



# The *SPLIT* Film Guide

split

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY ELLEN BRUNO



“Essential viewing for any family navigating a ‘split’...  
a roadmap for adults who want to help, and a portal  
to broach important conversations.”

– GOLD AWARD 2014 Parents’ Choice



Parents’ Choice Award

## for Parents and Professionals

to help kids and parents  
through the ups and downs of divorce

# things to know about wishing

## Kids often want their parents back together again.

Lots of kids wish they could “rewind” to a time when their parents were together. Even if some things get better after the split, many kids still want their parents to be together again.

It’s normal for kids to wish that their parents will get back together. And it’s a wish that may not go away for a very long time.

## Kids often try to fix things.

Kids can also spend a lot of time and imagination looking for ways to fix things and get their parents back together again.

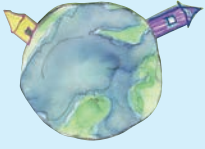
In order to fix things, kids might try to:

- Promise to behave better and be “perfect” children, so that their parents won’t argue.
- Act out or misbehave, so that parents will put aside their issues and focus on them instead.
- Feel sick (stomach aches, headaches, anxiety attacks), so that parents will come together to care for them.
- Create reasons for parents to see each other (for example, by leaving items they need at the other parent’s house or asking if parents can visit each other’s homes).

If you’ve noticed your kids trying to fix things between you and the other parent, help them understand that wishing is normal, but they can’t change what has happened. Kids need to understand that their parents’ choice will probably not change. They also need to know that their parents’ love for them will never change.

.....  
**olivia** *Can we just rewind  
and live in the same house  
and the same old world?*  
.....





## try this... **Make a wishing box.**

Find a box to hold wishes. Decorate the outside of the box with your child, and make a “Wishes” label. Inside, your child can put small objects (stones, sticks, beads, etc.) or strips of paper for each of their wishes.

You or your child can write a description to keep inside the box, perhaps using the following template:

*I am a wishing box and I can hold every one of your wishes. Some of your wishes will come true and some will not, but all of your wishes are real and important. You can add new wishes or take away old ones whenever you like. These are yours to keep forever.*

Once in a while, take out the wishing box and ask your child to tell you about some of her wishes.

## **Let your kids be kids.**

Kids will often try to fix the marriage. When that doesn't work, some kids try to manage the divorce. They may take on adult roles like trying to keep the peace or working out complicated logistics. Remind your children that their job is to be kids, and that your job is to be a parent. And be sure that you look to other adults or professionals when you need help—and not to your kids.

## **Keep the good memories.**

Life before the divorce is a part of who our children are and where their life story began. This is especially important for children who were very young at the time of the divorce. Resist the urge to erase that chapter of their lives.

Talk to your children about the happy times: their birth, how you chose their names, or some of their special “firsts.” Help them put together a photo album or set aside special keepsakes for when they are older.

The good memories will provide a sense of stability and continuity for your children through the many changes ahead.

## talking to **parents** about **wishing**

Some of the kids in *SPLIT* wish that things could go back to the way they were before their parents separated. Even if some things get better after the divorce, kids may still wish for their parents to get together again.

- + Do you think your children feel this way?
- + If so, what have you seen or heard that makes you think this?
- + What could you do or say to help your kids understand that wishing is normal but they can't change what has happened?

Jonah talks about crying on purpose to get his parents back together... but it doesn't work.

- + Have you ever noticed your kids trying to fix things between you and the other parent?
- + What are some ways parents can help kids handle their sad feelings?

Jonah talks about feeling powerless about his parents' divorce, but he says, "It's just not your ball of wax."

- + What do you think Jonah means by this?
- + What can make kids feel powerless when parents split up?
- + How can we help our kids understand that it's not their job to fix the marriage or manage the divorce?

