



Children in Divorce

A Curriculum created by



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Session One: Addressing Change

Change, the inevitable

Change is to one man the death of a friend; to another the birth of a child. Change is the shifting of soft winds of spring to a hurricane deadly and wild. Change is the moving of the hourglass sands. It's the coming of dawn after dark. Change is taking one step at a time; the emotions in each person's heart. But change in the end will not change at all. It's the one constant in everyone's lives. Change is the light at the end of the tunnel. The healer who opens our eyes.

Jake Harris

The theme for this session is “Changes.” We want to establish with the children and their parents the changes that have taken place in their lives since the divorce. This curriculum is designed to help them see that even though they have had changes in their lives, and that things may be different for them, they can learn to adjust and cope with change. Also, we want to remind them that there is a relationship that can be permanent – a relationship with God. He does not change His mind like man.

Enforcing that children are not alone on this journey and equipping them for change has proven to bring about healing, hope and restoration. You are a big part of this process. Whether you are teaching the children themselves or educating their parents, you are part of creating a healthy first step toward what may be the biggest change they have ever experienced.

If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it.

Mary Engelbreit



Session One: Littles Group

Goals

- To help children identify events that bring about changes in life and nature
- To help children see that even though we sometimes have negative changes in our lives we can still overcome them with God's love and guidance

Materials Needed

- Talking Stick
- Color Change Bags (premade)
- Books: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle and *Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- Puppet Supplies: (per child) a sock, pair of wiggle eyes, pair of pipe cleaners, Velcro, pre-cut pair of wings using felt, craft glue, Pom-Poms and markers (Note: An adult can also hot glue items that come off easily.)
- Copy of *Breakway Rules*

Introduction (15 minutes)

Welcome the group members and form the sharing circle. Using the Talking Stick, a facilitator needs to model introducing him- or herself.

My name is _____. The feeling I have now is _____.

Go over the *Breakway Rules* slowly and carefully.

Explain that tonight we will be talking about changes in our lives.

Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

Discuss how the caterpillar's life changed and how change can sometimes be good and sometimes it's hard. For the caterpillar the change was a little hard, but the results ended up being something really good. Explain how God created the caterpillar and knows what changes the caterpillar will go through. Emphasize that God has created them, too, and also knows about their changes.

Ask: What are some changes you have had in your life? (If kids have a hard time coming up with things, you might ask if anyone has ever had a baby brother or sister, ever moved to a new house, started a new school or changed schools.)



Session One: Littles Group

Art Activity (15 minutes)

Say: Let's make a caterpillar puppet to remind us that change can be hard, but can turn out to be an okay thing - and to remind us that God knows all about it.

Give each member a sock, pair of wiggle eyes, wings, Velcro, a pair of scissors, glue and markers. The puppet is essentially a caterpillar shape (tube sock) with eyes and detachable wings. The kids can decorate the caterpillar and wings any way they like.

While members work on their caterpillar puppets, invite them to share their thoughts about the changes in the life of a butterfly. Tell them in your own words: Just like we had no choice about the divorce in our life, the butterfly had no choice in how long he stayed in each of his life stages. However, unlike the butterfly, we do have a choice about our behavior after that.

Say: Let's read a story about a family whose life has changed because of divorce and see if we can pick out the changes in their lives.

Allow the participants to hold on to their new puppets as you read the story.

Read *Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce*. (Five minutes)

Talk about the story. Discuss what kind of changes have happened in the bear family's lives due to their parent's divorce.

Ask:

- What kind of changes have happened in your family since the divorce? (Let them list changes and talk about how they view the changes – positive or negative.)
- Allow the group members to give a voice to their caterpillar. Ask the caterpillar puppets:
 - What does change feel like?
 - What is hard about change?
 - Why is change important? Give each puppet a chance to answer.



Session One: Littles Group

Puppet Activity (10 minutes)

If you have a puppet stage encourage the children to get a new puppet to put on a puppet show using some of the following prompts. If you don't have a puppet stage, you may want to have them use the caterpillar puppet they just made as you facilitate the following prompts:

- The biggest change in my family since the divorce is...
- The changes that I don't like are...
- The changes I do like since the divorce are...
- The thing I can do to make my life better is...

It is important that the session ends on time. So, plan on concluding with this next activity by the end of the session.

