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### The Impact Divorce Has On a Family

I, myself, am a product of a broken family. My parents split briefly very early in my toddlerhood, they decided to get back together and try it once more only to have it fall apart once again. My parents separated for good as my elementary school years were coming to an end. We stayed in Miami for several years before my mom remarried and we moved to Jacksonville, Florida.

I struggled a lot with the transition, the one-parent lifestyle had its fair share of low points for me, especially being the oldest. As the oldest child I never had that extra person to confide in, nobody to get advice from, but I made the best of all my struggles. I found encouragement and advice through music and all the tough parts I endured I made sure to keep those from affecting my younger siblings. So I became a trustworthy, role model, father-figure type role for them, and made sure to always be there for each of them.

All in all, this is me and my family's personal take on enduring a divorce and what a blessing it truly was.

With my brother and sister being just 15 and 13 years old, respectively, the direct dialogue of the interview was very muddled, therefore I put together their overall ideas combined with my analysis:

The interview I conducted with my younger brother and sister reminded me of all of the feelings and hardships I endured as I grew up. I was able to relate with all the pros and cons they brought up. Neither of them mentioned anything I hadn't felt or thought of as a child.

Of course, a lot of the exact similarities is attributed to the fact that we come from the same family and have experienced the same issues, yet our personal thoughts cannot be skewed by one another's too strongly and that is where we were similar.

However, they seemed to be much more numb to the circumstances than I was because they were younger while everything was going on. They weren't capable of understanding what the divorce would mean for them as children who were not even 6 years old. They, as well as I, have been raised in a way that leaves them blind to more traditional families or how they function. Single-parent, extremely close knit immediate families feels like the norm to them. This serves as a testament to how greatly our mother raised us. She brought us up in a way that didn't leave us feeling incomplete or disadvantaged.

Here are the highlights of my mom's interview, she is the custodial parent in my case:

How do you think your divorce from my dad brought me and you closer together? and why?

I think the two of us were always going to be close no matter what, but I would say the divorce was an extra force that brought us together. The reason I say that is because when people experience a traumatic situation together, it bonds them. They are forced to rely and help each other; and that is exactly what we did.

How do you think the divorce has changed the dynamics of some of the relationships in our family?

I guess it effected Jasmynes relationship with your father because she was too young to have a relationship with him at the time and the circumstances have not let it develop.

Between the three of you guys, you were always close with Joshua, but your relationship with Jasmine has definitely developed out of the lack of her relationship with your father. You guys have grown a lot closer.

Off on a tangent, she goes on to talk about how the divorce was a blessing in disguise: "It enabled us to live our lives and be ourselves. We no longer had to live with fear in this toxic relationship."

Last thoughts on divorce:

"In some cases a divorce is necessary. It is sad when kids are involved but everyone wants to be the best parent they can possibly be and set their children in the best position for success. It is a fine line to parent the children without feeling guilty of taking the non-custodial parent out of their lives, but sometimes you have to do what you know is best no matter how hard the decision seems to be. No parent wants to feel responsible for taking the second parental relationship out of their child's lives but the joy in seeing their children blossom into great young adults makes up for that guilt and much more.

I actually enjoyed my interview with my mother. It was great to reminisce with her, even if the memories are negative. Since I've moved away for school, the dynamics of our very tight knit bond have shifted. Don't get me wrong, I still talk to her everyday over the phone so our communication is not lacking by any means; but it was nice to have a more serious talk where we recounted how close we used to be and how much of a

great time I had being raised by someone like her. We actually stayed on the phone way after the interview just thinking back for old times sake.

As far as the interview went, my mom continually stressed how it brought us (me and her) closer together. We both believe that enduring these tough times together, and being there to support each other in times of need has had a ton of positive effects on our lives, even if the experiences themselves were living nightmares. I wasn't surprised to here her go on to describe how she felt the divorce change the dynamics of some relationships (e.g. Mine and my mothers is more of a best-friend bond than an authoritative role, or how my relationship with my siblings is more of a father-figure like role). I didn't find it surprising because I felt it was a natural direction for the conversation to veer of to as well as the fact that it has been something I have noticed for years and have tried to understand.

Lastly, my mom continued to spin this negative phase of life to a positive life lesson. Her take was that it opened us to struggles which were humbling experiences. She also feels it helped build character and make me the man I am today.

When I played devils advocate she admitted that it took away from my opportunities in terms of sports and friendships as a young adults; but, personally, I wouldn't have life any other way if I had the chance to start over.

My step-dad's interview was basically divided into two parts, one discussing him as the non-custodial parent and the other half about him becoming step-father:

Non-Custodial Parent

Run me through your initial reaction to being separated from your children by the divorce:

It was completely heartbreaking. It left me devastated. I never imagined that my children would have to grow up without their father like I did. This was the last thing I wanted for my children.

How difficult was it to maintain meaningful relationships with your children even though you didn't see them often?

It is very difficult because every time you see them you have to play catch-up and gain some trust back over the first half of the time you spend with them. It is an obvious disadvantage because there is a level of closeness and comfort that is lacking that comes from seeing them on an everyday basis.

Elaborate on the disadvantage you felt:

"The custodial parent gets to see the children every single day, and that builds up rapport between them. It is hard for me to expect them to see me once every other weekend but still be as open as they would be with an everyday parent. I also have to miss out on the little things, like when they lost a tooth or had a fever, just small events that helps show my care and love for them. It is difficult to show them that with such a distant relationship or over the phone.

Step-father

How hard was fitting in to a new family?

"It was incredibly difficult, way harder than I expected. I thought I was the missing puzzle piece and would just plug right in, but that was not the case whatsoever. My first step was trying to find the role I needed to play, I didn't know where I fit in."

What do you mean "fit in?"

"Well, like I was just saying, the first thing I had to do was find my role in the family. I quickly came to realize that I needed to be trying to pick up their weaknesses, not impose my strengths."

Last thoughts on being a step-father:

"It not as simple as one would assume, but when you have the privilege of being the step father to great kids it is easy to show them love and love them as if they were your own children."

My stepdad's interview was both, the most complicated to conduct, as well as the most enlightening. His personal story is what made it difficult, he is both, a non-custodial parent to his kids as well as a stepfather so my siblings and I. Trying to separate the two roles was the hardest part for me, the part I enjoyed about it was how much I learned. I feel as if I am now closer with my stepdad. He opened up and shared vulnerable parts of his life with me on aspects we have never discussed before. I have gained an greater love for him when he opened my eyes to how much thought he has really put toward my family and I, I could genuinely feel his care and passion coming through the phone.

All in all, I felt like I got a better understanding for my family and who I truly am. I remembered the divorce only through my eyes so getting everyone else's points of view helped me get a more rounded understanding of the impact it had on everyone.