

# 1 How the Separation Affects the Children

## Separation and Child-Parent Relationship

During a divorce or separation, children are “caught in the middle”.

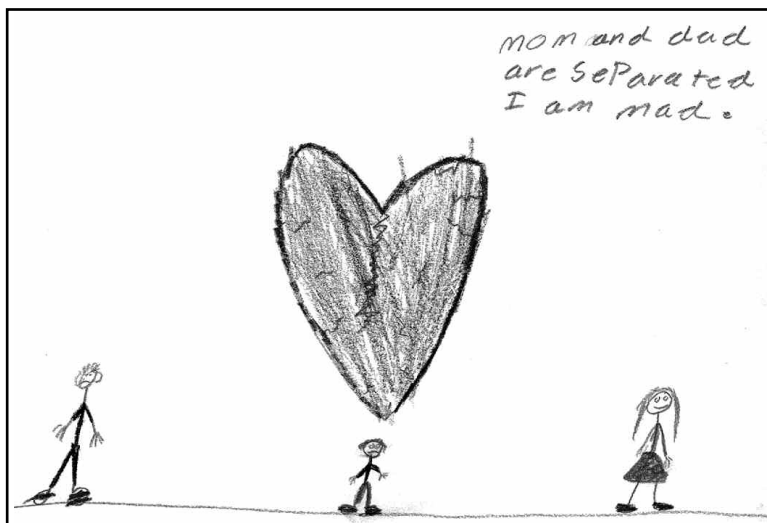
This is what the research says:

- Parents may lose focus on the child’s feelings, ideas, and needs for stability.
- It may be harder for each parent to be a positive role model.
- It may be more difficult to keep a close parent-child relationship.
- Parents may try to get children to support them against the other parent.

The amount of harm to the children depends on how much parents let the separation get in the way of their goals, values, vision of the future, and attitude towards everyday life. If there is conflict, the longer it continues, the worse it is for the children.

## ☀ What Children Often Experience

When parents separate, children often feel that the break up is their fault. If only one parent is involved in the child’s life after separation, children often believe that the other parent is not interested in them either because they are not good, important, or worthy of attention and love.



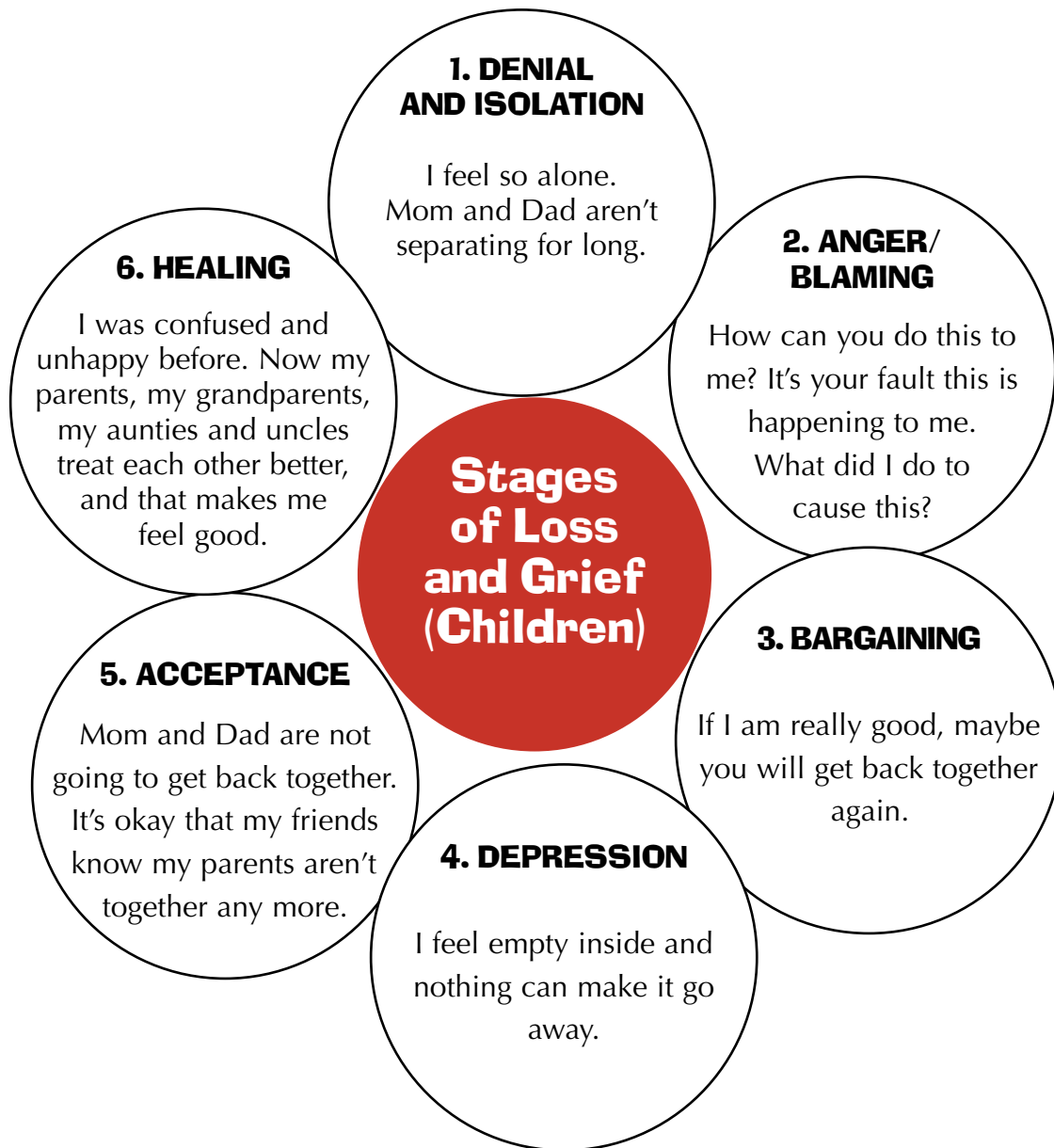
Terence, Nipisikopahk Middle School

Children often experience anger, sadness, rejection, and guilt. All of these emotions are confusing. They may also feel relieved, which they then feel guilty about.

Like adults, children experience stages of loss and grief.

As with adults, children may not go through these stages in order, and the time this process takes will vary from child to child.

## Stages of Loss and Grief for Children



*"The Aboriginal concept of health...is said to be holistic because it integrates and gives equal emphasis to the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional aspects of the person. The circle is used to represent the inseparability of the individual, family, community and world.... The circle (or wheel) embodies the notion of health as harmony or balance in all aspects of one's life.... [Human beings] must be in balance with [their] physical and social environments...in order to live and grow. Imbalance can threaten the conditions that enable the person to reach his or her full potential as a human being."*

*Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,  
Volume 4, "Perspective and Realities"*