

Being a Kid Isn't Easy



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This book is designed for children involved in divorce cases. It should be used as a bridge to ease open communication between adults and children.

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Being a kid isn't easy. That's what Alex thinks. Up until a while ago everything was fine. Alex went to school, rode his bike, read books and played games with his friends. But last year his Mom and Dad started fighting a lot. Sometimes they yell at each other and sometimes they don't talk at all. It's been hard for Alex to be around them. He spends a lot of time in his room so he won't hear them fighting.

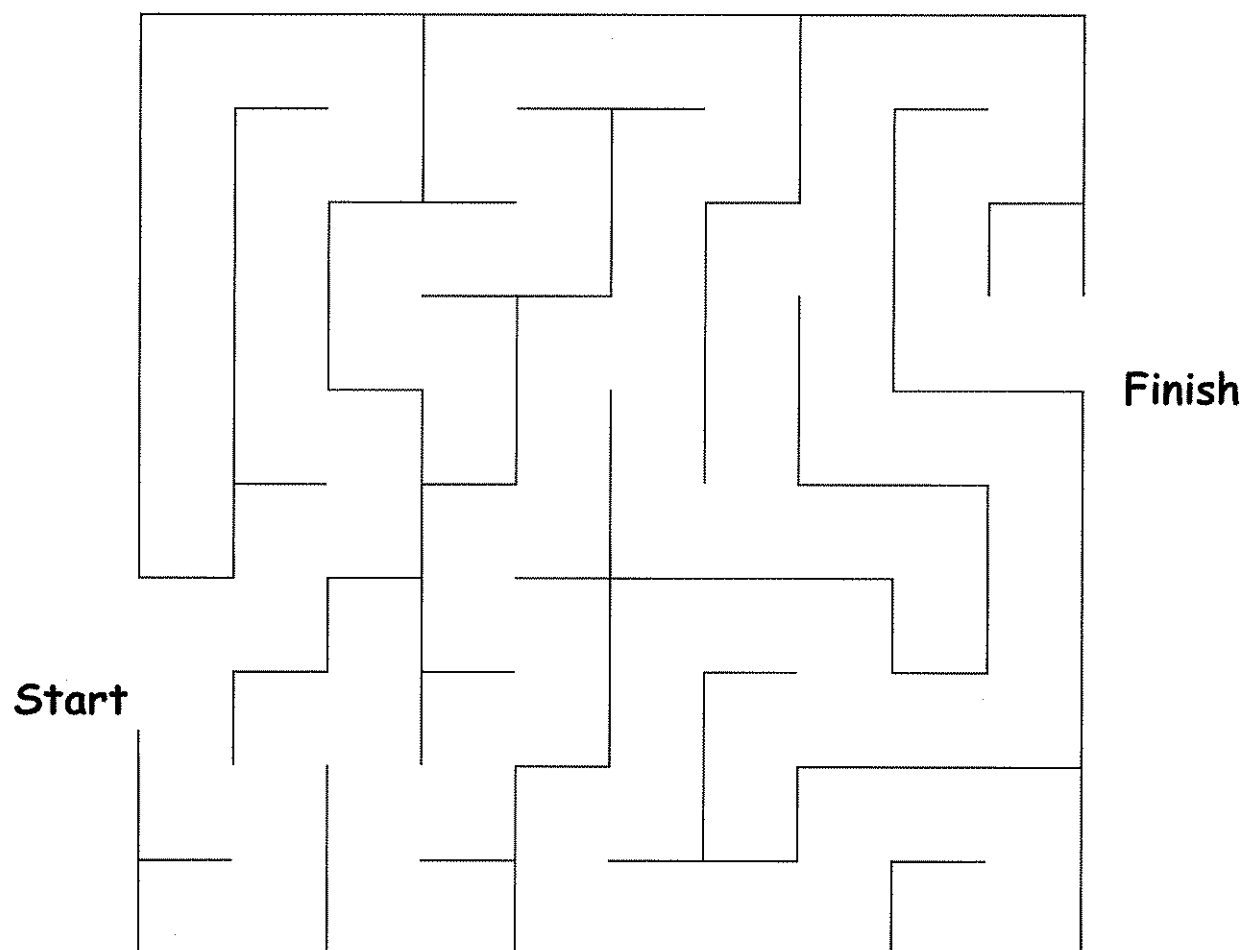


Last week, Alex's Mom and Dad told him that they are going to get a divorce. A divorce is when a Mom and Dad decide to live apart from each other and not be married anymore. Alex wanted to know which parent he would live with. His parents said they

were working that out. For now, Alex is going to live with his Mom and see his Dad on Wednesday nights and every other weekend.

It seems like everything has changed. Alex doesn't know what is going to happen to him.

Alex is surrounded by people who love him and will help him find his way through. Help Alex find his way through the maze below:



