



A SMILE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Page 1 of 2

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

07/26/2013



When my grandson was three years old, I moved into my daughter's house and lived there for a year while she was deployed to Afghanistan. One thing I noticed is the three year-old smiled all the time. This little kid was one happy little guy.

He even smiled most of the time when he was in trouble. His smile and happiness rarely got him out of trouble, but he just kept smiling anyway. I learned a lot from this three year-old – stop and smile every once in awhile.

I notice when I smile I seem to just feel better about things. I could have been very stressed and worried about my daughter in the situation she was in, but when the three year-old walked in with that smile my day got better. His smile was contagious. Even though his mom was gone, and he was sad and missing her, his smile always came through. This little kid had discovered early in his life something researchers are now validating.

Research bears out this information.

- When you take time to smile the feel good chemicals such as dopamine, endorphins and serotonin fire off in the brain.
- Smiling lifts your mood.
- The serotonin that is released in a smile helps stave off depression.
- When you smile, people react to you differently. They tend to treat you nicer.
- Some researchers say that seeing someone smiling activates the reward system in your brain. In other words when someone smiles at you, you feel rewarded.
- Smiling is contagious.
- Smiling helps deepen relationships.
- Smiling makes you attractive.
- The world seems like a better place when you smile.

Why am I talking about smiling on a blog about ministering to children of divorce? Because, it is very important that children of divorce have people minister to them that will lighten their stress. They need people that will help them feel good. They need adults who will want to deepen the bonds of friendship with them.

Think about it. Many children of divorce are around sad or angry adults all the time. This is especially true if the parents are warring and fighting. A parent comes to pick the child up for visitation; angry words are exchanged between the two people the child loves the most. The child leaves one parent, who has a scowl on their face, only to go with the other parent who is seething. This child needs to have some feel-good chemicals fire off in



A SMILE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

07/26/2013

the brain. Is it any wonder so many kids of divorce are depressed or angry? Perhaps they rarely have an opportunity to activate endorphins that lift their moods.

People who work with the child of divorce have many opportunities to lift a child's mood by smiling.

- When you greet a child of divorce, smile.
- When you see them across the room, smile.
- When they have accomplished something, smile.
- When they look scared or nervous, smile.
- When you get worried or afraid the child is going to get out of control, smile. (You need happy chemicals firing off in your brain too.)
- When the child goes to leave, send them off with a smile.

Get the picture?

Try smiling right now. See, doesn't that make you feel a little less stressed? Go to the mirror and smile at yourself. You might actually catch your own smile. Tomorrow when you rise, try smiling at God the minute your foot hits the floor.

By smiling you can help these children feel connected to the Lord and to the Lord's people. Smiling actually has the ability to deepen the bonds between you, the child, the parent and other adults in the church. Since smiling is contagious, get this epidemic get started at your church and let it begin with you.

Job 29:24 "I smiled on them when they had no confidence; and the light of my countenance they did not cast down." (NIV)

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>).