



Presents A Guide To

Working Through the 5 Stages of Divorce Grief With Your Children



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So, you're getting divorced. Whether this is something you chose or not, the reality is, it's happening. And since you have children, every decision you make as you maneuver your way through the next several months will affect not only you and your soon-to-be ex-spouse, but most importantly, your children as well.

Without a doubt, divorce is one of the most challenging things you'll ever go through. It's painful, period. Even if the way you deal with your pain is by getting angry, rest assured; eventually, you will have to deal with your pain. Divorce represents a death. And just like any other death, you'll go through many stages of grief.

The hardest part about divorcing when there are children involved is that your children will be processing through these stages at the same time you are. The more aware you can be of your own feelings, the better able you'll be to support your children in dealing with theirs. Keep in mind that each child is different and each will process their feelings about your divorce differently and at different rates, depending upon their ages, genders, personalities, etc.

There are 5 stages of divorce grief and the purpose of this short e-book is to provide a snapshot of how both you and your children could react to each. There is no right or wrong order to these stages and you may find yourself or your children switch between them often before you finally arrive at the final stage.

The 5 Stages of Divorce Grief

1. Denial

You: *"I'm fine." or "This can't be happening, not to me."*

Your children: *"My parent won't really get divorced."
"Mom (or dad) will be coming home soon."*

Denial is usually only a temporary defense but very real just the same. Whether you are the one who's leaving or the one being left (or a mutual participant in the divorce decision), it's fair to say this was not in your plan when you got married. It's a shock if for no other reason, for that one. And your first instinct will be to deny it's actually taking place.

Your children will manifest this stage by asking when your ex-spouse is coming home or asking why you can't work things out. Make sure you reassure them that you understand their feelings without doing too much explaining. No matter how good the reasons you give, your child will likely not understand or accept them at this stage. The best thing you can do is generally to listen and empathize.

2. Anger

You: *"Why me? It's not fair!" "It's their fault!"*

Your children: *"I hate my parents." "This is so unfair." "No one understands what I'm going through." "No one cares what I want."*

The most challenging thing you'll need to do at this stage is to keep from casting blame and lashing out at your ex-spouse. This behavior can permanently damage your relationship, which will negatively affect your children. When you're tempted to succumb to your anger, remember that your children and their well being are your number one priority and ask yourself if it's worth sacrificing that for the temporary satisfaction of a blow up (even if you are "right").

Dealing with your children's anger is also difficult and it's important to remember that it's generally not directed at you (even when it may seem to be), but at the situation and your child's general feeling of a lack of control.

3. Bargaining

You: *"Let's just stay together until children are grown," "I'll do anything, change myself, be anyone you want me to be."*

Your children: *"This is my fault. If I'm just a better kid, they'll get back together."*

For you, the third stage involves the hope that you can somehow change or delay the reality of divorce. Unless the bargain your making is truly in your best interest, it will more than likely end up backfiring. Changing who you are for the sake of someone else generally ends in resentment toward that person, which will poison your relationship in the long run.

Remember that part of the bargaining conversation for your children involves blaming themselves and promising they'll "be better" in order to change the circumstances. Be sure you reassure your children often that your divorce has nothing to do with them and that you and your ex-

spouses' love for them will not change in any way as a result of it.

4. Depression

You: *"I'm so sad, why bother with anything?" "I'll never be happy again" "I'm going to die alone."*

Your children: *"My life will never be the same." "My (mother or father, depending upon which parent is absent) doesn't love me enough to stay." "No one understands what I'm going through."*

During the fourth stage, the reality of divorce truly begins to set in and the sadness can feel overwhelming. It's important to realize that you can't skip this step. It's an essential time for grieving that must be processed. Just remember that the care of your children also must take priority as you process through your grief. If you need to, ask for support in caring for them from friends, relatives, or your ex-spouse if that's appropriate.

For your children, depression must be carefully monitored. Make sure you're talking and listening openly and often with your children about what they are feeling and let them know it's okay to cry when they need to. Being there for them and grieving together is an important path through this step to the final step.

5. Acceptance

You: *"It's going to be okay" "My life will be different but not necessarily worse from this."*

Your children: *"My parents will always love me no matter what." "I now live in two different houses but I'm always safe and cared for."*

During this stage, you'll finally arrive at the reality that your life has been forever changed, but not necessarily for the worse. Eventually you'll even begin to see a different and positive future for yourself and your children.

For your children, they come to understand that the fact that their parents are divorced doesn't mean they don't still have two loving parents.

Conclusion

Working through the 5 stages of divorce grief is essential to your eventual life journey, and when you can begin to look at it as such, it becomes easier to take the first steps toward creating a new relationship with your ex-spouse. This is where you will begin to define your new family.

As you begin that journey, you will face many challenges. The road will be difficult and often fraught with hazards that you'll need to navigate, sometimes on a daily basis. If you can remember that you're laying the foundation for a lifetime of interaction with your ex-spouse, it will color each decision you make.

Above all, hold your children and their best interest in the forefront of your heart and mind at all times. If you can truly learn to put your ego "on the shelf," you'll be able to keep your children "out of the middle and in the center," always the priority and never the pawns or the victims. That is the goal of the new paradigm of The Undivided Divorce.

And the dividends it pays are priceless.

About Us



Julie Anne Jones & David Gentzler



Julie Anne Jones and David Gentzler are a divorced couple who have created a co-parenting relationship over the course of the past 10 years. They share joint custody of their teenage boys, Sam and Eli and are passionate about changing the paradigm of post-divorce when children are involved. Julie Anne is an accredited life coach, but neither she nor David approach this topic from a clinical perspective. They are simply real people who have chosen to move through divorce and work daily toward becoming successful co-parents. Their passion is to share their experience and insights, and to support others who are on the same journey.

After thirteen years of marriage, David and Julie Anne began their divorce journey by sitting down at their kitchen table with a photo of their boys and the absolute conviction to do everything in their power to keep the impact their actions had on them to a minimum. That meant rearranging their lives, compromise, and putting their own needs aside at times for the sake of their children.

Now, ten years later, they have evolved into a new family together. It includes David's wife Valerie and her three children, Julie's husband John and his two kids, and all of the extended family that come along with them. Through all of the changes in their personal lives, they've never wavered from what they created that night at their kitchen table – a space between them where Sam and Eli know they are loved and supported by them individually and as co-parents, no matter what.

To learn more resources and tools for successfully navigating your own Undivided Divorce, and to learn our story as well as the success stories of others, visit us online at

<http://yourfamilydynamic.net>