

## I'm in elementary school and it pains me that my parents don't get along

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### Dear Troubleshooter:

I'm a girl in an upper grade of elementary school. My parents don't get along with each other and I want to ask for your advice about their **divorce**.

My father doesn't speak much and only says the bare minimum, such as "good morning." It's like he lives in a different world.

I can't be **rebellious** because I get scared when my father is angry, and so I've never fought with him. I feel like there's this distance between us.

I learned that my father doesn't like my mother anymore. But out of concern for our livelihood, among other reasons, he said they are not going to divorce until my older sister and I are grown up.

It's hard for me to pretend to smile in front of my friends and family every day.

My parents will be together for almost 10 more years until I grow up. Rather than have bad feelings between us, I would prefer they **split up** now.

Is there anything I can do to help them as an elementary school student? Please let me know.

— S, Tokyo

### Vocabulary

**divorce (n.)** – a formal ending of marriage

**rebellious (adj.)** – unwilling to obey rules or follow generally accepted standards of behavior

**to split up (phrasal verb)** – to stop having a relationship with somebody

### Discussion

1. Should the parents continue to live together even though they do not feel love towards each other anymore?
2. What would you say to the girl to comfort her if she told you about her feelings?

### Write your own sentences using the words in the Vocabulary Section.

#### Dear Ms. S:

It must be really hard for you because your parents do not get along. However, there are some things that only they can know about their married life. As a child, what you can do for them is very limited, but why don't you openly express your feelings to your parents, especially your father? If you are not comfortable talking directly to your father, a letter may be a good idea.

Although your father's love for your mother has **faded**, he seems to believe that he still has feelings for his family. At the very least, he still greets you every day and appears to feel responsible for you and your sister's **upbringing**. However, his **perception** is wrong if he thinks

he can offer your family scraps of love and responsibility. Your father needs to realize how painful it is for you to live, feeling no compassion or love from him.

You, on the other hand, need to spend time and use your mind to take care of yourself. Use books, movies and television to learn a lot about the lives and cultures of different people. There are so many things going on in this world, and there are various moments of joy and sorrow. Please try to get to know people who are living life to the best of their abilities in the midst of all those feelings. It may lead you to see the problems you are facing now from a different perspective.

I sincerely hope that you will take care of your own future.

— *Masami Ohinata, university president*

### **Vocabulary**

**to fade (v.)** – to disappear gradually

**upbringing (n.)** – the way a child is cared for and taught how to behave while growing up

**perception (n.)** – the way you think or understand someone or something

### **Discussion**

1. Do you agree or disagree with the given advice?
2. Do you think it would be helpful for the girl to talk to somebody outside her family about her feelings? Why or why not?
3. Have you had a trusted friend in your childhood with whom you could share your worries or secrets?