

# DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON KIDS

## A GUIDE TO DEALING WITH DEPRESSION



**DEPRESSION...A PAINFUL BUT NECESSARY PART OF GRIEF!** In the words of Dr. Archibald Hart, "At the time of their parents' divorce, nearly all children of depressed to some degree." While the extent of the depression differs, most children of divorce experience what is called "reactive depression." Reactive depression is a response to a severe loss of threat of loss – in this case the loss of their intact family along with the multitude of other losses that befall the child of divorce. Reactive depression is less severe than depression caused by biochemical reactions. Many adults fear depression because they do not understand it. This fear prevents them from helping children of divorce to navigate this often painful but absolutely necessary stage in the grieving process following divorce.

**DEPRESSION:** a condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal; sadness greater and more prolonged than that warranted by any objective reason. (from dictionary.com)

### Scripture References About Depression

Dt. 31:8	Ps. 147:3
Ps. 3:3	Is 41:10
Ps. 23	Is 43:2
Ps. 34:17	Jer. 29:11
Ps. 37:3-4	Jn. 16:33
Ps. 37:23-24	Rm. 8:38-39
Ps. 40:1-3	Ph. 4:13
Ps. 42:11	2 Tm. 1:7
Ps. 46:10	1 Pt. 5:6-7

### SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- Sadness or unhappiness
- Physically and psychologically "slowed down"
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Complaints of physical aches and pains (headaches, insomnia, etc.)
- Experiencing a loss of appetite or a preoccupation with food along with overeating
- A feeling of discontentment and inability to find pleasure
- Complaints that "nobody cares"
- Frustration which is reflected in irritability, short temperedness, or extreme sensitivity
- Engaging in self-rejecting talk

### HELPING A CHILD COPE WITH DEPRESSION

- ✓ See the loss from the child's point of view
- ✓ Don't minimize or make light of the loss
- ✓ Accept the depression as a normal reaction to the divorce
- ✓ Help your child experience the depression as fully as possible to expedite grieving
- ✓ Be patient and give the child space
- ✓ Allow the child freedom to feel
- ✓ Avoid perpetuating the depression by punishment or anger
- ✓ Provide the child with reassurance and accurate information
- ✓ Help your child to accept the reality of the loss
- ✓ Allow the child to talk about the loss and relive good times from before the divorce
- ✓ Pray with them

*"At the outset, let me make this very important point: **We are designed to experience reactive depression.** It is not an accident, and we are not failures because we get sad. It is the way God has designed us to deal with life's losses...Reactive depression is all about grieving. It is the depression that helps us come to terms with our loss. Reactive depression ... is the normal response we are all designed to experience when we have something we prize wrenched from us. Think about it for a moment. This is exactly what every child of divorce is experiencing-the loss of what he or she prizes above everything else: a united family and both parents who live at home." Dr. Archibald D. Hart Helping Children Survive Divorce: What to Expect; How to Help*

Depression often masks itself as:

Anger  
Clinginess  
Exaggerated Stories  
Failing Grades  
Lying  
Negativity  
Rebellion  
Regression  
Resentment



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Thanks to Dr. Archibald Hart whose book Helping Children Survive Divorce was a valuable resource in compiling this resource