

Ideas about Divorce

Goals

1. To illustrate a wide range of beliefs about divorce and to help students clarify what they believe about it
2. To help students learn that it is all right for people to have different views
3. To show that, even though many kids believe they are the cause of their parents' divorce, in fact they are not

Materials

Divorce Ideas Scale

Process

Review

1. Ask students what the most important thing is they have learned so far in the group. Point out that different people have different ideas about what is most important.

Working Time

1. Briefly describe the goals of the session.
2. Explain that people also have very different ideas or values about divorce, then hand out copies of the Divorce Ideas Scale. Students may either complete the scale by themselves, or you may read the scale items aloud and have students raise their hands to indicate how they feel about each statement.
3. Go through the scale items one at a time and ask students to share their responses. Allow ample time for comments and discussion on each item, stressing that it is OK for people to feel differently about the divorce situation.
4. Ask students whether they have ever tried to change anything about themselves. (Examples might include studying harder to get better grades, improving grammar, or stopping fighting with a brother or sister). Discuss how difficult it is to change one's own thoughts and behaviors, then ask students whether they think it is really possible to change someone else's thoughts and behaviors. Point out that we can only be responsible for ourselves. Therefore, we can't really be the cause of anyone else's thoughts or behaviors, including our parents' divorce.

Closing Time

1. Ask whether there is anything anyone would like to say before the group ends and mention the topic of the next session (expressing feelings about the divorce). Remind students of the confidentiality rule and the time for the next meeting.

Divorce Ideas Scale

Instructions: Circle or check the way you feel about divorce at this time.

1. Divorce is an awful, terrible thing.

never sometimes most of the time always

2. When people marry, they should never get divorced.

_____ I agree—they should never get divorced.

_____ I think sometimes it's OK for them to get divorced.

_____ I think it's OK for them to get divorced.

_____ I think they should get divorced if they fight a lot and don't love each other anymore.

3. Things get better after a divorce.

never sometimes most of the time always

4. Parents should not get married again after a divorce.

_____ I agree—they should not get married again.

_____ I think sometimes it's OK for them to marry again.

_____ I think it's OK for them to get married again.

_____ I think they should always get married again.

5. When parents get divorced, kids should be allowed to live with the parent they choose.

never sometimes most of the time always

6. My stepparent loves me and treats me nice.

never sometimes most of the time always

7. Stepbrothers or stepsisters can be fun.

never sometimes most of the time always

8. Divorce is better than having Mom and Dad fighting all the time.

never sometimes most of the time always

9. Divorce can be the kids' fault.

never sometimes most of the time always

10. You should tell your teachers about it if your parents divorce.

never sometimes most of the time always

11. How I feel right now about the divorce is . . .

terrible not good I can deal with it very good

Changing Angry Thinking

Goals

1. To further illustrate how changing thoughts about a situation can change feelings as well
2. To give students practice in applying this technique to anger-provoking situations in their own lives

Materials

Anger Log (self-improvement exercise from Session 5)
Changing Angry Thinking Worksheet

Process

Review

1. Invite students to share how they feel about the idea of changing thoughts in order to change feelings. Review and discuss students' responses on their Anger Logs.

Working Time

1. Briefly describe the goals of the session.
2. Distribute copies of the Changing Angry Thinking Worksheet and explain that this form will help students practice modifying angry thoughts. Illustrate the use of the worksheet by going through one complete situation with students. For example:

What happened

My parents grounded me for the weekend because I left my bike out and it was stolen.

What I thought

I hate being grounded—now I can't go to the movies on Saturday. I can't stand losing my bike.

What I felt

Disappointed, furious, confused.

Changed thoughts

I know better than to leave my bike out. It was my own fault I was grounded. I can deal with the disappointment.

Changed feelings

Sad, but resigned.

3. Instruct students to pair up and work together to complete their worksheets. Urge them to choose real-life situations; circulate to provide help as needed.
4. After students have completed their worksheets, regroup to share situations, thoughts, and feelings. Discuss how the different thoughts might have changed students' feelings about the events.

Closing Time

1. Distribute new copies of the Changing Angry Thinking Worksheet and ask students whether they would be willing to record their thoughts and feelings about any difficult situations that may come up before the next session. Encourage them to continue to use their Anger Logs as needed.
2. Ask whether there is anything anyone would like to say before the group ends and mention the topic of the next session (taking personal responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors). Remind students of the confidentiality rule and the time for the next meeting.

Changing Angry Thinking Worksheet

Instructions: Write down the situation and your thoughts and feelings about the situation. Then write down what you could change your thoughts to and the new feeling you would have as a result.

Situation 1

What happened _____

What I thought _____

What I felt _____

Changed thoughts _____

Changed feelings _____

Situation 2

What happened _____

What I thought _____

What I felt _____

Changed thoughts _____

Changed feelings _____
