

**Host:** Psalm 4 verse 8 says, “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”<sup>1</sup>

Wouldn't it be great to have a peaceful day and then go to sleep without any worries? To some degree we all worry, but worry and anxiety can be a bigger problem for a particular group of people.

Welcome to Champions Arise. I'm your host\_\_\_\_\_.

Today our coach, Kent Darcie, returns to discuss the ongoing anxiety and worry adults with divorced parents can experience. If your parents are divorced or you know someone from a broken home, you'll find this series very helpful. Kent is the founder of Adult Children of Divorce Ministries. He has been teaching on the various ways children who went through a divorce carry the effects with them into their adulthood. We hope you'll stay with us as we work to break the cycle of divorce.

### ***Music Theme out***

**Host:** Coach, in Matthew 6 verse 34 Jesus said, “don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.”<sup>2</sup> If we're honest, we *all* have a problem with worrying. What does..... why would....

**Coach:** What makes adults with divorced parents any different than the rest of the people?

**Host:** Yes. That's my question.

**Coach:** It's a fair question. We'll answer that question by examining some big situations that can produce anxiety. Then we'll look at some subtler examples of anxiety-producing situations that are unique to adults with divorced parents.

**Host:** What would be an event that would produce *a lot* of anxiety for an adult child of divorce?

**Coach:** A wedding is a good example. Weddings usually have a bride and a groom, a set of parents for both sides, and assorted relatives and friends. Depending on the culture, there may be a celebration of some kind afterward. In western cultures, there may be a wedding rehearsal and rehearsal dinner.

But, here is where the differences come in. If the bride and groom are from intact families, they may be anxious about everything going well. Or they're afraid of messing up the vows. But, usually, they aren't worrying about their parents.

With adult children of divorce the opposite is true. The primary thing they do worry about are their parents.

- Does the dad or stepdad walk the bride down the aisle?
- Where do the step parents sit in the ceremony?

- Who has greater influence with the decorations, the mom or the step mom?
- If the divorced mom and dad aren't getting along, will they make a scene at the wedding?
- If there is more than one step mom or dad, who gets invited?
- Who is in the family pictures afterward? Do you want mom and dad in the same picture? Do they want to be in the same picture?
- Which parent sits at which table at the reception after the wedding? Because you probably can't put them together.

**Host:** Wow!

**Coach:** I'm just getting started! The list goes on and on. And imagine if the bride and the groom are both from broken homes.

But the real tragedy is this; in the mind of the adult child of divorce, the wedding logistics revolve around the divorced mom and dad, instead of the bride and groom. And we don't talk about it. We don't share our fears or worries—not even with our future spouse. We might think it's silly or not worth discussing since they think there is nothing you can do about it anyway.

And the day, that should be a glorious celebration of a covenant witnessed by God and others, turns into an anxiety-ridden event that they can't wait to finish.

In our full-day seminar we talk about boundaries and pro-active steps that can help lower the anxiety in these situations.

**Host:** I never looked at weddings from that perspective

**Coach:** And funerals, graduations, the birth of a grandchild, are other examples of events that can create anxiety for adults with divorced parents. But these are examples of major bumps. Anxiety and worry can plague the adult child of divorce in the everyday things too.

When Jesus said, don't be anxious, He was telling us not worry about things we can't control or anticipate happening. But when divorce forced its way into our lives, we felt out of control. Also, a lot of things went wrong so we started to expect things to go wrong. As a result, anxiety crept in and never left.

Part of this is due to our unawareness of the anxiety. Most of the time anxiety is not at a high level, like in our wedding example. It hides just below the surface.

Another reason we miss anxiety in young people is because we're looking at the aftermath of the divorce from the adult perspective. We forget that a situation can produce vastly different anxiety levels depending on whether you are looking at it from the adult's point of view or the child's.

To clarify this, let's look at a series of events that happen around a divorce.

**Host:** Ok

**Coach:** Before the divorce, the parent’s anxiety levels are going up and are probably high. There is tension and arguing and a lot of negative things going on. However, at the same time, the child’s anxiety level may be very low. They don’t know about the marriage is strained.

When the divorce happens, everyone’s anxiety level is high. After the divorce, the parent’s level will drop. Sometimes you’ll hear people say, “It’s finally peaceful in the house.” But the child’s anxiety level won’t drop as much because they are seeing things from the child’s point of view and there are a lot of unknowns. And unknowns create anxiety.

