



DIVORCE THROUGH THEIR EYES – *THE CHEATING DAD*

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By Wayne D. Stocks

08/20/2012

Welcome back to our series titled "Divorce Through Their Eyes." In this series, we look at some firsthand accounts of children who have been there and can recount from their own experience how divorce affected their lives.



Today's story comes from a 16-year-old young gentleman named Zane Vanderberg who shares a little bit about his life, and the life of his two younger brothers, since his parents separated in this August 1, 2012 article from Huffington Post titled [The Musings of a 16-Year-Old with a Cheating Dad](#).

The article begins with recounting of how his father had cheated on his mother and how he knew about it even before his mom. From there Zane shares some insight into what his family looks like today:

I have read the articles that state that children are resilient and not terribly affected by divorce. I can say with absolute certainty that this has not been the case in my family after my mother discovered another secret affair and subsequently left my father. I have not spoken to him in almost two years.

I have two younger brothers. The youngest, an anxiety-ridden 10-year-old, longs for a "real family," as if the four of us don't have proper qualification to be considered a family. He and my 12-year-old brother have been living with my mother and me for half of the time, literally split down the middle. My father tells them he is happy now. My brothers do not understand this, as they are not happy. Their time with him is spent with my father's former mistress, who has now evolved to his girlfriend. I have come to believe that my brothers are oblivious to what is truly going on and put false hope in my parents reuniting.

My "new normal" family, if you can call it that, has been tripping through life ever since my father left. We were all present when my mother discovered the infidelity; the feeling of chaos was overwhelming. I punched a hole in the wall that is still there. Gaping. An open wall wound. My father did not honor his 18-year marriage with honesty, but chose to have my mother stumble upon his journal instead. We all felt cheated. My emotional toll was almost textbook. I still can't sleep. I have constant headaches combined with a coping mechanism of throwing humor and sarcasm at everything.





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I try to lead my fatherless family forward, hating the role I have created for myself. At home, I often feel trapped, an interim father figure to my brothers and sometimes a crutch to my mother. I am told that communicating with my father can reconfigure how I view my roles, but I have absolutely no desire to speak with him. I feel as if I never knew who he truly was and I certainly don't know him now.

Zane's story is like so many children of divorce. It is yet another first-hand account, from a young man in the middle of it all, that debunks the myth that children are resilient and will just get over it. Zane's brothers wrestle with the loss of a "real family" though Zane is 100% correct in his assertion that they are still a family – just with a new structure. Like many children who are a little older at the time of the divorce, Zane has taken on the role of adult for his little brothers and for his mother. While admirable, he clearly reflects his hatred for that role which he says he has "created for myself." In reality, it is a role no child would choose to create.

Zane shares one more reflection comparing his situation to that of his friend's:

I know at least one of my old friends went home and asked his parents, "You guys aren't breaking up, are you?" I can understand the fear over their parents' divorcing. I observe the "lucky" ones. The ones I envy. Those friends who have their parents standing next to them after a basketball game, helping them learn to drive, or proudly looking on and pulling out their phones to take photos of the first date, first dance, school projects and athletic achievements. When your parents divorce, all that changes. Especially if infidelity and lies were the foundation of your father leaving. Because how do you make believe everything is fine when the shrapnel is still in your skin? My father does not come to my games, he does not know who I am dating and he certainly has no photos of me from the last two years.

Divorce is not something that kids "just get over." Instead, it forever alters the course of their lives. There is healing to do, and with God's help, I pray that Zane finds that healing.