Alex has a lot of new and different feelings. Alex feels sad because his Mom and Dad are sad. His Mom cries a lot when she thinks Alex can't hear her. Alex wants to make her happy again, but he doesn't know how.

He also feels if he would have behaved better, his parents would have stayed together. Alex feels like it is his fault they are breaking up. The people around Alex have told him that they love him very much. He did nothing to cause this. Alex still thinks that if maybe had had not been bad, his parents would not be getting a divorce. Alex is going to try to be very good so his parents will get back together.

Alex needs to know that Moms and Dads are adults and they make their own decisions. Children are never the cause or the solution to adult problems. IT IS NEVER THE CHILD'S FAULT. Alex's parents did not separate because he was bad. Being good won't bring his parents back together again.

BREAK THE CODE!

9 20 19 14 5 22 5 18 20 8 5

3 8 9 12 4 19 6 1 21 12 20

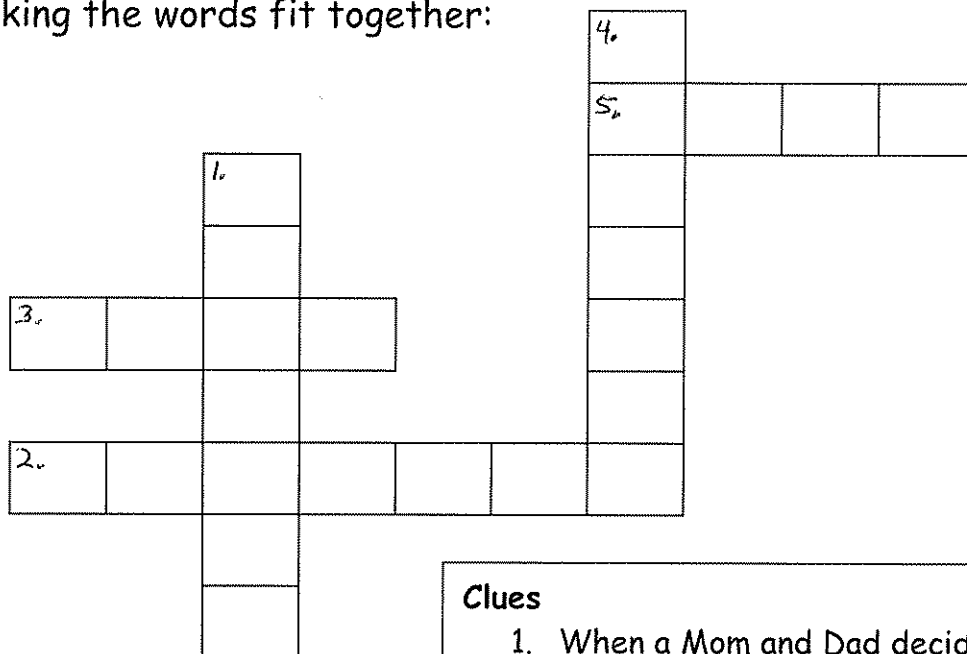
A=1	F=6	K=11	P=16	U=21	Z=26
B=2	G=7	L=12	Q=17	V=22	
C=3	H=8	M=13	R=18	W=23	
D=4	I=9	N=14	S=19	X=24	
E=5	J=10	O=15	T=20	Y=25	

Sometimes when Moms and Dads get a divorce, they have already agreed where the children will live. They know how they will divide everything up. Alex's parents haven't decided this yet. If they cannot agree, they will go to Court and a Judge will decide where Alex should live. We will talk more about that later.

