



# A Quick Guide to **HELPING** FAMILIES *in* CRISIS

**DIVORCE • ADDICTION • DEATH**

**INCLUDING**

Hints & Helps  
Follow-Up Care  
Email/Direct Message Templates  
Care Package Ideas  
Resource Handout

**KIDS' EDITION**



# What is it?

This toolbox resource helps you care for families in crisis. Each section offers you:

- Hints & Helps
- Email/ Direct Message Templates
- Care Package
- Follow Up
- Resources Handout

Times of crisis are difficult and can be life-changing for children. It is a critical time to offer your availability. Leaders often struggle with how to respond, what to do, or even what to say.

There is no perfect answer, approach, or even resource as every child, family, and circumstance is unique. This is important to understand personally. Your children's families do not need your perfectly crafted devotional or your years of experience. They need you to be present.

As leaders, we know the door to unlock healing and hope for those who are struggling is Jesus. We have a unique opportunity in the life of a family to be there in the hard moments. Even families who may not be regularly connecting to your organization may turn to you during moments of crisis.

## How to use it:

Save the file under the folder "Families in Crisis."

Copy/paste the email or direct messages as needed.

Print the Resource Handout for families at church or save and email to families in need.

Email to your volunteers for an online training session.

Host a volunteer training session for families in crisis.

# Divorce

## Hints & Helps

- Seek to understand the situation, circumstance, and history as best you can before responding.
- No matter what you know or discover about the situation, be careful not to take sides.
- Focus on the child first in response and encouragement and then support the parents.
- Seek space to connect with the children in an appropriate setting and time to allow the child/children to talk and process.
- While this is a negative experience for the child/children, seek to remain positive and encouraging.
- All responses and reactions should be age and maturity level appropriate.
- Be willing to listen and speak less as families may need a “listening, non-judgmental ear.”
- Avoid any legal discussions.

## Follow-Up Care

After the initial contact, plan a few check-ins and follow-ups. The first two years are the hardest for the family. There are many ups and downs as children wait to find out which home and parent they will live. Sometimes, divorces are intense and hurtful.

It is important to check in after a month, after a few months, and around the year mark. The ongoing and continual offering of your availability will make the family, and everyone involved, realize you have not forgotten about them. As time moves on, the divorce becomes their “normal,” so focus on their emotional well-being.

## PARENT NOTE/EMAIL

Dear (Insert Parent(s) Name),

This is \_\_\_\_\_, from \_\_\_\_\_. I wanted to reach out this week to let you know I am praying for you and your family. I heard about the difficult time you are experiencing and the decision to seek a divorce.

I know this is a challenging time for your family and your children. I would like you to know that I am here for you. Your family is valued and loved not only by God but also by me. I would love to stop by to pray with you and be a listening ear. If you are more comfortable, you are also welcome to stop by my office.

Additionally, I would like to set up a time, if you agree, to spend time with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert student(s) name). I would love to be someone they can turn to, as it may be helpful to have someone to talk with and process the situation and how they are feeling.

Please know that even in our human moments of hurt like these, we have a healing God present in our pain. I would like to walk alongside your family on the journey towards God's healing.

In Him,

(Insert Leader's Name)

(Insert Contact Information)

## PARENT DIRECT MESSAGE (TEXT/SOCIAL MEDIA)

I want you to know I am praying for you, and I would like to make myself available to you. God is present even as you go through all you are experiencing. *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior, and my God (Psalm 42:5).*

Right now, amid this divorce, it may seem as if you are in chaos as you fight a personal "battle," but God is still the God of Peace. You can find peace and rest in Him. *You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you (Isaiah 26:3).*

I just wanted to send a quick note to say that our church is here for you. While you are experiencing some emotional and personal struggles, I know there may also be difficult financial decisions. Let us know how we can not only pray for you but also help in a practical way. *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).*

To show the family the church cares, create a personal family care package that can be dropped off in person or mailed to the home. Think about the specific family and student as you create this care package.

The key is to think about connections and security as a family goes through a divorce. Come up with things that would allow the parent and child to connect and something that will offer the child a sense of comfort.

## PARENT(S)

- Ask the mom or dad if they need items for a new place. Often divorce means families now need two of everything... one at mom's home and one at dad's. Does the mom need blankets? Does the dad need grilling items?
- A pound of coffee & a mug
- Variety of snacks and drinks
- Movie gift card for a local theatre or a movie rental
- A small box of chocolates
- Gift cards to restaurants
- Gift cards to moving places, such as U-haul, UPS, or Storage Facility to help with packing expenses

## CHILD(REN)

- Ask the mom or dad if their child needs items for the new place. Often divorce means families now need two of their personal things...one at mom's home and one at dad's.
- A comfortable clothing item or blanket
- A bag of their favorite "comfort" snack
- A calming scent candle for their room
- A gift card to enjoy ice cream or coffee

