



## OH THOSE CHALLENGING KIDS!

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

04/13/2012

Many children's leaders feel that children from divorced homes exhibit challenging behaviors. That might be because these children seem distracted. Or they just sit there with a blank stare and you are sure they aren't hearing one word that is said. Or is it because these kids are hyper? They move and fidget and distract other kids. They try to run away or they yell, scream and even spit sometimes.



Have you ever come across a child that you are sure is .... uh..... well... to put it bluntly ....demon possessed or filled with an evil spirit? We read about demon-possessed and people filled with an evil spirit in the Bible.

*"When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.." Mark 5:2-5 (NIV)*

The version of this story in Luke 8:2 says,

*"When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town." (NIV)*

Whatever you want to call it this man was out of control. Children from divorcing families coming to our church might not break free of chains that bind them or roam the hills and cut themselves with stones, but some have so much strength when they are raging that they can break free and run away. Some hurt so much inside that they do scratch or cut themselves.

We don't think of children in our world being demon-possessed or being filled with evil spirits, but they are. They are filled with confusion, hurt, guilt, embarrassment, fear, anger, sadness, grief and a host of other emotions.

I was talking to an after school teacher the other day and she said,





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*“We have one little girl that has always had a high self esteem, always happy and cheerful. Recently she found out her parents are getting a divorce and I watched her yesterday walk down the hallway with her head down and her shoulders slumped. She is so sad she can hardly make it through the day. Her cheerfulness is gone and she is so unsure of herself in every area of her life.”*

Friends, that is an example of being filled with today’s evil spirits.

Eventually these feelings are going to affect her behavior. She might not lash out and try to hurt others but her anger will get the best of her and it will affect her behavior. In the coming weeks I’m going to share with you tips and things I have done to help these children. It is very important to keep them coming to church. God’s family is where there is hope.

My first tip is:

### **Be in control of your own emotions!**

You may say,

*“What does that mean? I am an adult. I’m a children’s leader. Of course I’m in control of my emotions.”*

Really? Seriously? I like to think that I am in control of my emotions enough that I can handle these children appropriately, but between you and I, I know I haven’t always handled each situation in the best manner. This was especially true at the beginning of working with the child of divorce.

I have learned that no matter what is going on inside me, I have to display calmness and peace on the outside. Remember [mirror neurons](#) we discussed a while back? [Mirror neurons](#) literally cause children to mirror back your emotions. If you come across as unsure, upset or even fearful of these children, that is what is going to come back to you from the child.

If you do get upset then display how to calm yourself, and do it in front of the children. Take a deep breath, hold it a few seconds and then let it out slowly. By the way, it is the exhale that is the calming part of breathing so breathe out s-l-o-w-l-y!

I have found that for me, humor works great. It calms me down and sets a tone in me that will allow me to handle some very rough situations. I put smile on my face. I chuckle deep inside me. I don’t always share the humor with anyone but it more or less is between the Father and me.



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One of the humorous illusions I see in my mind is the same one Jesus used with the demon-possessed man in the story in Mark 8. There have been many times in a frustrating moment I have looked around for a heard of pigs. I can just imagine a heard of pigs running and screaming down the hallway and out the front door of the church. It brings a smile to my face every time.

Next week we'll talk about specific phrases you can use with these children.

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR: 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. More great articles about how to successfully minister to the child of divorce in your church can be found at Linda's website [Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids \(HLP4\) \[http://www.hlp4.com\]](http://www.hlp4.com). Linda also offers support, encouragement, and suggestions to help single parents and those working with single parent children. She can be reached by e-mail at [Linda@hlp4.com](mailto:Linda@hlp4.com).*