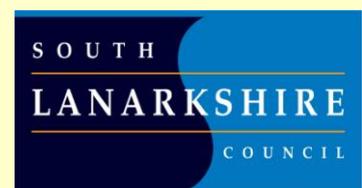


# Family Break-up or Divorce

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The  
Psychological  
Service



EDUCATION RESOURCES

**If you are reading this you have probably found out that your parents have split-up or have decided to divorce. Below are some answers to questions young people often ask about divorce and separation.**

**1. My feelings are really ‘mixed up’ now, will it stop?**

You may feel a whole range of different feelings: really sad; angry; worried; unsure; hurt. You might even feel happy or relieved. These feelings might be very strong and emotions may flood over you for no good reason, even during the day when you are thinking of other things. You may wake up thinking about everything that is going on and sometimes even dream that your parents are still together.

**These feelings are normal.** You are facing a major change in your life. You may learn through time to understand why this has happened. Important issues in life, such as separation, divorce and death are disturbing no matter what your age. When this happens we all suffer in some way.

**You may need help from others, to come to terms with the break up and it can be important to find someone to talk to about your feelings and worries.** You might want to talk to a friend or a friend of the family, a relative or a teacher in school. Gradually these feelings will ease and it will become easier to come to terms with the break up. You may need help from others to do this and it will take time, so don't get annoyed if the feelings don't seem to be going away – give it time.

## **2. Am I going 'crazy'?**

You are certainly **not** going crazy! The way you are feeling right now is **normal**. It is not a sign of you losing your mind. You have had a shock at the news of the break-up and you are trying to cope with several difficult questions at once e.g. what caused the break-up? Who was to blame? Will they get back together again? What will happen to me (where will I live or with whom)? Will I see both parents?

## **3. Is the break-up my fault?**

**No.** Parents divorce or separate because of their problems. They will have reached the decision to break-up because one of them (or both) feel it is the only way to carry on with their lives.

## **Whatever has happened, it is not your fault.**

### **4. Will the parent with whom I am now living leave next?**

Sometimes young people are worried that the parent who is in the family home may be next to leave. This is not likely to happen. However, if you are anxious about this speak to your parents about it.

### **5. I am not sleeping well – is this normal?**

When you go to bed you might find it difficult to sleep. You may wake up early in the morning and find that you can't get back to sleep. You may even wake up during the night or have nightmares. When people go through tough times this can happen, but as things settle down it should get better. If this continues you should let an adult know.

**6. My eating habits have changed, is this normal?**

This is not unusual when you are anxious or worried. You may be eating too much (comfort eating) or may be eating too little. You may put on, or lose a lot of weight over a short period because your appetite has changed. If this continues, please talk to an adult.

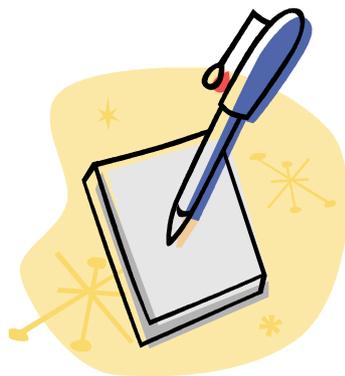
**7. I have mood swings now. How long will they last?**

You may seem to be on an emotional ‘roller coaster’, one minute you are up, the next down, one minute crying, the next minute you are angry. It is usual to feel very ‘emotional’ over such a major change in your life. Feeling extremely sad is common. For most people these feelings should last for a short time but if they don’t improve, you should talk to an adult.

**If you think about hurting or harming yourself, tell someone: parent, teacher, psychologist at school or your doctor.**

## 8. How can I begin to feel better?

It is important during difficult times to keep up your routine (even if you don't feel like it) and do things that you enjoy. For example, meeting people and friends you like, listening to music, watching television and playing games. Try and stick with a routine that calms you. Some people find writing down their thoughts in a diary or drawing can also be helpful.



If you are worrying about something in particular, try asking your parent or someone else close to you if they can help. It is important that you don't keep things 'bottled up'.

## **9. Are there more things I can do to help myself?**

You might want to try one of the following:

- Make a list saying all the positive things there are about you.
- Get some physical exercise – going swimming or joining a class in a gym is something that helps young people and adults to cope with stress.
- Enjoy a long bath.
- Listen to your favourite music.
- Keep your hands and brain busy e.g. puzzles, making something with your hands or reading

## Want to speak to someone outwith the family?

### Here are some Helpline numbers:-

All 0800 numbers are free of charge. You don't need a phone card or money, and they won't show up on the phone bill. They are usually very busy, so keep trying.

<b>ChildLine</b> 0800 1111 Freephone 24 hours a day	<b>NSPCC Helpline</b> 0800 800500 Freephone 24 hours a day Counselling, information and advice for children at risk of abuse
<b>Children's Legal Centre</b> 01206 873820 10 am - 12.30 pm, 2 - 4.30 pm weekdays	<b>Samaritans</b> 08457 909090 Freephone 24 hours a day Advice and support if you feel really unhappy and depressed
<b>Cruse Bereavement Care</b> 020 8332 7227 Help, advice and support if a relative or a friend has died. Lines are open every day, including weekends.	<b>Who Cares? Linkline</b> 0500 564570 Freephone 3.30-6 pm, Mon, Wed, Thursday Advice and support if you are or have been in care
<b>Get Connected</b> 0800 096-0096 Free national helpline for young people	<b>Youth Access</b> 020 8772 9900 9.30 am - 5.30 pm Mon-Fri Will tell you where to go for help locally
<b>National Youth Advocacy Service</b> 0800 616101 Freephone 9am-9pm, Mon-Fri, 2 - 8 pm weekends Information, advice and representation (someone who can speak for you)	<b>Breathing Space</b> 0800 83 85 87 <a href="http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk">www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk</a> Useful helpline for young men

## **Want to find out more?**

### **Here are some useful websites**

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) – a counselling website for children.

[www.carelaw.org.uk](http://www.carelaw.org.uk) – free website for young people in care, offers information on the law and your rights.

[www.justask.org.uk](http://www.justask.org.uk) – free website offers information, help and advice on legal services.

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk) – free website for all the family.

[www.thesite.org.uk](http://www.thesite.org.uk) – free website for young people (15-24 years) offering information, help and advice.

***South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service Centres***

**Hamilton Psychological Service Centre**

23 Beckford Street

Hamilton

ML3 0BT

Tel: 01698 455800

Fax: 01698 455822

**East Kilbride Psychological Service Centre**

c/o St Andrew's and St Bride's High School

Platthorn Drive

East Kilbride

G74 1NL

Tel: 01355 574121

**Lanark Psychological Service Centre**

Council Offices

South Vennel

Lanark

ML11 7JT

Tel: 01555 673249

Fax: 01555 673392

For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language,  
please phone 01698 455800 or email [enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk)

**[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk)**



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