



Guide to Dealing with your Parents' Divorce

What's inside

Dealing with your parents' divorce

Taking care of yourself

Learning to cope

How to support your parents

Resources for you

This package was created by Healthy U: Peer Health & Wellness at the University of Manitoba. We are a group of trained, non-judgmental, and confidential student health and wellness leaders on campus.

We provide outreach activities, workshops, and one-on-one support for our fellow students on a variety of health and well-being topics. Feel free to drop in to chat or pick up more information packages.

If you would like to request or attend one of our workshops or events, check out our website for details.



Dealing with your Parents' Divorce

You've probably heard a lot about what kids go through when their parents divorce. But what about dealing with this as an adult?

Take care of yourself

There is no one-size-fits-all advice on how to deal with this or what you are going to experience. The most important thing is to *take care of yourself*. It might be easy to get caught up in what is happening with your parents and how they feel, but remember that they're grown ups and you are not responsible for them.

The good times were real

If the divorce came as a surprise to you, you may be feeling like you don't know your parent(s). Remember that even though you might be seeing a side of them that you didn't know before, they are the same person they've always been - you just know more about them now. The good times you may have had together are still real.

Feel free to keep your distance

You are under no obligation to spend time with your parents' new partners or their children. Remember that the partner's children are in the same situation as you, and that they didn't ask for this either - play nice!

You're perfectly allowed to stay out of it

If you don't want to play mediator with your parents, tell them. If you do choose to keep them updated on each other, try keeping it to "they're doing okay" - even if your parent says they want to know everything, they probably don't! You might risk hurting them or making it harder to move on.

Who is their Support System?

Before your parents split up, they may have been each other's main supporter. Depending on the nature of their relationship and how the separation goes, they might not have each other to lean on anymore. Do they have other supports in their lives, such as close family members or friends?

What are you willing to offer?

You might find that one or both of your parents start to look to you as their support. Think about what you're willing to do for your parents and how much time you're able to spend with them. If you're not able to give as much as they are looking for, try encouraging them to visit with friends, see a counsellor, or join a support group. You don't have to do everything yourself!

Planning ahead

If you're looking for ways to help, think about what your parents lost aside from their relationship. What will happen if one of them gets sick? When are they able to retire, and what are they going to do? Are there any hobbies they might try, in order to fill the time they used to spend with each other? These are discussions you could consider having with your parents, in order to make sure they're still being looked after.

How are you Coping?

Dealing with stress

Chances are you're feeling pretty stressed right now. What are you doing to manage your stress? Here are some examples of things you can do:

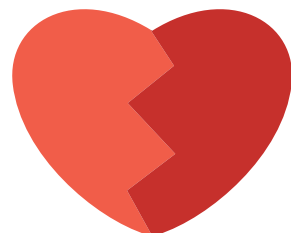
- Exercise - even a quick 15 minute walk can help!
- Rest and relax - take time to unwind! If you have trouble relaxing, try a free app such as Calm in the Storm or Mindshift!
- Socialize! Sometimes you just need some time with your friends. It's all about balance.
- Volunteer - a great way to forget about your own stress is to help someone else. You can sign up to volunteer in your community, or you can just offer to do something nice for someone. A little really does go a long way!

Letting yourself be upset

Are you acknowledging how you feel? It may be easy to get caught up in how your parents feel or what is happening to your family, but how are *you* doing?

It's perfectly normal to be sad, angry, relieved, or any other emotion - after all, we're human!

The sooner you admit to yourself or others how you feel, the easier it will be to deal with it. Try talking with a friend or family member about your perspective on the situation and how you feel about it.



Resources

On Campus

Student Counselling Centre (SCC)*

Groups and workshops. Free counselling for University of Manitoba students.

474 UMSU University Centre

204-474-8592

<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/counselling-resources-students>

Health & Wellness*

The Health & Wellness Educator is a Registered Nurse and available to talk about health and wellness topics.

469 UMSU University Centre (within the SCC)

204-295-9032

healthandwellness@umanitoba.ca

<http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/health-wellness>

Healthy U*

Talk to a peer health and wellness volunteer about your experience.

474 UMSU University Centre

<https://www.healthyuofm.com/>

*There are no in-person services at the University of Manitoba currently.
Check the relevant websites for remote services and updates.