

Q & A

1. What led you to write this book? Where did the original idea come from?

EVAN: Zoe and I had a lot to say, and our mom is someone who quite often writes her way through life's challenges and complications. So it was natural for us to write this book to process our experience and move on.

ZOE: This book was the brain child of editors and my mother who dreamed up the idea. Once presented to my brother, and myself first 10 years ago and then last summer, it was embraced and work began. The idea is to offer kids and parents alike tips, information, personal stories and activities to get through a hard time. We would like kids to know that they are not alone in this and that in any situation they encounter, someone else has been there, too.

ESS: The motivation for writing *Divorce is Not the End of the World* initially came up during a phone conversation with a friend who was also going through a divorce. We were comparing notes on our shared frustration as to how kids of divorce were constantly being characterized, especially in the media, as damaged, traumatized, and incapable of forming healthy relationships. I looked at my kids-she looked at her daughter, and we agreed that, if anything, our kids had been strengthened by the experience.

2. What's the book about? How is it unique?

EVAN: *Divorce is not the End of the World* is a collection of letters, quick tips, conversations and reflections based on two kids' life experience. It's Zoe, my mom and me going back and forth, exploring the various issues that kids and their parents struggle with when coping with divorce. It's not always pretty. Zoe and I tell it like it is but we are both optimists and encourage strength and optimism among the reader as well. You have two (three including Mom) perspectives instead of one and frankly, the depth of advice and support in a book that's under 100 pages is really astounding.

ZOE: Our book is very special because it really honestly addresses important issues for kids going through a divorce. It is not sugar coated, but gives it to you straight, and in a constructive way. It offers sympathy, camaraderie and all different types of advice. It is unique because we have more to say now that we're grown up. We've been there, seen that, cried then, overcome that, and we are okay, and, we want you to be, too.

3. What qualifies you as an expert on the topics covered in your book?

ZOE: Pretty simply, I am a well-rounded smart kid with divorced parents who wants to help other kids with divorced parents not only cope with it, but live happily with it. Somewhere along the course of life I realized that two of my best skills were working with kids, and writing. I have put them together to create this book. I have a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in Family Social Science and work as a Child Life Specialist at Hope Hospital in Chicago, IL. I have worked for many years as a nanny and a camp counselor, administrator and assistant director.

EVAN: I'm no more of an expert than any other kid who's survived his parents' divorce. I just come from a family in which reflecting on life challenges on the pages of a book is a tradition.

ESS: In writing this book, I've drawn from both my personal experiences as a parent

and my professional expertise writing books on love, marriage, pregnancy, parenting, coping with divorce, and starting over. My background in counseling, along with twenty years leading seminars has given me the unique opportunity to tackle this topic with sensitivity and depth. My experience offering writing workshops and working with aspiring writers gave me the tools to nurture my children's creativity.

4. Please share any stories about the writing process.

EVAN: During the rewriting process, I got in touch with a friend of mine who has lived with stepsiblings for a long time, if not always in the same house. It occurred to me that to add the "ten years later" portion to the stepsiblings chapter, I really had no experience to draw on. It was nice to be able to call a friend and ask about his experience and apply that to the book.

ZOE: Writing the book was a treat—my mom, brother and I sat around discussing the topics and working them into a format. It was a healing activity and one we all enjoyed. Any time you spend with your family is fun, crazy and silly, so, that was the best part about writing this book.

ESS: It was fascinating for me to see the ways in which Zoe and Evan had grown and changed, while remaining essential the same as they were ten years ago when they first wrote the book. For example, Zoe has always been very comfortable offering advice, whereas Evan shies away from coming across as an "expert." On the other hand, Evan chooses his words very carefully, while Zoe tends to be more matter of fact. I also saw ways in which both kids were less idealistic and more sympathetic to what parents go through as a result of having had romantic relationships of their own.

5. What was the hardest thing about writing a book?

ESS: Getting Zoe and Evan to get to work without feeling like a drill sergeant.

EVAN: Tackling topics that aren't as fresh or familiar as they were ten years ago. Keeping the original message of the book intact while bringing it up to date and making it a smoother read.

ZOE: Being happy with what you have done.

6. When did you know you were a writer?

ZOE: When my mom told me so ;) No, when I wrote, and it made me feel so happy and free, I knew it was something that was a true passion for me.

ESS: When I went to a writing workshop and read my work out loud, even though I had already been published several times.

7. What is your favorite thing about being an author?

EVAN: People think you're some kind of a celebrity when you're really just a normal person.

ZOE: Knowing that other people are reading what I wrote.

ESS: Getting to sleep until noon.

8. Your book is called *Divorce Is Not the End of the World*. But for some kids that's exactly how it feels. What can you say to those kids?

EVAN: That's a tough one. Whenever someone I care about is going through a hard time, I try to remind them that life is long and things will get better. What you really want is to give them a huge hug.

ESS: I've learned that the most painful experiences often lead to tremendous personal growth. But in the moment, pain is pain and you have to let someone feel what they're feeling. Ultimately, people are stronger than they think. Life may change dramatically, but we can trust our core to remain strong.

9. Recent research has raised the possibility that kids of divorce, especially those in their twenties, have more problems committing to long-term relationships. As part of "GenerationDivorce," do you think you're more or less likely to get married some day?

EVAN: I'm only less likely to get divorced. I see myself as having very high standards for a romantic relationship before considering a life commitment.

10. What are you working on now?

EVAN: A resume

ZOE: Making this book successful!