Alex is finding out that it is hard to cope with all the changes in his life. He is used to having his Mom and Dad living with him. Now he has to visit his Dad at his dad's new apartment and live with his Mom most of the time. His Mom and Dad fight each time they see each other.

Alex needs to remember that even though his Mom and Dad aren't getting along or living together, they both love him very much. His parents tell him that a lot.

It will take some time for Alex to put the pieces back together and make everything fit in his life. Solve the puzzle below by making the words fit together:



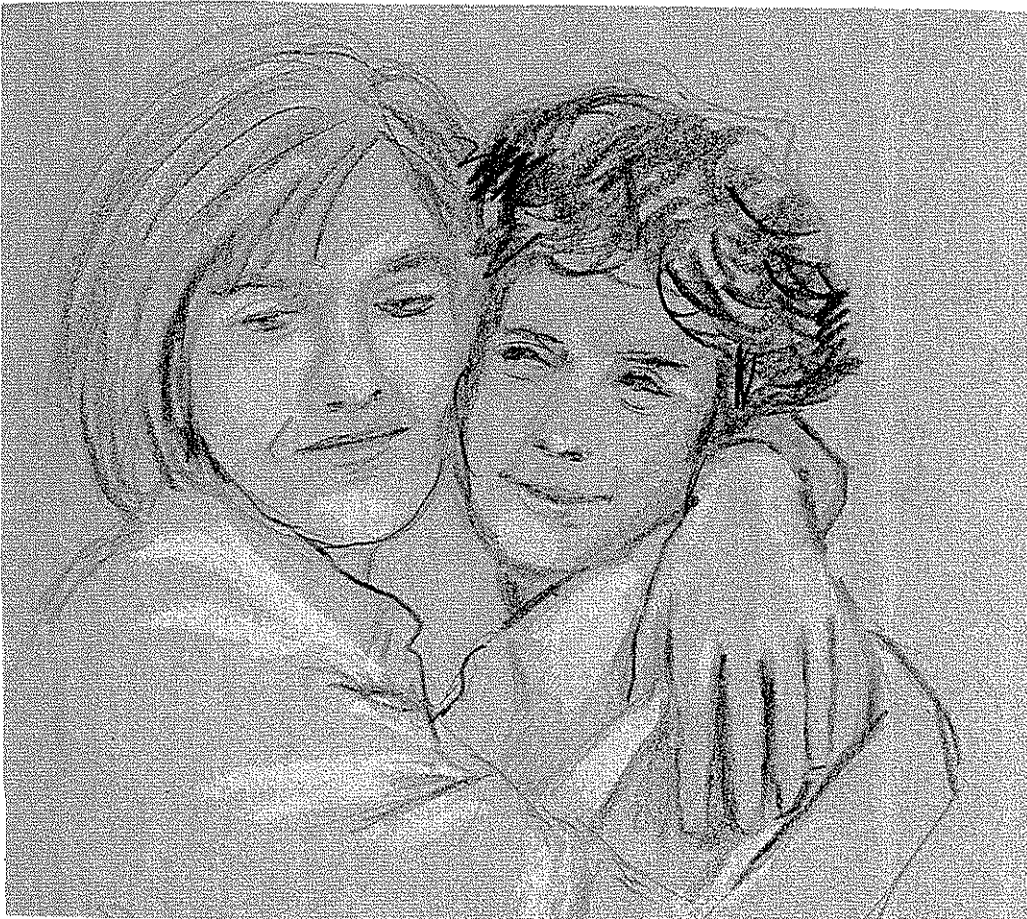
Clues

1. When a Mom and Dad decide to live apart
2. Your Mom and Dad
3. When someone cares for you very much
4. When things become new a different
5. Where you live.

