

## Books about Divorce and Stepfamilies for Children

### Books for Preschool Aged Children (under age 6)

Laurene & Marc Brown (1986) **Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families**. Direct and lively text plus definitions of terms address various aspects of divorce, including: Visitation, the "Why's" of divorce, Telling friends and more. It is a good vehicle for family discussion on the confusion, misconceptions, and anxieties often associated with divorce. This well-illustrated book has received numerous awards. It is an excellent choice for pre-school and also school-age children.

Linda Girard (1991) **At Daddy's on Saturdays**. After Katie's parents divorce, her daddy moves away. Saturday seems far away, but her mother and her teacher help her until Saturday, when she does see her father. Young children will find reassurance in this realistic but warm story of a divorce told from a young girl's point of view. Text is also suited for early elementary-age children.

Vicki Lansky (1998) **It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear**. This book is designed for parents and children ages 3 to 5 years to read together. Messages for parents help make a connection between the story and what happens to children in real families. Koko Bear faces situations that help him learn what divorce means, and that he is not to blame for the divorce. Koko Bear is helped to talk about his feelings and is told that he is still loved by both parents. Events of daily life that children and parents may have to face due to divorce are presented and problems are solved through talking, sharing, and sometimes special activities.

Jennifer Moore-Mallinos (2005) **When My Parents Forgot How to Be Friends**. This book assures boys and girls (ages 4-8) that children are in no way responsible for their parents' inability to get along together. It lets kids know that although one parent chooses to move away from the home, both parents continue to love their little boy or girl. Both Mom and Dad will continue to spend happy times with them.

Jillian Powell (1999) **Talking About Family Breakup**. Covers basic divorce and remarriage issues in straightforward text. The reader can find out why some families divorce, some of the changes that can happen when they do, and how to get used to a new kind of family. A note to adults provides suggestions for talking with children about this topic. The book's photographs represent a variety of family arrangements and ethnic groups.

Fred Rogers (1994) **Let's Talk About It: Divorce**. A narrative and pictorial description is offered of three different families that are dealing with divorce. This book stresses that the divorce is not the children's fault and that feelings of fear and anxiety are normal. It attempts to make children feel more stable during a time characterized by many changes.

John Schindel (1995) **Dear Daddy**. In this story, Jesse lives with his mother. His father lives on the other side of the country. Jesse struggles to deal with the difficulties of a long distance relationship with his father. After writing a letter to his father, Jesse finally receives an invitation to visit.

Sharon Dennis Wyeth (1996) **Ginger Brown: Too Many Houses**. When her parents separate, Ginger Brown, a bi-racial child, spends a lot of time moving from house to house. This is a touching story of a young girl's first difficult year in a changing family structure. A sensitive and reassuring book for kids in similar situations. The important role that grandparents play in supporting their grandchildren is covered in this book. Suitable for early elementary also.

### Books for Elementary School Aged Children (age 6-12)

Jan Blackstone-Ford, Annie Ford, Stephen Ford & Melanie Ford (1998) **My Parents Are Divorced, Too: A Book for Kids by Kids**. Written in the voice of the children to help other families struggling with divorce and readjustment. This book covers subjects the children thought important when they were first dealing with divorce. The goal is to serve as a vehicle to get children talking and parents listening during a time when life seems out of control. This is most suited to later elementary-age readers.

Doris Brett (1986) **Annie Stories: A Special Kind of Storytelling**. This outstanding book discusses the use and value of stories and provides quality information about children. The parental information on divorce and children just prior to the divorce story is a clear, concise and excellent review of children's reactions to divorce. Tips are given throughout the divorce story to assist parents. This book also has stories dealing with nightmares, going to the hospital, a new baby, relaxation and more. Also suitable for pre-school age children.

Julia Cole (1997) **My Parents' Divorce (How Do I Feel About)**. Four children give their opinions and advice on issues surrounding divorce. A wide range of topics are covered in a concise, colorful and pleasant way. Covers dealing with change, difficult feelings and ways to feel better. This is an outstanding book, particularly for this age range.

Paula Danziger (1982) **The Divorce Express**. In this humorous novel about a joint custody family, Phoebe spends weekdays with her father in the suburbs and commutes back to the city to be with her mother for weekends on a bus called the "Divorce Express," where she has to spend too much time. Just when Phoebe thinks she's getting a handle on her life, more change occurs.

Debra Goldentyer (1998) **Divorce (Preteen Pressures)**. Short narratives provide personal descriptions from parents' and children's' perspectives regarding separation, divorce and remarriage. Discusses typical feelings preteens may have when faced with various issues and experiences such as custody, the court system, mediation and dating. Suitable for upper-elementary ages.

Earl A. Grollman (1975) **Talking About Divorce and Separation**. Charcoal drawings and written words to help tell a young child that the parents are separating and divorcing, that it is not the child's fault, and that they will be involved in his/her life. Has parent section that explains the value of each page being read to/with the child. Also basic advice for parents on responding to the child's behavior.

Peter Mayle & Arthur Robins (1988) **Why Are We Getting A Divorce?**. With a blend of humor, sensitivity, and full illustrations, this book covers the many difficult issues associated with divorce, such as: why people marry, divorce misconceptions, adjusting to living with one parent, and how to deal with feelings of loss and hurt. Includes living together prior to marriage and parent meeting a new partner.

Menendez-Aponte, Emily (1999) **When Mom and Dad Divorce: A Kid's Resource**. With compassionate but realistic guidance, this book reassures children that divorce is not their fault, and that they will always be loved and cared for. The author offers tips for working through tricky feelings and working out sticky problems, such as loyalty conflicts and schedule confusion.

