

DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON KIDS

A Guide to Dealing With Feelings of Being Powerless



POWERLESS....WHAT CAN I DO? Children of Divorce did not choose to be in the position they find themselves in. Rather, their parent(s) made a decision which fundamentally impacts every day of their lives, for the rest of their lives. It is no wonder then that children of divorce seem powerless. No matter how much they long for reconciliation, they are powerless to make it happen. No matter how badly they want to stay in the same house, they are powerless to make it happen. They do not, for the most part, get to choose who they will spend time with and when. They do not get to choose what school to go to. They feel powerless – powerless to change anything, powerless over their own safety and powerless over their future. Many children of divorce will act out in anger and behavioral problems because in their disobedience, they regain a small sense of control over their surroundings.

POWERLESS: lacking power to act; helpless. (from dictionary.com)

Scripture References About Powerlessness

2 Chr 20:12	Ps 84:5
Ps 6:9-10	Ps 84:10
Ps 18:1-3	Ps 142:1-7
Ps 18:17	Mt 9:36
Ps 31:9-10	Rm 5:6
Ps 71:20-21	Rm 8:26
Ps 72:12-13	Ph 4:6-7

HOW POWERLESSNESS LEADS TO ANGER AND ACTING OUT

For children of divorce, who feel powerless to impact the world around them, they are often left with very little which is in their control. Imagine yourself as a child of divorce whose parents have told you that the family you grew up in is done, you'll now be living in two homes and experiencing a multitude of changes. There is nothing you can do about it. One of the things that no one can take away from you is your anger. Sometimes children of divorce will display their anger inappropriately because they view it as the one thing they still have some control over. Furthermore, many children will act out and misbehave because it gives them a sense of control over whatever environment they find themselves in. In these situations, it is important to be firm but not to engage in a power struggle with the child. By engaging in a power struggle you reaffirm the control the child is seeking. Instead, endeavor to give the child a sense of control over their own life by giving them choices

Giving Children Power Through Choices

One of the best things you can do to help children of divorce to regain a sense of power over their own lives is to give them choices. Here are some examples of choices you can give kids:

- ✓ Allow children to choose which activities they will engage in.
- ✓ Give a child a choice about how they will help with the running of your ministry or which chores they complete at a home.
- ✓ Choices can be simple like where they would like to sit.
- ✓ When a child acts out, give them a choice of calming down and remaining part of the group or removing themselves to calm down.
- ✓ Allow them to choose when to share and when to remain quiet.

Anger is not the only reaction of children at this age. They are also sad about the breakup, afraid of what is going to happen, and lonely. In particular, these children feel powerless. They do not want the divorce, miss their intact families, long for the noncustodial parent, and feel helpless to alter the tremendous changes occurring in their lives."

Kevin Seiji Shinoda *Children of Divorce: The Impact on Classroom Behavior*



Divorce Ministry 4 KIDS

© 2012

<http://DivorceMinistry4Kids.com>

