



Bill of Rights for Children of Divorce

Every kid should know he or she has rights, particularly when their mom and dad are splitting up. Below are some things parents shouldn't forget – and kids shouldn't let them forget – when the family is in the midst of a break-up.

- ***You have the right to love both of your parents. And you have the right to be loved by both of them.*** That means you shouldn't feel guilty about wanting to see your dad or your mom at any time. It's important for you to have both parents in your life, particularly during difficult times, such as a divorce.
- ***You do not have to choose one parent over the other.*** If you have an opinion about which parent you want to live with, let it be known. But nobody can force you to make that choice.
- ***You're entitled to all the feelings you're having.*** Don't be embarrassed by what you're feeling. It's scary when your parents break up, and you're allowed to be scared. Or angry. Or sad. Or whatever. Above all, don't feel like the divorce is your fault.
- ***You have the right to be in a safe environment.*** This means that nobody is allowed to put you in danger, either physically or emotionally. If one of your parents is hurting you, tell someone. Either your other parent or a trusted adult, like a teacher.
- ***You don't belong in the middle of your parents' break-up.*** Sometimes your parents may get so caught up in their own problems that they forget that you're just a kid, and that you can't handle their adult worries. If they start putting you in the middle of their dispute, remind them that it's their dispute, not yours. Also, don't become a messenger for your parents. If they have questions for each other, they should ask each other themselves, not have you ask for them.
- ***Grandparents, aunt, uncles and cousins are still part of your life.*** Even if you're living with your dad, you should still be able to see relatives on your mom's side. And vice versa. You'll always be a part of their lives, even if your parents aren't married anymore.
- ***You have the right to be a child.*** Kids shouldn't worry about adult problems. Concentrate on your school work, your friends, activities, etc. Your mom and dad just need your love. They have to fix their problems. You can't.

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