## BOOKS FOR PARENTS

- *Co-Parenting Works!: Helping Your Children Thrive after Divorce* – Daughtry
- *I Don't Want a Divorce* – Clark
- *The Vow that Breaks* – Kniskern
- *Children and Divorce: Helping When Life Interrupts* – Baker
- *Divorce Care: Hope, Help, and Healing During and After Your Divorce* – Grissom
- *The Essential Guide to Children & Separation* – Croly

## BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

- *Dinosaurs Divorce* – Brown
- *My Family is Changing* – Thomas

## RESOURCES (AS OF 2020)

<https://coparentinginternational.com/>

<https://www.collaborativepractice.com/>

<https://www.divorcecare.org/>

<https://soloparentsociety.com/>

<https://smartstepfamilies.com/>

\*These resources and links are provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only. Ministry to Parents bears no responsibility for the content of the external sites, any subsequent links, or the recommended counseling/healing programs.

# Addiction

## Hints & Helps

- Addiction is powerfully destructive in a family's life, especially to children.
- Addictions take on various faces beyond just alcohol and drugs. Addiction to pornography and gambling can be just as damaging to a family.
  - Take time to understand the emotional toll it has taken on the family.
  - Be sensitive to family history, even going back generations.
  - Carefully consider the financial strains the addiction may be putting on a family.
- Addiction starts privately, so you may be hearing about it for the first time.
- Children process and rationalize addiction differently.
  - Children may see a parent's problem as just an "illness."
  - Unbeknownst to parents, children may have witnessed aspects of the addiction.
- Carefully reach out to the family, as unlike other crises, such as death, job loss, or divorce, there is a unique level of embarrassment attached to addiction when it becomes known outside the walls of the home.

## Follow-Up Care

Recovery is a long process. The individual will always be in some state of recovery, so it is important to continue to care, but not make the family feel like the issue is being continually brought back up.

Follow up and continued care is important, as repercussions may continue to affect family members. Keep continued track of the family's children, as your ministry may be a safe place if they have experienced broken trust in their home.

## PARENT NOTE/EMAIL

Greetings (Insert Parent(s) Name),

I wanted to reach out to your family, privately, during this time. This note holds no judgment or agenda. It is a simple gesture to let you know I care about you and your family. Our church is here for you in any form or manner you feel comfortable with at this time.

I know \_\_\_\_\_ (person's name) is in a place of struggle and recovery. The road of recovery is long—not just for them but also for each member of your family.

We have a variety of resources that I would love to share with you. Please know that everything we communicate and anyway we help is entirely private. I seek to honor you, your family, and your children.

With that said, I am open and available to talk and pray with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert child/children's name). I know they may need a trusted friend during this time. Below you will find all of my contact information, so please reach out, and we can determine the best time and way to connect.

Grace and Peace,  
(Insert Leader's Name)  
(Insert Contact Information)

## PARENT DIRECT MESSAGE (TEXT/SOCIAL MEDIA)

Praying for strength and power for your family today. Know that God is in control, and there is nothing beyond His power—even this current struggle. *“No temptation has overtaken you, except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” - I Cor. 10:13*

Life may seem out of control right now, or even under the control of things we don't want. However, God is present in your situation. *“...for God gave us a spirit, not of fear but power and love and self-control.” -II Tim. 1:7*

This may seem like a dark moment. Everything that is unfolding is weighing on you and your family. You are in my prayers today. God is light, and He is going to shine into your life. He will bring His love and power to you. *“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” – Rom. 13:12*

Letting go of our control and the things that we humanly depend on is so hard sometimes. I am here for you and your family to help you come through this struggle. When we give things to God, Satan can no longer be in control. *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.- James 4:7*

To show the family you care, create a personal family care package that can be dropped off in person or mailed to their house. Think about the specific family and children as you create this care package. Focus on items that encourage distraction and busyness, as the family member struggling needs to keep their mind and body busy.

## ENTIRE FAMILY

- Healthy Snacks.
- Water and Juices.
- Outdoor toys/games.
- A gift card to a local fun activity (bowling, miniature golf...)
- Travel book for local sights and activities
- If the family member is in a treatment facility, offer meals with permission of the family.

