



HartnellChanot  
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Family Law Specialists

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When your parents married they expected to stay together until the end of their lives.

**But sometimes a marriage that starts out perfectly, can turn bad over time. Your parents may decide that getting a 'divorce' is the only way to make things better. This will bring about changes in family life which can be difficult and painful for all of you.**



Most people go into relationships, especially marriage, believing that they will stay together forever.

## Why parents divorce

**There are many reasons why couples find themselves unable to stay together.**

- **Drifting Apart**

Just like young people, adults change throughout life. Sometimes, couples find that as they grow older, they develop different interests and no longer have anything in common with the other person or feel that they do not know them anymore.

- **Stop loving each other**

Sometimes, without any reason, one or both people in a couple find they do not love each other anymore and no matter how hard they try they cannot make it work.

- **Cannot work out differences**

Some couples find they can't agree on many important issues and that arguments arise all the time without being settled. After a while this can become destructive and couples can decide that they would rather be apart.

- **Wanting to be with a new partner**

Sometimes one partner in a marriage may fall in love with someone else and feel that they can no longer stay with the person they are married to. They may feel that the new person understands them better than their current partner and that they wish to start a new life with them.

- **Major life changes**

Losing a job, becoming ill or the death of someone close can affect people deeply and sometimes it can cause problems within a marriage. Some couples may find they cannot move on together and decide to split up.

- **Abusive Relationships**

Everyone knows it's wrong to abuse or hurt a child or another adult, but it can happen in families undetected for a long time. In these cases it is sometimes necessary for the non-abusing family member to leave the abuser to protect their family.

## Parents' behaviour

**It's hard to be around parents who are not getting along. Hearing them argue, shout, cry and slam doors can be tough.**

*"It was really hard in the house for ages before my parent's split. Mum and Dad didn't talk to each other much and only talked to me. When they did talk it turned into a row over the smallest thing and I stayed out with my friends as much as possible." Tara, 14.*

When people are going through difficulties such as divorce, their behaviour can change for a while too. You may find your parents become more strict about things they did not mind before, or that the rules are more relaxed and they don't seem to notice you as much. Your parents may sometimes fight with you when really they are angry with each other.

The tension in the house is hard for everyone to bear especially if your parents are not speaking to each other.

Even if your parents seem distracted, they still love you and want to know what's bothering you. Find a quiet time and talk to them about how you're feeling and what's upsetting you. If you don't feel able to speak to them, speak to a trusted adult who may be able to help.

### Is it my fault?

**It is common to feel that it might be your fault your parents are splitting up.**

You may wonder if it might not have happened if you had behaved better or not asked for new clothes or kept your room tidier. But remember that parent's feelings towards each other are different from their love for you. Even if they are angry and upset with each other, this is completely separate from their love for you. A parent's love for you is unconditional whereas the love between two adults can change and break down.



## Hearing that your parents are going to split up can cause a mix of emotions.

**You may feel sad, angry, afraid and worried about who will take care of you.**

- **Anger**

If you feel angry tell your parents and look for ways to release your anger that does not hurt others or yourself.

- **Sadness**

It is normal to feel sadness when your parent's split up. You are experiencing loss and everybody around you will be feeling sad. These feelings may be worse at night or when you are alone but don't be afraid to have a good cry when you need to.

- **Guilt**

You may feel guilt when your parents divorce and think that you should have done something to change the situation. You may see one or both of your parents feeling sad, angry or lonely and feel powerless to help them.

- **Scared**

When your parents split up you can feel lost, out of control and worried about the future. This is completely normal and can be helped by talking to a friend or relative who has been through similar experiences or by writing your feelings down.

- **Physical feelings**

You may feel tired and unwell. If you are worried about any of these feelings, mention it to your parents, a teacher or another relative. It's important to let people know how you are feeling, it will often help these feelings get better.