Color Change Activity

Give each child a bag with two balls of Play-Doh (two primary colors: red/blue, yellow/blue, yellow/red). Instruct them to mix the two colors together until they are blended into one color.

The important thing for them to internalize is that the mixture in the bag will never be two separate colors again, but the new color is good, too. Thus our lives can change and things maybe different, but they can still be good.

Remind the children that there is one thing that will never change and that is that God is our Heavenly Daddy and He says that He will never leave us or forsake us if we seek Him. (Hebrews 13:5)



Session One: Middles Group

Goals

- To help children identify events that can change our lives and that some changes are happy and others can be sad
- To help children see that even though we sometimes have negative changes in our lives, we can still overcome those changes with a positive perspective; God is aware of our changes and He is in control always
- To encourage self-reflection and prayer as a way of coping

Materials Needed

- Talking Stick
- Copy of *Breakway* Rules
- Two Hula Hoops, Premade Labeled Index Cards, three to four packages of sticky pads
- Color Bags (premade)
- Dry-Erase Board and Dry-Erase marker
- Supplies for Sun Catcher Activity: (per child) coffee filter, bright-colored washable markers, a cup of water and a paper towel
- A soccer ball
- Change questions (premade)

Introduction (10 minutes)

Welcome the group members and form the sharing circle. Using the Talking Stick, a facilitator needs to model introducing him- or herself.

My name is _____. The feeling I have now is _____.

Go over the *Breakway* Rules slowly and carefully emphasizing the one(s) that seem to be most pertinent to your individual group.



Session One: Middles Group

Get to Know Each Other Hula Hoop Activity (10 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to give you a chance to learn the children's names and some of their likes and dislikes. It is important that you participate for them to feel like they know you as well.

Begin by laying the two Hula Hoops over each other, they should overlap enough for sticky notes to be able to fit. Show the children how the diagram works and how they can place their name (written on a sticky note) in the area that best describes them or their experience. Place pre-labeled index cards that say "both" between the Hula Hoops and on the outside "neither."

For the first activity use a label reading "sports" on the left side and "drama/the arts" on the right side, then put your sticky note with your name on it with your personal preference. Have the students follow your lead one at a time. It is important to say their name as they put on their sticky, this will help you to remember their name and make sure you are saying it correctly.

Next, follow the rest of the prompts until you have completed them.

"Death" "Divorce" | "Pizza" "Hamburger" | "Cake" "Ice Cream" | "Laugh" "Cry"

(Insert picture of this activity being done.)



Session One: Middles Group

Color Bag Activity (10 minutes)

Give each child a bag with two colors of Play-Doh in it (primary colors: red/yellow, blue/red, yellow/blue).

Ask: What are you noticing about what is in this bag? (They have two different colored balls of Play-Doh.)

Now, instruct the members to smash the two colors together until they are all blended into one color.

Ask: What are you noticing now about what is in the bag?

The important thing for them to internalize is that the mixture in the bag will never be separate colors again, but the new color is good, too. That is the way it is with our lives.

Dry-Erase Board Activity (10 minutes)

Explain that tonight we are talking about changes in our lives – changes since our parents' divorce. Create two columns on the Dry-Erase Board.

- First Column: What has changed?
- Second Column: What hasn't changed?

Ask about school, friends, housing and pets – any type of change that may or may not have occurred since the divorce.

Process with group members the changes that have occurred. Talk with them about which of those changes have been good. From their comments, star those on the marker board. Let them tell you which changes have not been good. Put an X by those changes on the marker board.

Ask: Do any of you see changes in yourself since the divorce?

Session One: Middles Group

Art Activity (10 minutes)

This activity will require a table or flat surface.

Explain the Sun Catchers Activity.

- Give everyone a coffee filter and bright colored washable markers.
- Have them flatten the filter.
- With the markers, they are to draw a picture of something that has changed in their family since their parents divorced.
- When the picture is finished, have them fold the coffee filter in half, then in half again. Keep folding it in half until it becomes too thick to fold and is cone-shaped.
- Place the cup (2/3 full of water) in the middle of the table and one by one, dip the tip of each cone into the water. The water will spread through the filter and blend the colors (watch each filter for a period of time).
- Talk about how divorce is like the water moving through the filter. It changes everything, but the basic pattern and colors are still there, just changed. The wet, messy filters can be compared to how it feels when your family is divorced.
- Roll out several layers of paper towels onto the table or flat surface.
- Unfold the filters and place them on the paper towels to dry.

