



DO SOME MIDDLE SCHOOL AGED KIDS DO BETTER WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH DIVORCE?

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

10/25/2013

Recently I had a middle school teacher ask me a question that proved to be fairly thought provoking. I wanted to share his question and my thoughts toward his question.

His question:

As a middle school teacher, I always wonder why some students deal very well with divorce, while others don't. I would never make the assumption that they don't do well, because many do.

There are many variables on kids in middle school and why they might do well with a divorce while others struggle.



- The age they were when their parents divorced could make a difference. If their parents divorced when they were infants, toddlers or preschoolers perhaps they have had time to adjust to their situation. Or their parents have had time to adjust. Everyone has gotten into routines and life has moved on. These kids accept living in separate homes because it's the only type of living they remember.
- It might be that the parents know how to work with each other in a non-confrontational way. Parents who continue the "war" for long periods of time after the initial divorce will continue to affect their child's process of grieving the divorce. These kids can't ever truly mourn the death of the once intact family.
- Besides how their parents handled the initial divorce, a lot also depends on how they handle the discipline with the child and their interactions after the divorce. How strong the custodial parent is and how they convey their expectations and set boundaries for the child are also a contributing factor for many children.
- Some kids do better because they have a good support system surrounding them. This support system might include grandparents, church family, caring children's minister, neighbors and caring school teachers who take time to notice and give the child extra attention.
- Some kids have a higher capacity to handle conflict. They internally have the ability to be positive and try and find the best way to look at things. They are naturally more resilient than other kids. I think this is particularly true if they have a personal relationship with Christ. They find hope and encouragement in the scriptures and in their prayer life.
- Others do well because they attended a group support program such as [DC4K](#). In DC4K they found answers to their questions; were able to learn there are other kids like them; were given an opportunity to help others and in general learned ways to better cope with their individual situation. You may not ever know these kids attended a DC4K program when they were in elementary school because they may not talk about it.



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- Some middle school age children will hide their family problems. They will keep it together at school but fall apart at each parent's home. They find school as an escape from their problems and will throw themselves into their schoolwork.

Being a tween or in middle school when parents initially divorce is so very difficult on kids. To be a child on the threshold of adolescence is the worst time to have divorcing parents. Some teens when being told parents are divorcing will act nonchalant and continue as if nothing has happened. For these kids the denial may last for several years. (To read more about tweens and how they process divorce see "[Tweens and the Effects of Divorce on Their Lives.](#)")

What has been your experience with middle school kids?

Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at ljacobs@dc4k.org. You can find additional articles from Linda on her blog at <http://blog.dc4k.org/>.

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).