Alex is very angry that his Mom and Dad are getting a divorce. He feels like they have upset his life and he just wants things to go back to the way they were before.

Alex has to learn some new words - custody and visitation. Custody means the agreement his parents will have about who will make decisions in Alex's life and where he will live. He will live part of the time with one of his parents, and have visitation, or visitation, with his other parent.

Alex's Mom and Dad are arguing a lot over custody and visitation. It's hard for Alex because he loves and wants to live with both of them. He doesn't want to hurt either of his parents. He doesn't want to choose one over the other.



Alex is also afraid of what is going to happen to him. Will he have to move and change schools? If he does, will he be able to make new friends?

He is busy thinking about things. It's hard to listen to his teacher in school. Last week Alex was thinking about his parents fighting and worried about what was going to happen in the future. His teacher was telling the class how to do new problems in Math. Alex wasn't listening. All the other kids in his class were doing the new problems, but Alex didn't have a clue what to do.

Alex just got a big, fat F on his Math test. Some of his other grades aren't any better. And Alex isn't just having trouble with his grades in school.



Alex is so angry. He's mad at his parents for not getting along and changing everything. It's hard for Alex to tell his parents that he's mad at them, so he keeps it inside. He doesn't want to talk to his parents about how he is feeling because they are already upset.

Anger has a way of coming out whether you want it to or not. Even though Alex thinks he's keeping his anger inside of him, he finds that he gets mad at his friends more than he used to. He also gets upset easily if things don't go the way he planned.

Alex's friend, Billy, knows that Alex is having trouble at home. Billy found out that it's sometimes hard to be a friend. While Billy and Alex were having lunch one day, Billy took some of Alex's food. They always share their food. This time it made Alex really mad and he punched Billy in the arm. Billy punched him back. They had a big fight in the cafeteria. Alex and Billy have never been in a fight before. They both had to go to the Principal's Office.

Billy talked to his Mom that night. She told him that everything is changing for Alex. Sometimes when you hurt inside, you get angry with people that are not the reason for the pain. Billy understood that Alex wasn't really mad at him for taking his food. The anger he was holding inside burst out at a bad time for Billy.

Billy is a very good friend. The next day at school, he and Alex talked about the fight. They are friends again. Alex has learned he can talk to Billy about his parents' divorce and what is going on in his life. Billy is a good listener.

Alex's teacher, Mrs. Smith, is worried about him. Mrs. Smith has his Mom come to the school to talk about Alex's problems. She tells Alex and his Mom that it is normal for Alex to be angry, scared and worried. She suggests that Alex go to a counselor.

A counselor is someone Alex can talk to about his feelings. He can tell the counselor that he feels torn between his mother and father. He doesn't want to talk to one parent about the other. It's good to have someone outside his family to talk with. The counselor helps him understand that the divorce is not his fault and he doesn't have to pick sides

The counselor also helps Alex talk about his feelings and fears. This helps Alex find a better way to work through his anger without fighting. It also helps him pay attention in school.



Sometimes it's hard to figure out just what you are feeling and what is making you feel that way. Find the words in the puzzle below. When you find a word, mark it off the list. Someday you will be able to erase these feelings about things that are happening in your life right now.

