

## Chinatown Kids' Turn

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"What did I do wrong to cause my parents to not be together?" This is a common question a child may ask him/herself when parents divorce or separate. Self-blame, fear, sadness, anger, loneliness, and confusion surround a child who experiences the separation of his/her parents. There are questions the child wants to ask, but is afraid to. Who should s/he ask? Dad? Mom? How will the adults react or respond? Most times, the child feels more comfortable to just not ask.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 43% of all marriages in the United States have resulted in divorce in the year 2008. Divorce or separation is a tough and challenging situation for all members of the family. It is extremely difficult for children whose voices are not heard and whose parents are not communicating with their children to help them through this process.

According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs in China, 1.12 million couples divorced in 2005, which was a 12% hike from the previous year. The concept of divorce seems to be common for many around the world today, but many children are still being impacted by the effects of divorce if they are not supported by their parents to help them understand and cope with their situation.

In the Chinese culture, many believe that family issues should be dealt with at home and behind closed doors. Exposing family problems to the outside world will bring shame and the loss of face. The question is how are these issues resolved within the home behind these closed doors.

Many of these issues are not dealt with directly. Some people may feel that if we don't talk about it, problems will go away. There are those who feel that children are too young to understand. If they don't bring it up, that means that they are okay. There are also those who feel that if their children still seem to be doing well in school and are studying hard, that is all that matters right now. However, children may not immediately show or know how to express their feelings to adults during these challenging times. Like children, many adults go through tough times during divorce or separation as well. They may also feel angry, depressed, lonely, frustrated, and confused, and don't know what to do.

To assist Chinese American families with children who are experiencing divorce or separation, Cameron House has a program called Chinatown Kids' Turn. It is a partnership between Cameron House and Kids' Turn and is the first educational program in the Bay Area for Chinese Americans. According to Kids' Turn, more than 1 million children suffer from their parents' divorce or separation each year in the United States (2000). This 6-session workshop helps enhance lives through improved communication between the parent(s) and child(ren), teaching them coping skills, and helping them recognize that they are not alone. Cameron House offers a Fall and a Spring series workshop instructed in Cantonese to those who are facing these issues. If you are interested in this service, you may contact Ming at (415) 781-0401 Ext. 128.

In serving the needs of our community, Cameron House's Social Services Ministry also offers other services as well. Our staff is multilingual in Cantonese, English, Mandarin, Shanghainese, and Toisanese, and Vietnamese. Services include:

- Individual and Family Counseling
- Counseling for Gamblers and Family Members
- Domestic Violence Case Management
- Employment Services
- Cantonese Women's Support Group
- Chinese Cancer Support Group
- Food Pantry Eligibility Assessment
- Chinese Family Diabetes Education Project

You may also visit our website for more information.

**[www.cameronhouse.org](http://www.cameronhouse.org)**

Statistic Sources:

<http://www.usattorneylegalservices.com/divorce-statistics.html>

<http://www.divorcereform.org/rates.html>

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