

When parents are no longer together

A tangle of bad feelings

There is a tense feeling as you say good night. Although it is quiet and dark, you struggle to fall asleep. Your heart pounds wildly as you stare into the darkness. Your stomach churns with anger, sadness, and fear of an uncertain future. The fun things you once did don't seem to be fun anymore and even your favourite food doesn't taste as good as it used to. You feel alone.

What makes you angry is that it is so unfair and there is nothing you can do about it. Everyone is supposed to keep the rules; so what happened to the rules of forgiving one another and loving each other? Now *you* are the one getting hurt, and there's no one to put a stop to it. Perhaps your anger makes you want to fight as well. Or maybe you have pushed your anger down deep inside where it seems to eat away at everything that used to feel good.

You may have a nagging feeling that somehow you are the reason for all the trouble. Perhaps you feel guilty that you couldn't keep your parents happy all the time or that you couldn't stop them fighting.

Remember this!

- It is not wrong to feel angry, but hurting others because you're mad at them is wrong. Your feelings for your mom and dad will go up and down. The one day you'll feel sorry for your mom or dad, the next day you'll be angry with one or both of them.
- Your parents did not separate because of something you did. A problem has come between them that has made them so unhappy that they have decided to live apart. But they still love you as much as ever, even though it may not seem like it now.
- It is not your job to get your mom and dad back together. Trying to put things right between them will only cause you to be disappointed again and again.

- Your parents are probably also feeling angry, afraid, guilty, sad or lonely. Sometimes they may be quiet; sometimes they may be short-tempered. Don't blame yourself for the way they feel. Remember that they also need time to work through their feelings.
- As your mom and dad set up separate homes, they may often be in deep thought as they sort out the many things that need to be taken care of. This could make you feel unsure and afraid because you don't know if another disappointment will suddenly creep up on you. Don't let unnecessary worries weigh you down by imagining all kinds of bad things. If you are not sure what's going on or what will happen next, talk to your parents about the things that make you feel afraid.
- It will take some time to get used to a new way of life, but after a while life will start feeling more normal again.

Most important of all, remember that you have someone who will always be there for you. "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" Deuteronomy 31:8.