W	M	B	O	F	K	A	N	G	E	R	T	P	V	E
D	L	D	S	C	A	R	E	D	C	W	J	H	I	T
Y	O	M	I	K	E	G	P	N	S	U	R	L	S	M
E	S	R	S	V	C	U	S	T	O	D	Y	P	I	F
L	C	R	A	J	O	E	H	N	E	R	V	O	T	E
L	H	R	D	N	P	R	O	B	L	E	M	S	A	A
I	O	H	N	B	J	P	C	R	W	K	E	S	T	R
N	O	T	E	C	K	W	O	E	M	O	V	R	I	S
G	L	H	S	G	M	B	U	W	K	M	R	P	O	J
F	B	W	S	K	P	G	R	A	D	E	S	R	N	O
R	T	N	F	I	G	H	T	S	R	M	T	E	Y	G

Word List

DIVORCE

PROBLEMS

WORRY

YELLING

COURT

FIGHTS

ARGUE

ANGER

SCHOOL

CUSTODY

SADNESS

VISITATION

GRADES

FEAR

SCARED

Alex's Mom and Dad aren't agreeing on much these days. They have been arguing for a long time about where Alex will live. Sometimes they say bad things about each other. Alex feels caught in the middle. He loves both of his parents and it makes him sad that they are so mad at each other.

Alex's parents are going to Court. The Judge will decide the times Alex will be with each parent.

Alex's Mom and Dad each have a lawyer. The lawyer's job is to show the Judge their client's side of an argument. Alex may have his own lawyer. His lawyer is called a *Guardian ad Litem*. The *Guardian ad Litem's* job is to talk to Alex and give an opinion to the Judge as to what is in Alex's best interest. The *Guardian ad Litem* will speak for Alex in Court.

Alex wonders what Court is like and what a Judge does. Here are some of the people who are in the courtroom and what they do.

Judge: The Judge usually wears a black robe and sits at a big desk in the courtroom. Everyone stands up when the Judge walks into the courtroom. The judge does many things. He is like a referee at a ball game and makes sure everyone plays by the rules. After hearing what Alex's Mom and Dad want, the Judge will make a decision.

Bailiff: You will know the bailiff when you see him or her. The bailiff makes sure people who go to court obey the rules. The bailiff usually wears a uniform like a police officer. The bailiff is a special police officer just for the Court.

Court Reporter: Sometimes a court reporter will be in the courtroom. This is a person who writes down every word that is

said. The court reporter usually sits near the judge and types on a small machine. People in court have to speak slowly and clearly so the court reporter can hear all of the words.

Witnesses: People who come to court to tell what they have seen or heard are called witnesses. When a witness comes to court, they have to raise their hand and make a special promise, called an oath, that they will tell the truth. They take a special seat in the courtroom and the lawyers ask them questions.

The Judge has a very important job. He or she hears lots of people argue all day long. The Judge then has to decide what should happen. Even though Alex's Mom and Dad believe their side is right, the Judge will have to decide.

You be the Judge.

Read the following cases and then make a decision:

1. John finds a kitten in his yard. The kitten has no collar or tags. John feeds the kitten and brings him into his house because it's cold outside. John asks around the neighborhood to see if anyone lost a kitten and no one has. He calls the local newspaper and places an advertisement that says he found a kitten and to call him. No one calls. John names the kitten and takes care of it. Two months later, the kitten is playing in his front yard. A lady, Mary, is walking by. She says what a cute kitten it is and that she had one that looked just like it but ran away over two months ago. She said that she was on vacation and the girl who was looking after the kitten let it out of the house. John admitted that he found the kitten and had asked everyone in the neighborhood about it. Mary said she was on vacation at that time. She didn't read the newspaper and didn't see the ad. John thinks she should have looked for the kitten before now and

made more of an effort to find the kitten. He has taken care of the kitten for two months and feels it is his. Mary said the kitten is hers and she has a picture of it when she brought it home. She wants the kitten back.

If you were the Judge, who would you give the kitten to and why?

2. Daisy is in a store looking at books. She picks up a book that she is thinking of buying. She starts looking at other books, loses track of time and is late to catch her ride. She runs out of the store and then realizes she still has the book and forgot to pay for it. She says she was going back into the store to return the book, but the security guard catches her outside and says she was stealing it. She was headed back towards the store when he caught her. He calls the police. They say she stole the book. Daisy has stolen things from stores before, but not for a long time. She learned her lesson and doesn't steal anymore. Do you think she was going to take the book back to the store or was she stealing it? What would you do to her if you were the Judge?