And here is where it really gets interesting. When the parent starts dating someone, *their* anxiety level can drop significantly. They are feeling better about themselves. They are getting out, but the child’s anxiety goes up, because they want their parents back together.

When the parent remarries, the level drops even more, and the child’s anxiety level goes *up* even more.

**Host:** So the child of divorce’s anxiety level, depending on the situation, could be the opposite of what you would expect. High when you think it would be low.

**Coach:** Yes. In fact, Judith Wallerstein had research on this. Wallerstein is considered, by many, to be the ultimate authority on the effects of divorce on children. You asked earlier why adult children of divorce are different than everyone else when it comes to anxiety. Here is a major difference she found.

If a person from an intact family is having a tough time in life --- job troubles, or relationship troubles, their anxiety level may go up. But when things turn around --- get a raise at the job, things are good at home, the kids are behaving—the anxiety level goes down.

For the adult child of divorce, when things are tough, their anxiety level may go up. *But*, when things start going well—get the raise, things are good at home—the anxiety level goes up, not down.

**Host:** Goes up? Why would it go up?

**Coach:** Adult child of divorce often have the fear of doom—the fear that things can go bad at any moment. So when things are going well, their anxiety level... goes up...

**Host:** ...because they have more to lose.... [said like he is discovering it as he’s saying it]

**Coach:** That’s right

**Host:** That’s, amazing...and a little depressing.

**Coach:** Well, yes, until you become aware that you’re reacting that way.

Then things can change dramatically. When I read this in Wallerstein's book, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, I thought, "That's me! I'm that way." And I've talked with other adults from broken homes. They react the same way; with a combination of amazement, and recognition. They see it in their own lives.

And for me, my wife saw it. She would say that I never relaxed. But we never connected it to the divorce. Though you'd think it would be obvious.

When you are anxious about keeping your mom and dad happy, anxious about moving, anxious about mom's boyfriends, anxious about step brothers and sisters touching your stuff, anxious over whether your family will have enough food, being anxious becomes normal. And you grow into an anxious adult.

And anxious adults don't relax. On the anxiety scale, we never really get down to zero. Our guard is always up. And God never intended us to live that way. He wants us to trust Him and not worry

Psalms 127 verses 1 and 2 say

"Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted. Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good. It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones."<sup>3</sup>

Proverbs 3 verses 21 through 24 says

"My son, let them not depart from your eyes—Keep sound wisdom and discretion; So they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, And your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet."<sup>4</sup>

When Jesus said, don't worry, this was right after He told us to seek God first. Our trust and faith in God is what helps us overcome anxiety. Philippians 4 verses 6 and 7 explain this.

"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

**Host:** Amen. It's encouraging to know that with some basic information and God's truth, lives can change.

**Coach:** True, but our listeners have the same challenge that the gospel brings. It's a fact that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. But if we don't accept the gift by confessing our sin and asking Him to be our Savior, we don't receive the blessing of having our sins forgiven.

In this series, we've talked about anger, trust issues, father hunger, and anxiety. We've presented ways to overcome these issues and have healthier relationships. But, those with divorced parents have to apply what they've learned. And it's not always easy.

**Host:** But it's worth it.

**Coach:** Absolutely. But, guys tend to be avoiders. We bury our heads, and deny that we may have a problem; even when God uses our spouses to tell us. Unfortunately, collateral damage results when we don't take action. Ignoring issues like anger and anxiety often result in addictions, adultery, and abuse. That's when innocent people like our spouses, kids, or friends get hurt.

But that doesn't have to happen. I encourage our listeners to review this program again. If you are new to this series, go back and listen to the previous programs. And share them with an adult child of divorce you know. Your action could save their marriage, and the marriage of their kids, and their grandkids marriage as well.

### ***Music Theme in***

**HOST:** Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential

We'd like to hear from you. To contact us, or to learn more about this series, go online to [www.championsarise.org](http://www.championsarise.org). and click on the "Breaking the Cycle of Divorce" link. We hope you'll join us next time as we look at another way adults with divorced parents are still being impacted by their parent's divorce.

I'm \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

<sup>1</sup> English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>3</sup> New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> New King James Version (NKJV).

<sup>5</sup> English Standard Version (ESV)