## BOOKS FOR PARENTS

- *The Heart of Addiction* – Shaw
- *Healing Wounds of Sexual Addiction* – Laaser
- *Anchored: A Devotional for Parents of an Addict* – Bailey
- *Prodigal Daughter: A Family's Brave Journey Through Addiction and Recovery* – Koke
- *Tempted and Tried* – Moore
- *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addiction* – May

## BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

- *My Dad Loves Me, My Dad Has A Disease: A Child's View of Living with Addiction* – Black
- *My Big Sister Takes Drugs* – Vigna
- *Up and Down the Mountain: Helping Kids Deal with Parental Alcoholism* – Higgins
- *Fresh Fables: The Dragon Who Lives at Our House – A Story Of What It Feels Like to Lose Control Of our Life* – Palmore

## RESOURCES (AS OF 2020)

<https://www.celebraterecovery.com>

<https://billandlaurieloke.com/>

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/how-addiction-affects-the-family/>

<https://www.onsiteworkshops.com/>

<https://sagehill.co/counseling/>

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# Death

## Hints & Helps

- Everyone deals with a death in the family in a different way and in their own time. Try to be present and give space for them to move through the bereavement process.
- There are various stages of loss, so know the stages, and be prepared for each one: 1. Denial and Isolation, 2. Anger, 3. Bargaining; 4. Depression; 5. Acceptance.
- Children deal with and understand death differently from adults, so make sure to process a loved one's death in age-appropriate ways.
- Do not try to make the mood lighter or use cliches.
- Seek practical ways to help the family and children after the funeral is over and in the coming months.

## Follow-Up Care

The follow up after a funeral is huge, but it is even more special when you follow up a month or more after the funeral when everyone starts to forget. A phone call, email, or quick text message does not bring back up the loss but instead offers a listening ear when the grief and loss start to settle in.

The late stages of depression often hit families, as the meals, cards, and

encouragements start to fade. Follow up during these times is essential, but often overlooked.

Take note of the date of the passing, and on the first anniversary, reach out to the family and let them know you remembered. You'll never know how much it means to them.

## WHAT "NOT TO SAY" TO A GRIEVING FAMILY

- It will be okay.
- Stay strong.
- You should...
- It will get better.
- They are in a better place.
- I know how you feel.

## PARENT NOTE/EMAIL

Greetings (Insert Parent(s) Name),

I am so sincerely sorry for your loss. I know you are going to truly miss \_\_\_\_\_. They were a huge part of your life and an important member of your family. I know your love for them meant so much to them.

Please know that your church family is here for you. We hope to cover your family in prayer and express our love in the coming days and weeks. We are here to offer you whatever help you need as a family.

I will be attending the services on \_\_\_\_\_ and want to make myself available to your family, but especially to \_\_\_\_\_ (insert child/children's name), on that day. I would also like to set a time in the coming weeks (when you are ready) to pray with you.

You are entirely in God's hands at this moment. I hope He is your comfort and strength during this time.

In Prayer,

(Insert Leader's Name)

(Insert Contact Information)

## PARENT DIRECT MESSAGE (TEXT/SOCIAL MEDIA)

Today, I'm reaching out to express my deepest sympathies as you grieve your loss. I hope you find peace and joy in Christ today, as you look back at their special life and look ahead to our hope in heaven. Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* - John 11:25-26

I know \_\_\_\_\_ really struggled over the last couple of months. I know it was tough on your family to watch them go through it all. While it is heartbreaking at this moment, there is joy in knowing that their temporary struggle is over, and eternity is now theirs. *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* - II Cor. 4:17-18

You are in my prayers today as you continue to grieve. I am here for you and your children. I would love to spend some time with them in the coming weeks or months. It may help to have someone to talk with as they deal with their feelings. *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.* - II Cor. 5:8

Here is a note of encouragement for today! You are in my thoughts! Our team and your church family care for you. Take hope and have hope today because God cares for you and your family. *'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.* - Rev. 21:4

To show the family you care, create a personal family care package that can be dropped off in person or mailed to the house. Think about the specific family and children as you create this care package, which should bring joy and memories to the family. Think of items that will help them celebrate the lost loved one's life and think practically about the long days ahead at the services.

## ENTIRE FAMILY

- With permission of the family, set up a meal train spaced out over every 2-3 days for the weeks and months following the funeral week.
- Ask other church members to offer gift cards for local restaurants and grocery stores.
- Offer rides for grocery pick up and drop off.
- Small journal for the family, to sit down together and write memories and stories of the loved one as they come to them.
- With the family's permission, ask church members to donate to a professional cleaning service to be used sometime throughout the year.
- With the permission of the family, arrange a carpool for school or extra-curricular activities with other families.

## PARENT ITEMS

- A small memory box to place items from the funeral day.
- Ask church members to provide food for the family on the day of the funeral.
- Drinks and snacks to be eaten during the long viewing, memorial, and funeral services.
- Toys, crayons, etc. for families with small children at the funeral.

## CHILD(REN) ITEMS

- Small toys or fidget toys, to be used during the long viewing, memorial, and funeral services.
- Small coloring book or activity book
- Crayons, pencils
- Small bag of candy

## BOOKS FOR PARENTS

- *Amazing Questions Kids Ask about Angels and Heaven* – Multiple Authors
- *Heaven for Kids* – Alcorn
- *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss* – Sittser

## BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

- *Someone I Loved Died* – Tangvald
- *Someday Heaven* – Libby
- *There's A Party In Heaven* – Bower

## RESOURCES (AS OF 2020)

<https://www.griefshare.org/>

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