Unscramble the words.

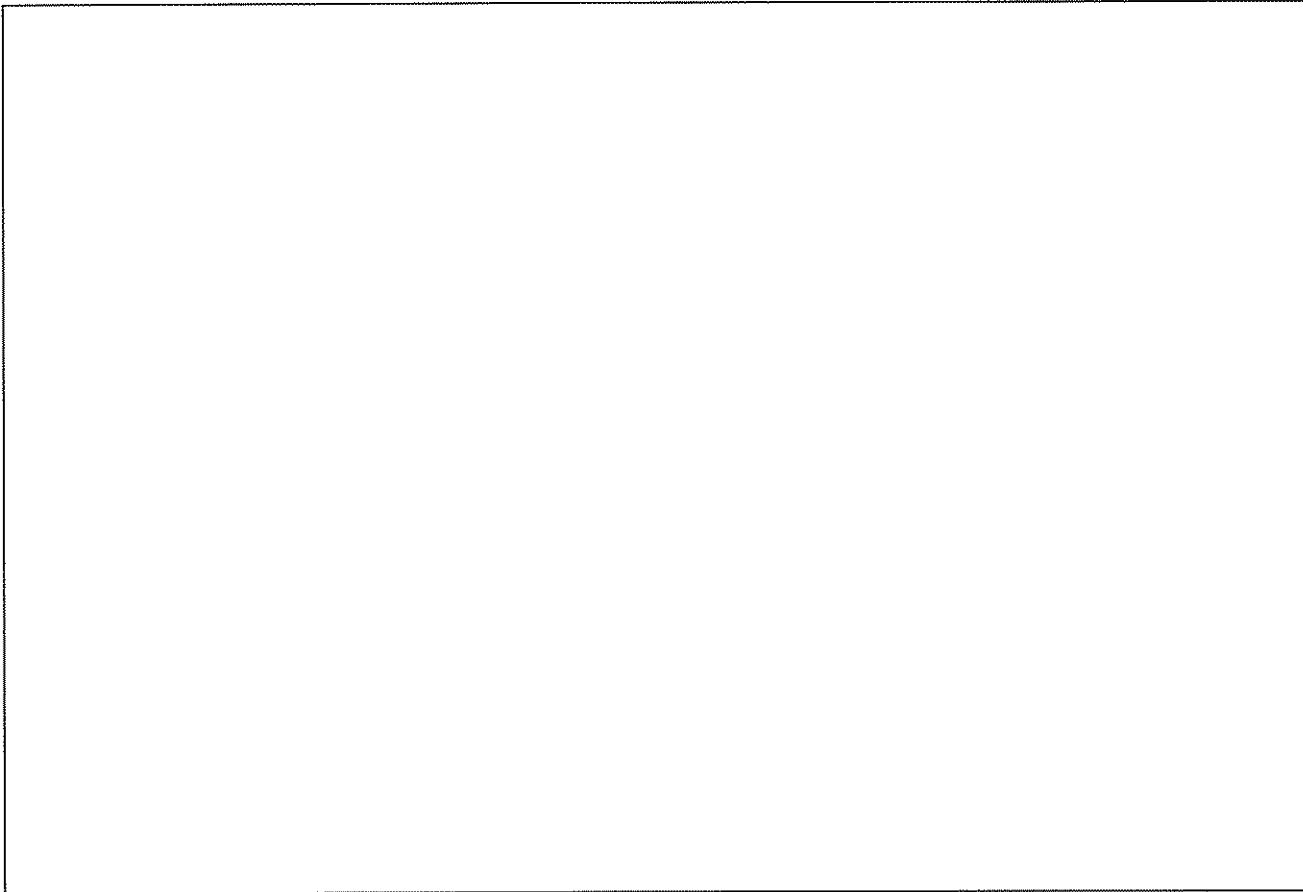
1. PYAHP _____
2. LIDHC _____
3. ARTENP _____
4. RUCOT _____
5. GUJDE _____
6. TORAETYN _____
7. MEOH _____
8. REAC _____

The Judge decided that Alex will live with his Mom during the week and live with his Dad on the weekends. It is going to take a while to get used to seeing his Mom and Dad not living together and having their own homes. Alex is glad that he is staying in the same school and is able to see his friends. He has his own room at his Dad's house and likes spending time there. Sometimes Alex wishes his Mom and Dad would live together again.