Say: Tomorrow you will want to see the beauty of your sun catcher as you hold it up to the sun. Although it has been through a major change, it has maintained its beautiful colors and as you see the colors blend, know that your life can also blend and still be beautiful with all of its original colors. All of us will one day change, we are created with a natural body, but will be given a spiritual body.

...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:44 (NAS)

Change is at the very heart of God. Even Jesus walked with His disciples in the natural body and then walked among them for forty days in His spiritual body. Sometimes it is hard to make sense of all the changes we are experiencing, but it is always important to know that you are not alone and that everyone has to deal with change.



Session One: Middles Group

You're on the Ball Game (10 minutes)

This activity is similar to musical chairs but instead of chairs you will be using a ball. Play music as participants throw the ball to each other. When the music stops, the individual holding the ball selects and answers a change question written on the ball. After the participant answers the question, continue with additional rounds. (For this activity you will want to get a soccer ball and a permanent marker.)

Using a permanent marker, write the following questions directly on the ball:

- The biggest change in my family since the divorce is...
- The changes I don't like are...
- The changes I do like are...
- Something I can do to make my life better is...
- When I first found out my parents were getting a divorce I...
- I feel sad when...
- I feel mad when...
- I feel happy when...
- The one thing I wish I could tell my dad is...
- The one thing I wish I could tell my mom is...

Ask: What are you doing to make something positive out of the changes in your life due to the divorce?

Session One: Middles Group

Closing Conversation (Five minutes)

Talk with the kids about some things they can do to deal with changes in their lives, such as write in a journal, talk about their feelings with God and/or adults or friends, exercise, play games or have some fun.

Briefly summarize what you've talked about tonight. Tell the kids you're glad they came and that you look forward to seeing them next week. Remind them that although we are talking about a lot of changes, there is one thing that will never change; our God will never leave us.

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have ; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5





Session One: Teen Group

Goals

- To help teens identify that change happens in our lives and that some changes are happy and some changes are sad
- To help teens see that even though we sometimes have negative changes in our lives that we can still overcome those changes by having an eternal perspective that will bring us closer to God
- To encourage self-reflection as a way of understanding and coping

Materials Needed

- Copy of Breakway Rules
- Supplies for Box Activity: small box (per teen), magazines, glue, paints and markers
- Dry-Erase Board and Dry-Erase Markers
- Teen Journal (one per teen – use the Breakway Teen Journal)
- Color Bag (premade)

Introduction (15 minutes)

In the sharing circle, welcome group members. A facilitator needs to model how they can introduce themselves.

My name is _____. The feeling I have now is _____.

Go over *Breakway* Rules, emphasizing the one(s) that are most pertinent to your individual group.

To get teens to warm up a little, allow them to talk about how their day was or allow them to talk about anything significant that has happened to them recently. Explain that tonight we will be talking about changes in our families.

Go over the goals for the night.



Session One: Teen Group

Box Activity (15 minutes)

Give each teen a small box and let them paint, draw or cover the box with the way they felt before the divorce happened in their family on the outside of the box. They can cut out words or pictures from magazines to glue on the outside of the box. They can write or draw on it. They can, use different colors of paint to paint the inside and outside. Have them decorate the inside of the box to represent how they feel on the inside now.

While the teens are working on their box, start creating two columns on a Dry-Erase Board. The first column should read: What has changed? The second column should read: What hasn't changed?

Start asking the teens to help you make a list of what has changed in their lives since the divorce and what has not changed. Make sure to list that God has not changed. Examples could be school, friends, housing, pets, jobs, etc.

Process with group members the changes that have occurred in their lives. Talk with them about which of those changes have been good. List those changes on the board. From their comments, star the good changes. Let them tell you what changes have not been good and put an X by those changes.

Ask: Do any of you see changes in yourself since the divorce?



Session One: Teen Group

Teen Journal Activity (10 minutes)

Pass out the Teen Journals (one per teen). Explain that journaling is a great way to make sense out of changes and experiences. Journaling also allows us to see that even in difficult times, we are not alone and that they too shall pass.