Barbara Pomerantz (1998) **Who Will Lead Kiddush?**. The author discusses the feelings of a young Jewish girl adjusting to the changes brought about by the divorce of her parents. Within the context of Judaism, there are traditions and rituals which can add continuity and stability for children whose parents are divorced.

Michael S. Prokop (1986) **Kids' Divorce Workbook**. This book provides an in-depth look at emotions and feelings about the divorce. The workbook activities help to increase self-awareness and feeling good about oneself. Addresses issues of anger, disappointment, fear, and talking with a counselor or clergyman. Information about other helpful books included.

Shirley Thomas & Dorothy Rankin (1998) **Divorced But Still My Parents**. This book helps children with their reactions to divorce. Parents can help by reading the book along with their children. It is organized according to the five stages of grief outlined by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her studies about phases of mourning that follow whenever permanent loss occurs. Each phase is explained in words children in the middle years of childhood can understand. It identifies common problems and worries faced by children, along with ideas for coping and feeling better. Includes activities and drawings.

Elizabeth Weitzman (1996) **Let's Talk About Your Parents' Divorce**. Simple, brief book structured around divorce-related topics that are described and illustrated with photographs. Topics included cover separate homes, custody, communication and dating. Multicultural photographs are included.

#### Books for Teens (age 13-17)

Judy Blume (1972) **It's Not The End of the World**. A first person narrative with a bit of humor concerning a 12-year-old girl who does not want her parents to get divorced. The typical confused emotions experienced during divorce are highlighted. The story deals with home and school environments, sibling relationships and coping after the divorce is finalized.

Cassella-Kapusinski (2006) **Now What Do I Do? A Guide to Help Teenagers with Their Parents' Separation or Divorce**. A workbook to help teens vent some of their anger, fear and frustration over their parents' breakup, whether recent or years ago. Includes personal sharings by the author and introduces faith as an aspect of healing. Can be used individually or as curriculum for support group or retreat programs.

William L. Coleman (1998) **What Children Need to Know When Parents Get Divorced**. This classic book is designed to be read with elementary-age children facing the trauma of divorce. The author provides an honest, understandable, and sympathetic way to help children deal with their questions and feelings and work toward emotional healing and a healthy view of themselves. Book was written from a Christian perspective.

Gayle Kimball (1994) **How to Survive Your Parents' Divorce: Kids' Advice to Kids**. Over 250 young people share how they coped with their parents' divorce. Learning from other youth can make coping easier. The book includes comments from 20 counselors who work with youth whose parents are divorcing. Additional topics covered include communication, getting help, family activities, school success and remarriage. Kids are encouraged to keep a journal and journaling questions are included in each chapter.

Jill Kremetz (1984) **How it Feels When Parents Divorce**. Several boys and girls (ages 8-16) share their experiences with adjusting to their parents' divorces. The children interviewed are from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and offer an honest look at their experiences surrounding their parents' divorce, custody arrangements, parents' beginning to date, or remarry. Good choice for this age group.

Beth Levine (1995) **Divorce: Young People Caught in the Middle**. This common sense manual for teens dealing with parents' divorce offers helpful advice and an overall realistic picture of the whole difficult divorce scene. Interesting case studies are interwoven with commentary, facts, and statistics. Topics include pre-divorce stress, the divorce procedure and custody matters, relevant economics, emotional adjustments, relations with non-custodial parents, and the stepfamily scenario. Good examples of problems, both immediate and long-term, that children face when their parents separate. This book is an especially appropriate choice for older teens.

Zoe & Evan Stern (1997) **Divorce is Not the End of the World**. A teenage brother and sister, whose parents are divorced because their father is gay, discuss topics relating to this situation, respond to letters from other children, and offer tips based on their experience. Includes insights from their mother. Honest, positive and practical book. The reader is given questions to reflect on at the end of each chapter.

Alys Swan-Jackson (1998) **When Your Parents Split Up: How to Keep Yourself Together (Plugged In)**. This book discusses teens' questions about divorce and provides advice for coping with change. Questionnaires and activities are included to help teens cope with their emotions, plus interviews with teens who have been through the same situation. Stepfamily issues are also covered. Helpful resources are provided in the summary at the end of the book. This book is a good choice and is especially appropriate for older teens.

#### Books for Children and Adults Living in Stepfamilies

Claire Berman (1990) **What Am I Doing in a Step Family?**. This book contains information to help children understand stepfamily issues. Subjects include how stepfamilies form, what to call a stepparent, discipline, changes in household rules, jealousy, new siblings. This book takes a candid approach to the sensitive issues involved to help parents and children address the tough problems. Text is most suited to early elementary-age children.

Joseph Cerquone (1994) **You're a Stepparent...Now What?** This book shows how to set realistic expectations, establish good relationships with your stepchildren, fairly discipline your stepchildren, parent stepsiblings, and cope with grandparents, holidays and everyday life.

Heegaard, Marge. (1993) **When a Parent Marries Again: Children Can Learn to Cope with Family Change**. This interactive children's volume is for children 6-12 who may live or are living in a stepfamily.

Margaret Newman (1994) **Stepfamily Realities: How to Overcome Difficulties and Have a Happy Family**. This book addresses the major issues concerning introducing new stepfamily members, including the complications of daily family life, visiting stepchildren, resident stepchildren, and finding time to maintain a loving marital relationship. This is an inviting and comforting guide to confronting the reality of the stepfamily arrangement.

Emily B. and John S. Visher (1991) **How to Win as a Step-Family**. The Vishers are founders of the Stepfamily Association of America and they have been involved in helping stepfamilies for nearly 30 years. The book contains practical information and specific suggestions for adults involved in making stepfamilies work. Frequently, the Vishers use actual examples to illustrate particular ideas.