

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN OF DIVORCE, SEPARATION, AND NEVER-MARRIED PARENTS

If my parents are divorced, separating or never-married

I have the right

1. to love, and be loved by, both of my parents without being made to feel guilt, pressure, disapproval, or rejection from anyone in my family.
2. to be kept out of the middle of my parents' conflict and not to be forced to pick sides, carry messages, or hear complaints from either parent about the other.
3. to have a regular daily and weekly routine.
4. to refuse to choose between my parents. This includes not being asked to decide which parent will attend an event because both can't be in the same place and not being asked to determine with which parent I will be spending any particular holiday.
5. to be asked about preferences and safety concerns, but not to be asked to choose with whom I want to live. Having to make this kind of choice will always hurt someone, and hurting the people I love hurts ME. I reserve this right even when I am a teenager and offered the choice by some adult authorities.
6. to express my feelings to my parents in an appropriate manner.
7. to refuse to serve as a friend or therapist to my parents. I am not responsible for their feelings or for cheering them up. I do not deserve to be subjected to their adult problems and complaints.
8. to love and see as many people in my life as I want—including siblings, step-parents, and relatives—without being made to feel guilty or disloyal.
9. to refuse to replace a biological parent with a step-parent or to refer to anyone who is not my biological parent as "mom" or "dad."
10. to remind myself and everyone around me that I did not choose my parents. They chose each other, and, together, they chose to bring me into the world. Anything that is said by one parent about the other is said about half of me.

While I may feel alone in my situation, I need to realize that there are many kids like me dealing with the same kinds of problems, and I am always free to ask any trusted adult—such as a teacher, coach, or counselor—for help. I can see other kids like me by watching the documentary, *Erasing Family* www.erasingfamily.org.

If I feel the need to ask for advice anonymously, I can always text **(865) 4-FAMILY** to get support without giving my name. My parents can receive advice from this number, too!

