WHEN MOM AND DAD DIVORCE

CFE 3321V

OPEN CAPTIONED
UNITED LEARNING INC.
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Grade Levels: 4-9
15 minutes
DESCRIPTION

Helps children explore the reality of divorce. Part I discusses the normal feelings and reactions children experience: fear, sadness, guilt, loneliness, disappointment, shame, depression, and anger. Emphasizes it’s OK to feel these. Part II presents positive steps children may take to help themselves. Suggests that divorce is a reality and can be a beginning to a better life for all the family.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

• To depict a range of normal emotions children encounter when parents divorce.
• To identify coping strategies used to deal with potentially damaging feelings.
• To demonstrate appropriate ways to take charge of one’s life.
• To reinforce the fact that children are not responsible for their parents’ actions.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Read the CAPTION SCRIPT to determine unfamiliar vocabulary and language concepts.
2. Relate that the video is divided into two parts: Part I describes normal feelings children encounter; Part II presents coping skills.
4. Explain the term *innocent bystander*.
5. List emotions children feel when adults do things children can’t change.
6. Discuss what people do with feelings they can’t manage.
7. Identify professionals who help people when they encounter problems they can’t solve themselves.
AFTER SHOWING

PART I: FEELINGS

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss how divorce affects each family member, particularly children.
2. Using the list generated in BEFORE SHOWING, discuss feelings children have as normal reactions to divorce. Include the following:
   a. Fear
   b. Guilt
   c. Loneliness
   d. Disappointment
   e. Shame
   f. Depression
   g. Anger
3. Define and discuss these terms:
   a. Joint custody
   b. Visitation rights
   c. Alternate caregivers
4. Compare crying when physically injured with crying relating to divorce. Note both are normal and appropriate for boys and girls.
5. Discuss the analogy of a child of divorce to “the innocent bystander.” Relate the following to the analogy:
   a. Parents’ responsibility
   b. Children’s responsibility
6. Evaluate the feelings seen and verbalized in the video. Compare with those experienced personally.
7. Children are not responsible for their parents’ divorce. Discuss how they may feel this responsibility.

Applications and Activities

1. Practice new vocabulary using all appropriate modes of communication.
2. Research the physical characteristics of depression.
3. Create a collage of feelings children have when parents divorce.
4. Select one of the feelings children have when parents divorce, and dramatize it.
5. Record feelings experienced during the day.
   a. Determine if each was appropriate or inappropriate for the situation in which it occurred.
   b. Recall how body language, facial expressions, and natural gestures assisted in expressing those feelings.
   c. Find alternate ways to express those feelings.
6. Imagine and write how a best friend might react and feel if parents divorced.
7. Demonstrate how a ball pushed under water is similar to repressed feelings.
   a. Fill a bucket with water and push a ball to the bottom of the bucket.
   b. Release the ball.
   c. Discuss the results.
   d. Speculate what happens when feelings are “pushed down.”
8. Share personal experiences as they relate to divorce, especially those involving emotional responses.

PART II: MAKING CHOICES

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Children cope with divorce in a variety of ways. Discuss the following strategies:
   a. Doing nothing
   b. Talking with responsible adults
   c. Being realistic
   d. Taking charge of one’s life
2. Discuss the positive and negative aspects of doing nothing--just staying miserable.
3. List some responsible adults who will listen to children who are affected by a divorce.
   a. Identify their roles and titles.
b. Classify them according to their training.
4. In a dream world, everything is perfect, and nothing bad happens.
   a. Compare a dream world with reality as each relates to divorce and children.
   b. List the positive and negative aspects of each.
5. Children can take charge of their lives. Recall the video’s suggestions and add to the list.
6. Taking charge of one’s life means making decisions that lead to independence and that build self-worth.
   a. Share personal experiences with paying jobs that raise self-esteem.
   b. Identify other actions which result in increased self-confidence.
7. Children need to know that their feelings and situations are not unusual. Discuss possible support groups, such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America.