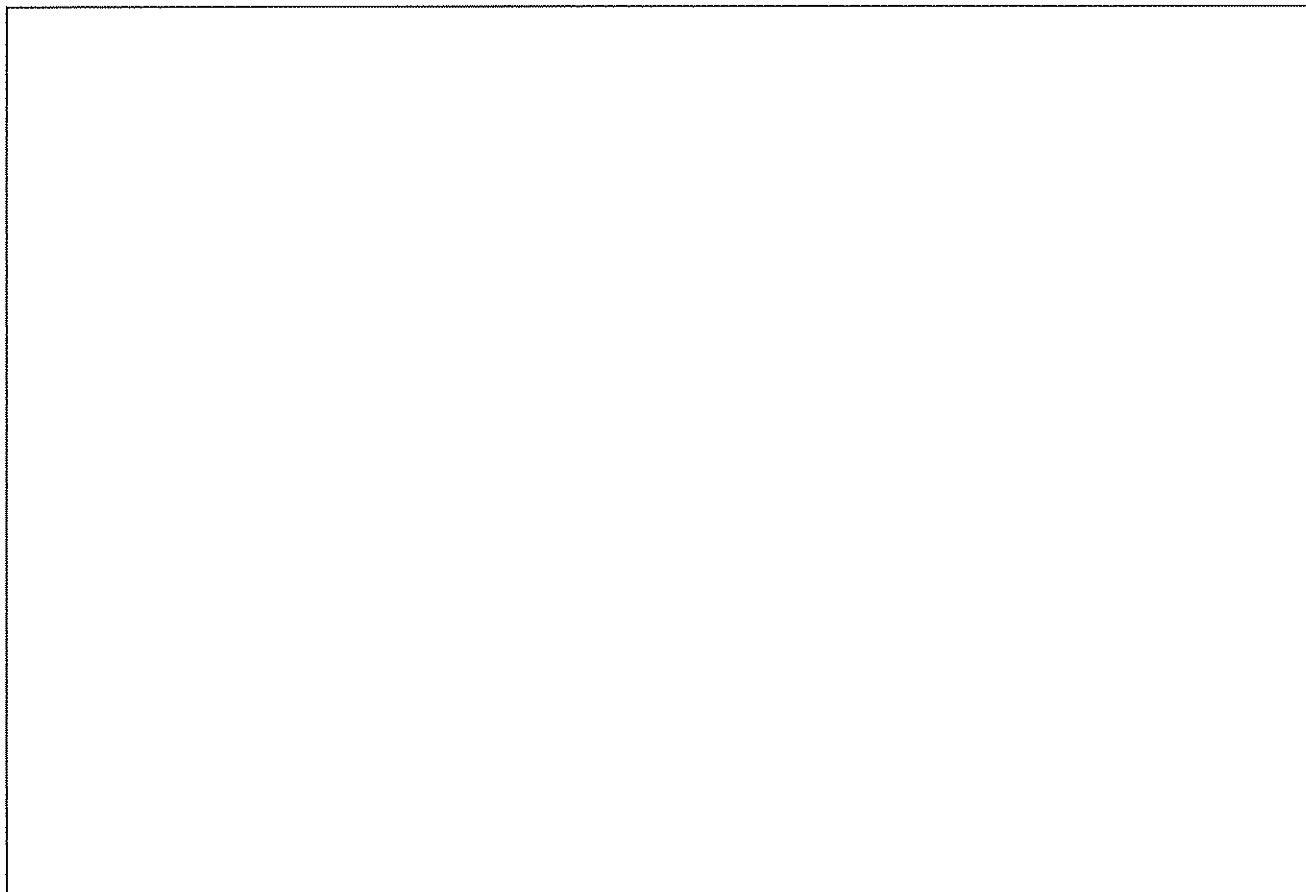
It is normal for Alex to want his Mom and Dad to live together. Most kids who have divorced parents wish for this. The longer Alex sees his Mom and dad living their lives apart from each

