



The Inbetweener

Breaking up is hard to - but it can be even harder when it's happening to your parents, and you're stuck in the middle. Here's how to cope when your 'rents decide to go their separate ways

It's one thing when you fall for a guy and it doesn't work out. You shed a few tears, listen to some sad love songs and eat A LOT of ice cream. But when your parents split up, it can shock and upset you in ways an ex-boyf never could. The important thing to remember is that you're not alone, and that it is possible to cope with the split, and still have a family there to love and support you.

Why are my parents separating?

When Jessica*, 15, found out that her parent's were splitting up it came as a big blow. "They just sat me down at the kitchen table and, really calmly, explained that they had decided the marriage wasn't working," she remembers. "I was totally thrown - it had never occurred to me that they might split up, I had never even seen them fight."
Francesca McGuinn is a

Counsellor with Teen Between, a new service set up to offer help, support and counselling to teens whose parents have split up. She understands that a parental break up can be unsettling and confusing. "Teenagers can be the most affected by parents separating," she explains. "That's not surprising, given that they have significant external pressures to deal with, including exams, decisions about future careers and generally making the transition into adulthood."



Is it my fault?

The short answer to that question is: No way, Jose.

"Teens often think that somehow or other, this is their fault – and that is absolutely not the case," says Francesca. Marriages are complex things, and sometimes your parents simply don't have a straight and easy answer for why they're breaking up. As much as you'd love to know how to fix it, you can't.

Helping hand

It can really help to know that you're not the only one feeling the way you do. The Teen Between website (www.teenbetween.ie) was created specially for teens whose parents are separating.

"You can read other people's experiences and advice, and there's even an online journal where you can jot down your feelings from day to day," Francesca says. You can also avail of their one-to-one counselling service.

Moving on

Accepting that a separation is final can be one of the hardest things you'll have to do. Realising that your parents are probably never going to get back together is a tough pill to swallow, but the important thing to remember is that your parents are still there for you, no matter what.

"Generally most teens want their parents to get back together but that might not happen," says Francesca. "You need to remember that you are still a family, you're just a family in a different form."

“Teens can often think that divorce is their fault but that is not the case. Marriages are complex”

Talking freely and confidentially to a pro can really help sort your head out and teach you how to understand and deal with your emotions. Your parents might be asked for a contribution, but the counselling is provided regardless of you 'rent's ability to pay, so don't let money worries stop you from asking for the help.

For info, support and advice, head to www.teenbetween.ie

Dealing With Divorce

"When my parents split up I was terrified I would have to choose between them," says 16-year old Claire. "I hated the idea of having two rooms in separate places, of having to split my life in half." Francesca says that it's common for teens to feel guilty about who to split their time with. "It's very common to feel caught up in the middle, particularly if there is conflict – they can feel like the messenger, or go-between."

"Remember, even though things seem so awful at the moment things to do change and people do come through it," she advises. "Talk to your friends, talk to an adult, talk to a parent if you can, but don't keep everything bottled up. It's not healthy."

* Names have been changed