

What Divorce Can Do to Your Child

I remember the first time I heard that a friend's parents were divorcing. I must have been 7 at the time, and I didn't understand. Was that possible? People were allowed to do that?

It didn't seem right. More than that, it seemed wrong.

Growing up, I didn't know my biological dad, and my mom married my stepdad when I was 4 so I remember little before him. They had a fine marriage, but there were always issues. Even as a kid I was aware of that. Money, church, friends, attitudes, other attractions, the chore of children ... these things weighed on my parents. There were times I thought their marriage was over, but then they'd come back together again—until the time they didn't.

I remember the moment my stepdad told me that he had filed divorce papers. My parents' divorce wasn't unexpected, but my heart ached all the same.

Being a child of #divorce hurts. Read about @TriciaGoyer's experience: [Click To Tweet](#)

He'd been waiting to tell me because I was planning my own wedding. But the day he chose to tell me was my wedding day. Yes, my wedding day. He didn't want me to be surprised, when I returned from my honeymoon, that he was living someplace else.

I can picture your dropped jaw ... and I felt the same shock and disbelief as I drove away later that day with my new husband. I was 18 years old and newly married, but something still felt wrong about my parents getting a divorce. I felt like a hurt kid inside.

For a child, things never seem "right" again after your parents' divorce. It was weird to see my mom without my dad

there. It seemed weird to have to go to two Christmas gatherings, two Thanksgivings. It's the most unnatural thing in the world.

Another thing you can't shake as a child of divorce is the feeling that it's partly your fault. I went through some very rocky years as a teenager, and I caused a lot of stress for my parents. During my junior year of high school, when my mom wondered if she should leave my stepdad and get her own apartment, I told her I thought she should. Even though my input had very little effect on their decision, I still feel guilt. It'll always be there. There's always a feeling that if I'd been a better kid it would have been easier for my parents to work it out.

The truth about being a child of divorce is that it hurts no matter how old you are. This is not how God created things. A commitment is a commitment, especially one made before God.

I've been thinking about this lately because if my generation has anything in common, it is our universal exposure to divorce—not only with our parents, but in our marriages. If you're alive today, divorce has had a profound effect on you—financially, emotionally, morally, spiritually. Our lives are different because of what has happened in our country's marriages.

And where does that leave us? As people who understand the pain and struggle, it's our job to help strengthen marriages—those around us and our own. Sure, you might think your friend has a good excuse for divorce, but don't encourage it. **Encourage forgiveness, grace and reconciliation. Pray. Pray hard.**

Pray for the couples out there, and pray for their children. We've seen enough hurting kids grow into hurting adults.

And if you're considering a divorce yourself ... I beg you to reconsider. The grass is not greener. Happiness is not found

in someone else. Love can be rekindled.

The best thing you can do for yourself and for your children is to give your marriage a second chance. Don't think that walking away from your commitment will come without consequences. Don't think you're not going to break your children's hearts.

If you don't want to try again, take your hurt and pain to God. Tell Him that the love is gone and seek His help. Love can sprout where you think there is only dead, dry ground. God can do miracles, and He wants to start in your heart.

I promise.

God promises.

"The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Steps You Can Take

1. Strengthen the marriages around you.
2. Encourage forgiveness.
3. Pray for couples and their kids.
4. Reconsider your own divorce.

Daily Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank you for families and for marriage. Being married is a calling, and it's hard work. Help my spouse and me to work through our differences and to show each other love and forgiveness. May our marriage encourage those around us who might be considering divorce.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tricia Goyer has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31, and HomeLife Magazine.