

## Movies about Divorce and Stepfamilies for Children

### Movies involving Parental Separation, Divorce and Abandonment

**Antwone Fisher** (older teens & young adults), R rating. The true story of Antwone Fisher tracks a remarkable young man on the path to recovery from physical and sexual abuse. Antwone Fisher is a young Navy sailor who is on verge of getting booted from the military because of his volatile temper when he is ordered to mandatory sessions with psychiatrist Dr. Jerome Davenport. After a few strained sessions, Fisher navigates through difficult memories of his Cleveland childhood, mostly of life with a vicious foster mother who beats him on a regular basis and a foster sister who violates him sexually. Fisher and Davenport form a father-son bond. And eventually, he finds the strength to work through his anger and the courage to forge his first romantic relationship with Cheryl.

**E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial**, PG. An extra-terrestrial is accidentally left behind on Earth and is befriended by a young boy, coping with his parents' divorce, and his brother and sister. As Elliot attempts to help his extra-terrestrial companion contact his home planet so that he might be rescued, the children must elude scientists and government agents determined to apprehend the alien for their own purposes...which results in an adventure greater than any of them could have imagined.

**Fly Away Home**, PG. Following the death of her mother, thirteen-year-old Amy is bundled off to the Ontario farm to live with her estranged father, Thomas, an artist/inventor who has shaped his environment to reflect his eclectic interests. One day, Amy's travels through the farm's woods lead to a discovery that touches her: a nest of orphaned goose eggs. She nurtures the eggs until they hatch and, since geese imprint on whoever they see first, Amy becomes Mother Goose. Seeing his daughter's happiness, Thomas does not have the heart to deny her family of goslings. The young geese thrive but their idyll is disturbed when an officious wildlife officer tells Thomas that it is illegal to raise wild geese without clipping their wings. Thomas knows that nature will compel the geese to migrate south, but they've never learned to fly and with no other geese to show them how, they seem doomed. Thomas, however, has found a cause and decides to use his modest flying skills and hang glider experience to teach the geese to fly.

**The Horse Whisperer** (high school ages), PG-13. A terrible horseback riding accident has left 14-year-old Grace MacLean emotionally and physically scarred for life, and has left her prized horse, Pilgrim, permanently spooked. Grace's mother, Annie --a high-powered New York magazine editor--is unwilling to believe that Pilgrim is beyond help and is desperate to help her daughter recover from the trauma. Annie drives across the country to Montana, with daughter and horse in tow, in search of Tom Booker, a horse whisperer with a special gift for communicating with troubled horses. With Tom's help, both Grace and Pilgrim begin to deal with the aftermath of the accident. Annie, meanwhile, begins to reevaluate the choices she has made in life as she becomes enamored with both Booker and life on a Montana ranch. Sam Neill plays Robert MacLean, the husband and father left behind in New York when mother and daughter make their trek. The film was based on the popular novel by Nicholas Evans.

**Kramer vs. Kramer**, PG. Returning home late from work one night, a career-obsessed Ted Kramer is told by his wife, Joanna, that she is leaving him. After a lifetime of being "somebody's wife," she's going off to find herself, leaving Ted to care for their six-year-old son. Ted, while trying to hold down his job, gets to really know his son as few fathers do: cooking his meals, taking him to the park, understanding every need and fear. For the first time in his life he feels like a fulfilled parent. But then Joanna returns--and she wants her son back.

**The Man Without a Face**, PG-13. A troubled adolescent boy, intent on passing the entrance exam to an exclusive military academy, is mentored by a reclusive, disfigured former teacher.

**Mrs. Doubtfire** (elementary and middle school ages), PG-13. When an irresponsible and child-like dad is barred from seeing his kids, he disguises himself as a woman and applies for the job of housekeeper for his ex-wife. The disguise of a sturdy matron works a beneficial change on him as well -- but how long can he keep this up? This comedic romp won an Academy Award for Best Makeup.

**Swimming Upstream**, PG-13. The inspirational true story of an Australian swimmer's quest for Olympic gold, *Swimming Upstream* is a "gripping" tale of emotional triumph. As the target of his father Harold's drunken abuse, young Tony Fingleton escapes to the underwater solitude of the local pool, where he aspires to win Harold's love by becoming a national swimming champion. But when his cruel father pits Tony against his own brother in a competition to make the Olympic team, Tony must find the courage to swim his way to victory . . . and out of his father's emotionally crippling net.

**Tender Mercies**, PG. The film stars Robert Duvall as Mac Sledge, formerly an icon of country & western music, now down-and-out, a penniless alcoholic. Rosa Lee (Tess Harper), the young widow who owns the rural Texas motel where he has ended up, allows him to work off his board. As the months pass, the singer develops a bond with Rosa and her young son, experiencing the healing effects of this deeply religious woman's compassion. They become a family when she accepts Mac's offer of marriage, and he continues to rebuild his life. He attempts to see his daughter, Sue Ann (Ellen Barkin), whom he hasn't seen in years, and despite a nasty dust-up with Dixie (Betty Buckley), his ex-wife, is finally able to do so. However, the last tragedy he must confront is one that will truly test his recovery. Less a traditional story than a chain of epiphanies on faith and love, this masterpiece of low-key naturalism is arguably the finest work in the distinguished careers of both Duvall and Beresford.

**Unstrung Heroes**, PG. Steven Lidz is 12 years old and his world is fracturing. Overwhelmed by his life with an ailing mother and an emotionally distant father, Steven runs off to live with his two wildly eccentric uncles, Danny and Arthur. Baffled by the tragedies surrounding him, Steven finds solace in the idiosyncrasies of his Uncles' strange and wonderful world. It is there that he begins the journey from boyhood innocence to a young man's understanding of life.