

Family Under Stress

Directions Read the situation below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Falling Apart

Lee, age fifteen, lives with his parents, Ray and Marge, and younger brother Duane, age twelve. They have always been a close family. Ray works full time. Marge has a part-time cake-decorating business out of their home. The rest of her days are spent taking care of home and family.

When Ray loses his job, things change. Although discouraged, Ray tries for a long time to find another job, but he is unsuccessful. As their income dwindles, the family cuts back on expenses. Marge can not bring in enough money with her cake decorating, so she drops that and gets a full-time job in a department store.

Over time, Ray stops smiling and joking with his family. Instead, he sits all day, watches television, and numbs his feelings with alcohol. His personality changes, and the family hardly recognizes who he has become.

Marge's job pays much less than Ray's old job did, so the family's financial problems increase. Marge is worried and tired. She can not do what she used to for the family, although she tries. Her stress grows. Sometimes she snaps at Lee or Duane for no obvious reason.

Lee worries too. His father's increasing anger scares him. Duane's grades are beginning to slip. Lee feels as though his family is falling apart.

1. Lee's father sometimes says things to Lee that are cruel. It would be easy for Lee to take the words personally and become insecure about his own worth. Why should Lee not think this way? _____

2. Teens who live with an alcoholic often feel as though they have to be careful not to upset the person. As a result, they try to do everything right and to always keep the peace. Why is this behavior harmful? _____

(Continued on next page)

Family Under Stress (Continued)

Activity 39

3. Teens who live with an alcoholic often feel that they must take on many responsibilities in the family. This can be too much of a burden and even take away the alcoholic's sense of responsibility. How could Lee be helpful without taking on more than a teen should have to handle?

4. Lee thinks that he should find a way to solve the family problems. Why is this a troublesome way for him to think? _____

5. Can Lee change what his father has become? Explain. _____

6. When his mother snaps at him, how should Lee respond? _____

7. Lee feels angry inside. How can he relieve some of the stress he feels?

8. How could a close friend be useful to Lee? _____

9. Who are some adults who could talk with Lee about his problems? _____

10. What community resources are available to help Lee deal with his family situation? Do research in your community to help you answer this question. Make your list as comprehensive as possible, and put the information on separate paper.

Separation and Divorce

Directions Imagine that your friend Chris moved to another state, and you are keeping in touch. Reply to each letter from Chris with some useful advice or perspective.

August 4: Mom and Dad have been fighting ever since we moved. Half the time they seem to be fighting about me. Anyway, today they told me that Dad is moving out. Maybe I should not be surprised, but I am. I keep wondering if it is my fault. Maybe there is something I could have done differently. **Chris**

Dear Chris: _____

August 18: Almost every time Mom talks to me, she complains about Dad. I love them both. I do not want to argue with her, but I do not want to agree with her either. If I do not say anything at all, she gets mad at me for not paying attention, or else she says I'm being rude. I have started avoiding her, which does not feel good either. **Chris**

Dear Chris: _____

(Continued on next page)

Separation and Divorce (Continued)

Activity 40

September 5: Dad keeps buying me things. I think it is his way of competing for me, because he can afford them better than Mom can. He has my love anyway; I wish he would not try to buy it this way.

Chris

Dear Chris: _____

September 19: How can I get my parents together again? Everyone is so unhappy; I know that would be the best solution. **Chris**

Dear Chris: _____

October 3: Guess I should not have gotten my hopes up. My parents are going through with the divorce. I feel so alone. I have started to make friends here, but I am embarrassed for them to learn my parents are splitting up. **Chris**

Dear Chris: _____
