

# REWARDS, OR THE GOOD THINGS NO ONE TELLS YOU ABOUT DIVORCE

## WHY DIVORCE REALLY ISN'T THE END OF THE WORLD

**Evan:** It's so dumb that everyone acts like divorce is the end of the world. There are so many good things that come out of it. Going through this has made me emotionally tougher. When you go through something hard, you get stronger. The whole thing has made me more durable and more sympathetic. I mean, I'd never experienced agony before. Now I know how it feels when your heart breaks; it's a huge dark feeling that surrounds you and there's no way to escape.

**Zoe:** I felt that way, too. But now I feel older and wiser because of what I've been through. I know about different kinds of families and I'm more accepting when something bad happens, because I am confident I'll survive. When my friends have problems with their families, they come to me because I've been through it. Divorce may seem like the worst thing that could happen, but you have this tragedy and you find out that you can endure.

**Evan:** One thing I like about it is that I have more time and attention from each of my parents. When they were married, I got 50 percent of each of them. Now, I get almost 75 percent because they're only concentrating on me when we're together.

**Zoe:** There are lots of pluses to being divorced. You get two houses, more parents, more life experiences that make you a better person. I've had to learn how to deal with problems, like accepting my father being gay, like dealing with attitude from kids at school who don't get it, like having to be more organized and not always getting to be with the parent I want to when I want to.

**Evan:** I like spending separate time with Mom and Dad, because both of them are a lot happier now. Lots of families stay together for their children's sake and have terrible lives. Our family is doing great. My parents are happy and I'm happy. I still have my old friends and I've made new friends because my parents are divorced—we have something in common. I like both of my parents' new partners and I like both places I live. So everything's turned out fine. If you come into this situation with a made-up mind that it's going to be awful and you're not going to learn anything, then you won't. It's a given that it's going to be hard, but that doesn't make it bad. This is the sort of thing you have to find out for yourself.

Dear Zoe,

I get sick of people feeling sorry for me because my parents got divorced. Some of my friends say, "Oh, that must be so hard for you," or grown-ups keep asking how I'm doing and I don't know what to say. Sometimes I'm sad that my parents aren't together anymore, but I've adjusted, and to tell you the truth, I feel pretty good about the situation. Why do people have to act like you're some kind of a freak or have an incurable illness just because your parents are divorced?

Janet, age 13

Dear Janet,

People say things like that because they don't understand.

They think you're in a terrible crisis, but they don't know the first thing about it if they've never been through it themselves. Yes, they're trying to help, but they shouldn't act like they pity you, because divorce isn't a bad thing.

It's just something that happens which usually turns out for the best. The next time someone acts this way, just be quick and sassy about it. Say "I'm happy and I'm fine." If you know that you're okay and strong, then you can just flow with it and not feel as if you have to defend yourself to anyone.

Best of luck,

Zoe

### EVAN'S QUICK TIPS

1. **Think about the good things you've gotten out of divorce.**
2. **Know that your parents are probably happier apart.**
3. **Remember the bad stuff that went on when they were married.**
4. **Realize how you're growing from going through this.**
5. **See the ways your life is getting better.**

### TEN YEARS LATER, (EVAN) \* \*

The good things that no one tells you about are real, and eventually you will look back on this time and see it as an important part of your life, even if it is painful and difficult. Zoe and I definitely see it that way. The most important thing has always been and will continue to be your attitude. I hope you have faith, patience, hope, understanding, and maturity. But most of all, I hope that you have a steady, positive attitude throughout this divorce. It's your life; you have a say in your own happiness!

### *What Their Mom Has to Say*

It's a shame that people think that divorce is only a horrible thing. In fact, I can think of dozens of ways in which going through my divorce has changed my life for the better and has made Zoe and Evan far stronger and more capable human beings. But I certainly didn't know this when their dad and I first told them we were getting divorced. Back then, I was terribly worried that our divorce would ruin their lives, that they would feel troubled and insecure, and that perhaps they would be rejected by their friends. Boy, was I wrong!

Writing this book has convinced me that divorce can have a positive impact on kids. I've seen how Zoe and Evan, like so many other kids, are stronger and more resilient from having been through this. Those of you who go through divorce are not only survivors—you are heroes! You have so much to be proud of. You're more flexible because you've had to get used to so many new things, like two homes, stepparents, and the countless other ways your life has changed. You're more responsible because you've learned how to organize your schedules and your belongings.

But most of all, you've learned a lot about love. Like Zoe and Evan, going through divorce has probably made you more caring and compassionate, more able to lend a hand when your friends are hurting or in need. You know what it's like to feel sad, and you know how to listen from your heart when others are in pain. And hopefully, you've learned that divorce isn't the end of the world. In fact, it can be a wonderful new beginning.

## YOUR TURN \*

- Can you see some ways in which your life has changed for the better as a result of your parents getting divorced?
- How are you different? Stronger? More capable?
- What have you learned?
- Take a moment now to complete this sentence:

Since my parents got divorced, I can see how I've changed for the better by becoming more \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have learned a lot and  
I will keep learning and growing  
from this experience.

## WEB RESOURCES FOR KIDS AND PARENTS

**www.kidsturn.org:** Kids' Turn is a nonprofit organization that provides guidance and activities to help kids and parents through divorce.

**www.crckids.org/index.htm:** The Children's Rights Council provides this resource website for families emphasizing the legal aspects of divorce.

**www.pbs.org/inthemix:** *In the Mix* is a TV series created by teens that covers how teens live and the issues important to them. Click on "Divorce and Stepfamilies" to find video clips from the segment, statistics, resources, and more.

**www.pbskids.org/itsmylife:** It's My Life is a website that covers important topics that matter to kids. In the section about "Family," scroll down to the topics "Divorce" and "Stepfamilies" and find a variety of resources. Also available to view in Spanish.

**www.familieschange.ca/:** This fabulous interactive website is sponsored by the Attorney General and the Law Courts Education Society of British Columbia, Canada. Also available to view in French.

**www.itsnotyourfault.org:** A website run by National Children's Home, an organization based in the U.K. supporting children worldwide, which provides practical information about divorce for children, young adults, and parents.