Applications and Activities
1. Invite the school counselor, a social worker, or a psychologist to discuss ways to cope with a parent’s divorce.
2. Research and report on the differences between a counselor, a social worker, and a psychologist.
3. Investigate the positive and negative aspects of a counselor skilled in sign language versus a counselor with an interpreter.
4. Visit a counselor’s office. Prepare interview questions relating to education, purpose of work, and expected results from consulting with this person.
5. Invite a social worker, counselor, and psychologist to participate in a panel discussion, including explanation of their professional similarities and differences.
6. Imagine a perfect family.
   a. Illustrate the concept using artwork, pictures, magazines, and other resources.
   b. Present an explanation of the illustration.
7. Debate the fantasy of a perfect family versus the reality of family life.
8. Using a local telephone directory, identify organizations for divorced parents.
   a. Write for brochures.
   b. Hypothesize the results if a divorced parent joined such an organization.
9. Visit the local Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America organization.
   a. Investigate requirements for joining.
   b. Ask about modification of the service for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
10. Plan an activity with a friend whose parents are divorced.
    a. Share expectations of the activity with the class.
    b. After the activity, relate how expectations were met or were different.
11. Make a booklet about ways children can take charge of their lives appropriately.
12. Create a bulletin board to illustrate activities that children affected by divorce can do that help them cope and help build support groups. Note that most activities include all children, not just those of divorced parents.
13. Communication between parents and children is very important.
    a. Imagine how hearing parents tell their deaf child they are divorcing.
    b. Imagine the same event with deaf parents and child.
    c. Dramatize each, using all appropriate means of communication.
14. Divorce is not an ideal situation, but it can be an opportunity for new beginnings.
    a. Create a list of possible new opportunities, such as new friends, new activities, and new attitudes.
    b. Select one new opportunity and implement it for two weeks.
    c. Report the results to the group.
15. Invite an older child of divorced parents to discuss a successful adjustment to divorce.

WEBSITES
Explore the Internet to discover sites related to this topic. Check the CFV website for related information (http://www.cfv.org).
CAPTION SCRIPT

Following are the captions as they appear on the video. Teachers are encouraged to read the script prior to viewing the video for pertinent vocabulary, to discover language patterns within the captions, or to determine content for introduction or review. Enlarged copies may be given to students as a language exercise.

I remember
I came home from school
and my dad was there.

My big brother,
Eddie, was there, too,

they were both sitting there
with these long serious faces.

I asked them
what was going on,

and my dad said
to sit down,

that he had something
to tell me.

I thought something
was wrong with my mom,

so I started getting
a little bit scared.

But it wasn't that.

Then my dad told me he and
my mom were getting a divorce.

It was like I was
in a state of shock.

And then I started to cry.

(narrator)
If you're one of the countless
number of young people
whose parents
have gone through, or are going
through a divorce or separation,
you may have had an experience

similar to Donna Redmond's.

But even if you didn't,

you know that when your
mom and dad split up,

everything can seem
to fall apart.

Feelings get all mixed up.

You're hurt and angry and fearful--

and that's probably only a small
part of what's going on inside you.

But as horrible
as kids of divorce feel

when they first get the news,

there is another
side of the story:

a divorce can be a new beginning;

and, believe it or not,

it can lead to a better life
for everyone in the family.

The trick is
getting from here...

to here.

From feeling all those
terrible emotions,

to accepting what's happened,

learning from it,

and then moving on
to something better.
First, we're going to talk about feelings because when parents divorce or separate, all kinds of feelings flood over each person in the family-- emotions that are often difficult to face, and even more difficult to sort out.

I was afraid because I didn't know what was going to happen to me. ...being afraid is probably the most common emotion that kids of divorce and separation have.

A lot of kids wonder: ...when they first learn that their parents are splitting up. And when you think about it, that's a pretty natural question.

After all, your parents have loved you and have taken care of you ever since you were born.

The good news is that parents don't stop loving their children when they separate or divorce.

It just doesn't work that way.

But your family won't be together like before.

So what will happen to you?

Well, in many cases, children of divorced parents spend part of their time with one parent, perhaps during the school year, and the rest of the time with the other, maybe on summer vacations.

That's called "joint custody."

In many other cases, the children stay with one parent all the time, but the other parent comes around to spend time with them.

That parent is given what's called "visitation rights."

Joint custody and visitation rights are usually what happen when parents divorce.

Once in a great while-- and only in special circumstances-- a child may live with another relative, perhaps a grandparent.

In even rarer instances, a youngster will live with foster parents, people who like children and want to take care of them.

But whatever happens, children of divorced parents are taken care of, usually by one or both of their parents... but not at the same time.

Well, my mom and dad would argue about me a lot. My dad would be yellin' about how my mom would baby me, and my mom would yell back that he didn't know anything about kids.

So I thought I was the reason they got their divorce.

(narrator) Besides fear, guilt is another emotion commonly felt in broken homes.

Many kids feel guilty because they think they're somehow
responsible for their parent's split-up.

And I say you're going!

I don't care what you say! I'm not going!

I hate that place! It's full of old people that are depressing!

Honey! Honey! Oh, now see what you've done!

(narrator)
 Sometimes young people think that if they hadn't talked back to their parents, or had done all their chores without complaining, there would be less stress in the household, and so less chance of a divorce.

Sometimes they don't know what they've done, but they think that somehow they're to blame.

The truth is that no child is responsible for a divorce.

The bad feelings between moms and dads are a result of their behavior and their emotions—not their children's.

Their kids are innocent bystanders, somewhat like a person who stands on a corner and is hit by the flying debris of an auto accident.

