

Family

Family life can be a place of refuge and security but for some it is a source of pain and disappointment. Our families absorb many of the stresses and strains from the outside world – and the pressures can boil over. Sometimes a personal problem, particularly in a young person, can overwhelm a family and there seems to be no clear way forward. At other times, changes within the family leave other members confused and angry or hurt.

All families are different, and the ups and downs of family life have a huge effect on children and young people. The love and support children feel from parents and relatives will give them the strength to grow and develop. However, all families go through difficult times and some children and young people can find it hard to get on with parents or siblings.

This can be for a variety of reasons including:

- Different personalities clashing and disagreements over ways of doing things
- Jealousy or fighting between brothers and sisters
- Parents arguing
- Divorce or separation
- New step-parents or step-brothers and sisters
- A parent or relative having mental health problems, disabilities or illness
- A parent or relative having alcohol or drug problems
- Stresses due to unemployment, money or housing problems.
- Domestic violence
- Cultural or generational differences
- The effects of bereavement
- Abuse or neglect

Children and young people often think family problems are their fault, even if nobody has told them this. Changes in the family can unsettle, upset, and make children feel insecure and bad about themselves. They may feel angry, anxious or depressed. These feelings can affect other areas of their lives such as school and friendships.

The **My Changing Family** worksheet is a sentence-completion activity designed to help you verbalise your thoughts and feelings about family changes, such as separation or divorce. This worksheet creates a safe starting point for children who have difficulty discussing their thoughts and feelings, while providing opportunities to move towards other important conversations like "why" and "what next?"

Resources:

Family - Let's Talk Board Game

Family Topic Discussion Questions

Family Top Quiz Questions

My Changing Family

My Family's Changing

Childline – Family Problems

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/home-families/family-relationships/family-relationships/>

Strategies to cope with family stress

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/strategies_to_cope_with_family_stress