## How to feel better

**When your parents split up you can feel lonely and confused. Your feelings of self worth can be affected and your behaviour may change.**

You might find you don't want to see your friends and family and would rather spend time alone in your room. You might find yourself feeling angry and having arguments with your friends about silly things or even find you feel anxious in situations you used to be okay with like speaking in class or walking in crowded streets.

- **Talk it out**

Try talking to your parents – you may be surprised at how much this helps. If you feel you would rather talk to someone else, confide in someone you trust. Many people have experience of divorce and want to do all they can to help. There are also great organisations to help young people on the Internet and in your local library. Even if you feel you can't talk to anyone, it is sometimes good to write your feelings down somewhere safe like a diary. This way you can let your feelings out in a way you feel comfortable with.

- **You are not alone**

It's normal to feel alone when you are upset. Even if there are lots of young people around you whose parents have gone through a divorce, this situation is happening to you and is unique to your set of circumstances. Many of your classmates and even teachers have been where you are and felt sad and alone. If you share your feelings with them, or even just enjoy spending time with your friends like you always did it will help you to feel less isolated. Bear in mind that your parents still have the same love for you and are making plans for your future. Things may be very difficult in the beginning but they do change and people can adapt to new situations.

## Tips to make it easier

*“My teacher said I might enjoy the after school gym club. I joined and it really helped take my mind off things. I made new friends there and even did some award badges.” Josie, 11.*

- **Live your life**

Join new clubs and do things you enjoy in your spare time.

- **Stay in touch**

If you have moved, stay in touch and visit your old friends.

- **Exercise**

Exercising will help you work off stressful feelings.

- **Don't keep things bottled up**

There are people & organisations to talk to when you feel sad.

# When you find your parents are splitting up you will probably have some worries about the future.

**This is completely normal and an important part of moving forward in your family life. Below are some questions you may have:**

- Who am I going to live with?
- Will we have to move house?
- Will I have to change schools and leave my friends?
- Who is going to look after my pet?
- What will happen at Birthdays and Christmas.
- Will I have to choose between my parents?
- Can I still see mum/dad if they leave home?
- Will I live with my brothers/sisters?

Try to find time to talk to your parents about your worries and make sure you let them know your views. Your parents will need to know what you think to help them make decisions, and you will feel that you have had your say and been listened to.

If it helps, write your questions down before you speak to them - this keeps things clear. They may not be able to give you an answer straight away but they can then keep you up to date on the changes happening in your lives.

## Ways to stay in touch

**Family break up can mean you see less of the parent you no longer live with.**

There are many ways to keep in touch such as:

- **Phone calls, Email and Text Messages**
- **Web Cams / Skype**
- **Letters**
- **Internet (Face-book, Myspace etc)**

It's fun to share photographs and videos with your parents over the Internet and keep them up to date with what you are doing.

Remember though, your mum and dad may not be as up to speed with how the internet works and you might have to give them some help!



## The future

**You may feel as if your world has fallen apart but it can be put back together again and you can look forward to a more settled future.**

You and your parents now have the chance to rebuild your lives and find happiness in different ways.

After things have settled down you may find the atmosphere at home is less stressful now that your parents are no longer living together. Also you may get to spend more quality time with each of your parents when you see them separately. Your parents may feel calmer and be nicer to spend time with. You may get to know them even better.

Coping with a difficult situation like divorce can make you feel stronger as a person. The experience can also help you to help others who are going through similar problems. Family life will never be exactly the same again after a break up but it can survive the changes and go on to be a happy new beginning for all.

**One thing that will never change is that your parents will always love you.**

### Who to talk to...

**There are many great organisations to help you on the internet. If you feel you would rather talk to someone else, confide in someone you trust. A brother or sister, grandparent, aunt or uncle can often be a good person to talk to, since they know your family history.**

**For more information and advice visit our website [www.hartnellchanot.co.uk/justkids](http://www.hartnellchanot.co.uk/justkids)**