other, the easier it is for him to know that they are going to stay apart.

Draw a picture of you at your Mom's house.



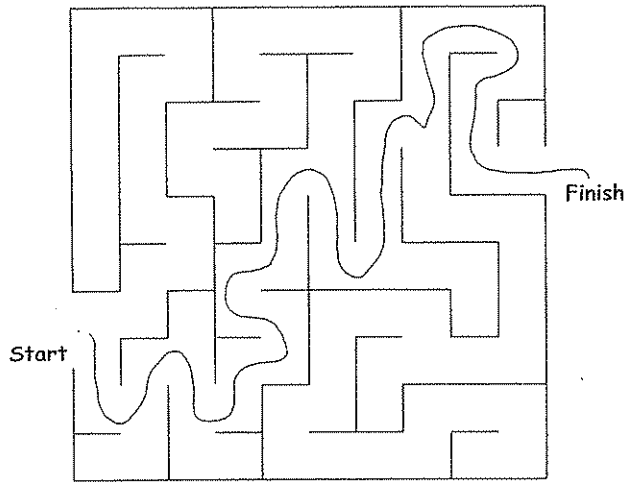
Draw a picture of you at your Dad's house:



See how many words you can make out of:

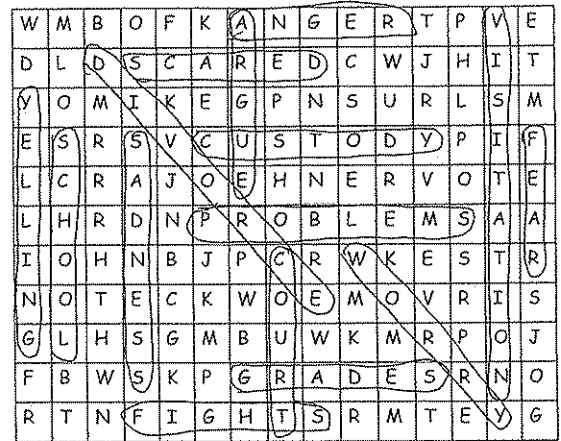
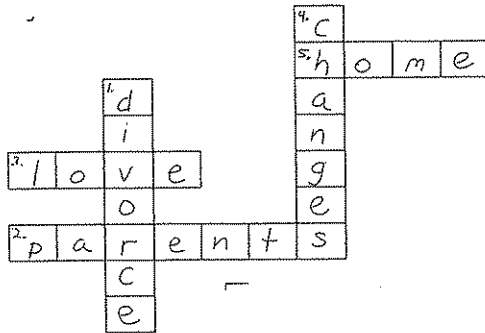
MY FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Puzzle solutions:



·BREAK THE CODE!

1 + . s n e v e r t h e
 9 20 19 14 5 22 5 18 20 8 5
c h i l d s f a u l t
 3 8 9 12 4 19 6 1 21 12 20



Unscramble the words.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. PYAHP | <u>HAPPY</u> |
| 2. LIDHC | <u>CHILD</u> |
| 3. ARTENP | <u>PARENT</u> |
| 4. RUCOT | <u>COURT</u> |
| 5. GUJDE | <u>JUDGE</u> |
| 6. TORAETYN | <u>ATTORNEY</u> |
| 7. MEOH | <u>HOME</u> |
| 8. REAC | <u>CARE</u> |