



SILENCE SHATTERS DREAMS AND PERPETUATES BROKEN DREAMS

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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Every child has dreams and when parents divorce or break up, silence from the adults in their lives can tend to destroy the dreams in a normal child centered environment. All children are self-centered. That's how God made us – to depend on our parents and other adults.

However, when there is a crisis such as a divorce, kids need people to talk to them and explain what is happening and what's going to happen. Children don't need silence from the very people they depend upon to help them through the rough patches of life.

Many divorcing parents don't know what to say to their child so they don't say much. Some will sit the kids down and tell them they are getting a divorce but they stop short of explaining exactly what that means.



- Does it mean one parent is moving out?
- Does it mean you'll never get to see the other parent?
- Does it mean the parent no longer loves you? The child thinks if the parents fell out of love with each other then they very well could fall out of love with the child too.
- Who is going to take care of me as in love me, feed me, keep me safe and put me to bed at night?

Kids need answers to their questions. The first time the parents set the children down and tell them about the divorce it is okay to keep it short. Ask the kids if they have any questions. Then set a time to meet again. This way the kids know there will be time to think through and formulate their questions for both parents.

Silence from the adults also perpetuates broken dreams. When parents don't talk about the future it leaves the child wondering what their future is going to be like. Older kids may wonder if this break up means they won't get to go to college. Younger kids wonder if they might not get to play soccer, football or other sports activities. All their dreams become threatened when there is an impending divorce.

Children church workers can fill in the gap for some of these children. Talk to the child and let the child talk to you. Some kids need to be encouraged to tell their story. Explain to the children that we all have stories to tell. You might start out by telling them a story about something that happened to you.

Purchase some journaling books and encourage the children to write their stories. You could start off having them write their memories of their preschool years. Encourage good memories. This will help them remember at one time their parents enjoyed each other and enjoyed doing things with them also. Next have the older



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elementary age child write about their kindergarten and first grade years. Writing about fun things will help them write about the not so fun things they are now experiencing.

If a child doesn't want to write, have them draw pictures and tell you their stories. If there is time and space, have the kids meet to share their stories with each other. There is healing in knowing that someone else is experiencing something like you are experiencing.

I was in a small group one time where when we finished a book study we decided to keep meeting. We decided we would each write about the first decade of our lives. We met the next month and shared our stories. We then wrote about the next decade and met again. We continued writing about the next decade and meeting to share. I can't tell you how therapeutic that was to simply share our lives. I believe the same closeness can come to young children if given the opportunity and encouraged to do so.

I believe that is why [DC4K](http://www.dc4k.org), DivorceCare for Kids, is so successful at helping children heal from the devastation of divorce and move forward in their lives. They get to connect with other children who are experiencing the same thing. They connect and bond with each other and with the leaders. They learn about Christ who loves them and they come to know a God that will never leave them or forsake them.

Give kids a chance. I think you'll be amazed.

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>).