Tell the Teens that you, their leader, will hang on to their journals, but at the end of the program they are free to take them home. This will ensure that each teen has their journal for each session.

Have the teens take a few moments to read some of the journal entries out loud. Give them a few moments to answer a few of the prompts.

Ask if anyone might want to choose an entry and answer it for the group.

Closing Conversation (10 minutes)

Talk with the teens about some things they can do to deal with changes in their lives other than journaling, such as talking about their feelings with God, an adult(s) or some friends, exercise, play games, have fun or listen to music.

Say: Sometimes we are tempted to camp out on “why me?” But I want to encourage you to start thinking, “who can help me through this change?” God tells us that He will help us through change and stay close.

A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24 (NAS)

Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted and set hearts free. We don't have to ask, “why me?” He knows why us. He makes crooked paths straight and uses changes that the world may tell us are bad for good. He is capable and most importantly, He is close and cares.

In conclusion, briefly summarize what you've talked about tonight.

Tell the teens you're glad they came and that you look forward to seeing them next week.



Session One: Adult Group

Goals

- To give parents a child's perspective when facing divorce
- To encourage adults to overcome negative changes with positive perspective
- To encourage self-reflection as a way of understanding and coping
- To present ways they can help their children understand and go through the changes they are facing as they go through a divorce

Materials Needed

- Color Bag (premade)
- Rights of Children of Divorce
- Books: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle and *Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- Dry-Erase Board and Dry-Erase Markers
- Book List for Children of Divorce handout

Introduction

Welcome everyone to the group. Explain that you start each week with an introduction statement from each person. A facilitator should go first to model for the group.

My name is _____. The feeling I have now is _____.

Tell parents that today's theme is "Changes" and that our purpose in meeting each week is to gain positive coping skills not only for themselves, but also for their children.

Say: Compared to children from homes disrupted by death, children from divorced homes have more psychological problems. I tell you this statistic to stress the importance of your child's attendance. Sometimes when we feel in a crisis we tend to be inconsistent, so I want to encourage you, for your kids, to stay consistent as you go through the program.



Session One: Adult Group

Say: It is important that we all realize that no one is immune to getting a divorce. Your story is important and you being here is important, too. Through telling pieces of our story, we will probably find out that we have more in common than we think. Our goal as a group is to explore what divorce feels like as an adult and how we, as a group, can minimize the negative effects of divorce for ourselves and for our children.

Ask each participant to give a two to three sentence summary of their divorce story if they are comfortable doing that. (For example: My husband/wife wanted out of the marriage.) Ask them to give particulars, such as how long they have been divorced and names and ages of their children.

Color Bag Activity (Demonstration Only)

Show a color bag. (Primary Colors of Play-Doh, red/blue, blue/yellow, yellow/red) Mix the two balls together and talk about the change in color. It's not the same. It will never be those two colors again, but a different color. The new color is good, too. It's the new normal. That is the way it is with our lives.

Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts.

Arnold Bennett

Say: All the kids will get a chance to have a color bag of Play-Doh and see the two colors become a new color. They will also be using books tonight to help them process their feelings about the changes in their lives. The Littles will be reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Mama Bear and Daddy Bear's Divorce*, both books about changes.



Session One: Adult Group

Show the Adults some books dealing with changes for all age groups and talk about the value of using books to talk about things in our lives. Books are a great way for children to learn about expectations and find comfort for new uncharted events in their lives. Offer them a book list for children of divorce when they leave this evening.

Also tell parents about the activities each of the groups will be doing:

- The Littles will be making a caterpillar puppet to help them see a visible change.
- The Middles will be making a sun catcher using a coffee filter with multiple colors and water. This will allow them to see the blend of a design that once looked one way and transformed to a new design, opening the door for communication about the changes in their own lives.
- The Teens will be making an inside/outside box to illustrate the feelings they had pre-divorce and the feelings they now have, post-divorce.

Say: Let's talk about changes in our lives since the divorce.

Point to the Dry-Erase Board for guidance and say: As you can see, there have been a lot of changes that have taken place for each of you. Focusing on one sentence at a time, let's go around the group and ask the group members to fill in the rest of the sentence:

- Changes that have occurred in my family since the divorce are...
- Changes that have occurred in myself since the divorce are...
- Some changes that I don't like are...