[thunk]
is another feeling
kids of divorced couples often have.

They're disappointed
because their parents weren't able to
solve their problems and stay married.

Lots of youngsters feel shame, too.
In fact, they may avoid
friends or acquaintances
because they're ashamed
of their unsettled home life.

Shame may be very intense
if alcohol or drugs have been a
reason for their parent's split-up.

As you can imagine,
a divorce or separation is enough
to depress just about anybody.

And so, depression
is something else that often
takes place in divorced families.

Depression is when
your emotions shut down.

You don't feel like talking to people,
you don't want to make friends,
you lose your energy and interests,
and perhaps have trouble sleeping.

Sometimes, depressed people
eat uncontrollably--
or, on the other hand,
may lose their appetites completely.

Sure, I was angry.
I mean, how would you feel
if your parents robbed you
of a happy, normal home?

I was plenty angry.
(narrator)
Then there's anger.

Lots of kids feel angry about being
placed into such a hurtful situation.

The thing about anger
is that it can grow and grow
until it twists the way
you view life and other people.

And so anger can take
a terrible toll on you--
on your mental
and physical health.

In fact, all those terrible feelings
that kids usually have
when parents divorce or separate
can make life pretty miserable.

They can build up inside of you.

Oh, sure,
you can push those feelings down
to where they may not be so painful.

You can even pretend they aren't there.
But they don't disappear.

Like air pushed around a balloon,
they squish out in other places.

You can even try to run away
from those painful feelings.

But wherever you go,
or no matter where you try to hide,
they'll be there inside of you.

So what can you do
about all those feelings
that kids usually have
when their parents
divorce or separate?

Well, what you can do
is make some choices.

Remember the bystander
hit by the flying debris
when the two cars collided?

[thunk]
Ow!
He could do nothing--
jjust stand there being miserable,
or pretend like nothing happened--
or he could get some help.
It's his choice.

Well, guess what?
You have a choice, too!
Like the bystander, you can stay
where you are and be miserable,
or pretend like nothing's happened.
Or you can get some help.

Seeing your school's
guidance counselor, psychologist,
or social worker is a good start.
They can help kids sort out
all those bad feelings
that occur when there are
serious family problems.

They fight all the time.
They argue a lot.
And sometimes they
even throw things.
My dad gets so mad he
sometimes leaves and doesn't
come back for a couple days.
And my mom, she sits there
and just cries and stuff.
(narrator)
Counselors, psychologists, and social
workers are very good listeners, too.

And when difficulties build up,

having someone to hear and
understand your feelings about them
can be a big relief.
Moreover, getting all those
painful emotions out in the open
helps make them go away.

They're no longer bottled up,
churning inside of you.
Sometimes a favorite relative,
such as an aunt or uncle,
or a favorite teacher
can be very helpful, too--
as can members of the clergy--
pastors, priests, and rabbis.
However, your school's
social worker, guidance counselor,
or psychologist
may be your best bet--
at least, as a starting point--
because each have special training
to help kids get through tough times.

Another choice you have
is being realistic--
or living in a dream world.
For most kids whose parents
are getting divorced,
living in a dream world means hoping
that their folks will patch things up
and get back together.
Being realistic,
on the other hand,
means accepting the hard fact
that they probably won't.
Once that reality is faced, you'll
be ready to make another choice--
to worry endlessly
about your parents' situation,
which, if you're honest, you know
you can't do anything about--
or be concerned about yourself.
That means--
and this can be very hard--
you may have to take charge of your own life, and do the things that have to be done to make things better for you. You may find that spending more time with a best friend and his or her family will give you the companionship you're missing at home. If you feel uncomfortable with that, you could look into "Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America," an organization found in many communities. It will put you in contact with a person who can be a special friend that you can confide in. Another way that you can take charge of your life is to encourage your mother or father to join an organization called "Parents Without Partners." This group has lots of fun activities that can help kids and parents get over rough times. [players cheering] Getting involved in sports activities, as well as joining a church or synagogue youth group can also help. You may find that earning some money by doing work around your neighborhood will give you a good feeling of accomplishment, a feeling that can help replace all those painful ones. If you're old enough, you could try your hand at baby-sitting. Learning to play a musical instrument is another great way to take charge of your life because music can help you express those strong feelings inside you. When parents divorce or separate, then, kids have lots of mixed up and hurtful emotions, feelings that can build up-- and continue to build up-- until life seems almost unbearable. But you don't have to be a victim of your parents split-up. You can get help from lots of people... and lots of organizations. And, along with your own efforts, all that help can turn divorces into something quite unexpected-- a way to discover a new and better life. Funding for purchase and captioning of this video was provided by the U.S. Department of Education: PH: 1-800-572-5580 (V).