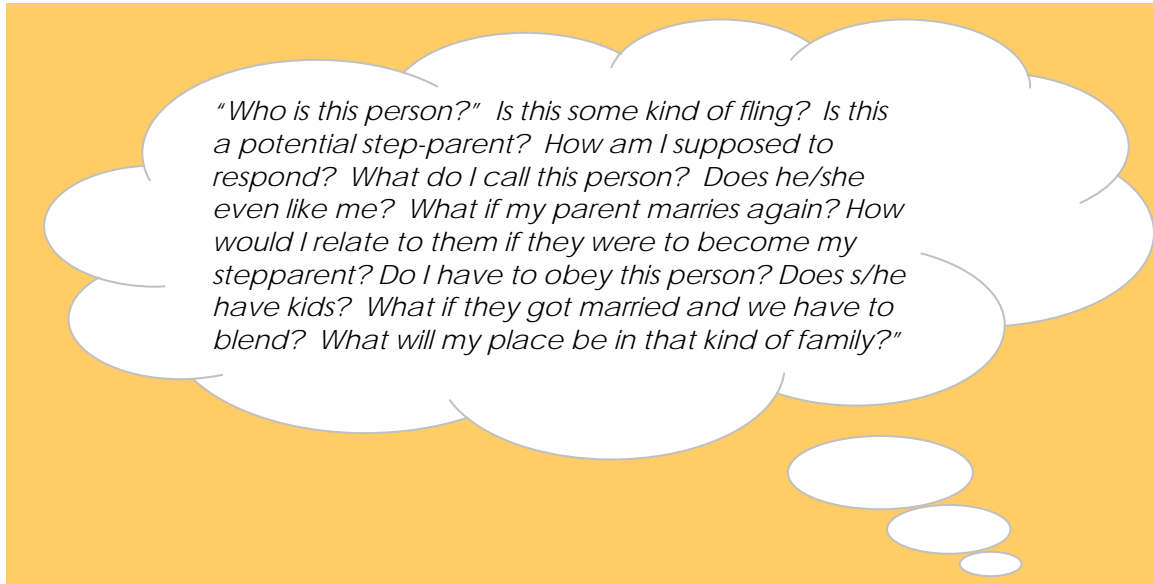
This section reviews the overwhelming changes that occur once a divorce or separation has taken place. This may mean new family arrangements, new homes for both parents, both parents having to work (or work harder), and/or arranging visitation with a non-custodial parent. Young people will learn how to balance and lean into the changes as they come along to keep moving forward.

- **Chapter 5: We’re a Single-Parent Family Now**
- **Chapter 6: There’s Never Enough Money**
- **Chapter 7: New Friends New Schools**
- **Chapter 8: I Visit Them Every Other Weekend**

Section 3 – New Family Relationships

Overwhelming changes occur once a divorce has taken place. This may mean kids 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 children– especially when parents begin dating. This drives a dizzying array of questions:



Such unanswered questions can drive a young person 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 9: My Parents Are Dating Just Like Me**
- **Chapter 10: New Parents New Siblings**

Section 4 – Where is God When I Hurt?

Sometimes we wonder where God is when we need him. We wonder how He could just let bad things happen or we think that He is punishing us for our sins. Many teenagers cannot understand why the divorce has happened. The following chapters will answer many of the questions that seem to make us question God. God does not promise to save us from all pain but He does suffer with us. God says in Revelation 21:3-4 that when we get to heaven He will be with us and He will wipe every tear from our eye, there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. But for right now, we live in a fallen world. We can learn and grow from our difficult experiences. The following chapters will show teenagers how Jesus offers to help us through trials and tribulations.

- **Chapter 11: Hurts Band-Aids Can't Cover**
- **Chapter 12: What the Bible Says About Suffering**
- **Chapter 13: What the Bible Says About Comfort**

Section 5 – Dysfunctional Family Secrets

Summary by "Kids Hope for Teens" by Gary Sprague: "Sometimes families just don't work. A family should be something like a well-oiled machine, with every part doing its job, everything fitting together. What happens, though, when one part conks out or when two parts collide with each other? The machine does not work as well. Eventually, it may break down. "

When a family machine is not functioning well, we call it dysfunctional. That's a word psychologists use to say that it just doesn't work as it should. Something is wrong. Every family will have an occasional fight, but if there's fighting all the time, it's dysfunctional. Individuals in a family may do things wrong from time to time, but when it becomes a pattern, the family is dysfunctional.

In the following chapters, we're going to deal with some serious issues, including adultery, abuse and addiction. Very often, there are other issues present in families that cause shame and guilt for teens. For example, it may be embarrassing to that 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.

- **Chapter 14: What is Adultery?**
- **Chapter 15: What is Abuse?**
- **Chapter 16: What is Addiction?**
- **Chapter 17: Breaking the Cycle**

13 Week Reading Schedule

- Week 1 –** Introduction/Orientation
- Week 2 –** Chapter 1: Unpopular Feelings
- Week 3 –** Chapter 2: Other Unpopular Feelings
- Week 4 –** Chapter 3: It Isn't My Fault
- Week 5 –** Chapter 11: Hurt Band-Aids Can't Cover
- Week 6 –** Chapter 12: What the Bible Says About Suffering
Chapter 13: What the Bible Says About Comfort
- Week 7 –** Chapter 14: What Is Adultery?
Chapter 15: What is Abuse?
- Week 8 –** Chapter 16: What Is Addiction?
Chapter 17: Breaking the Cycle
- Week 9 –** Chapter 5: My Mom and Dad Live in Different Places
Chapter 6: Both of My Parents Work Now
Chapter 7: New Friends and New Schools
- Week 10 –** Chapter 8: I Visit Them Every Other Weekend
- Week 11 –** Chapter 9: My Parents Are Dating just Like Me
- Week 12 –** Chapter 10: New Parents and New Siblings
- Week 13 –** Closing (End of Group)