

My Family

Hi, my name is James. This is my story about the changes in my family. It all started about two years ago when I was 12. My big sister Alaya was 16 then and spent lots of time with my little sister Lilly who was 8. Mum works in the Supermarket and so Alaya always took Lilly to and from school. My Dad is the manager of a big cinema and often has to work late. Mum used to stress about this and say that he should put the family first. One night I was on my X-Box in my room and I heard them arguing again.

"I don't know why you think your job is more important than your family. I have the kids all the time. You hardly see them. You need to get another job!" Mum sounded really angry.

"I have always put my family first. I don't want to work long hours, I do it to pay the bills. I've had enough, I'm leaving!" Dad wasn't shouting but I heard the door close. I couldn't believe that Dad would leave us. Next day Dad wasn't around at breakfast and all day I thought about what I had overheard.

Dad's Gone

When we got home from school Mum sat us down together and told us that Dad had left. Alaya was mad, "How could you, don't you think about us?"



"We are thinking of you. You know we haven't been getting on. Things will be much the same. You can still see Dad and we will still live here. I might need to work longer hours but we will manage."

"Where has Daddy gone?" asked Lilly.

"He's staying with his friend," answered Mum.

Alaya stormed upstairs, she was upset. I felt upset but I pretended I didn't care.

Dad came in and said, "Don't worry. We still both love you. It won't make any difference to that."

I didn't believe him but I didn't say anything.

School

Next morning Lilly was upset and Mum and Alaya took her to school. I felt angry and left out. I didn't want to play 'footie'

with my mates at lunchtime and they kept asking "What's the matter, Misery Guts?" I was mad at that and kicked out hitting my mates leg.

Mr Fellowes, the P.E teacher saw it, "James! Come with me. You can have a lunchtime detention!"

I followed him into school, tears starting in my eyes. "James, why don't you tell me what is the matter?"

Mr Fellowes sounded kind and I needed to talk. I told him what had happened. He seemed to understand but said I had to learn some ways of dealing with my anger. He said



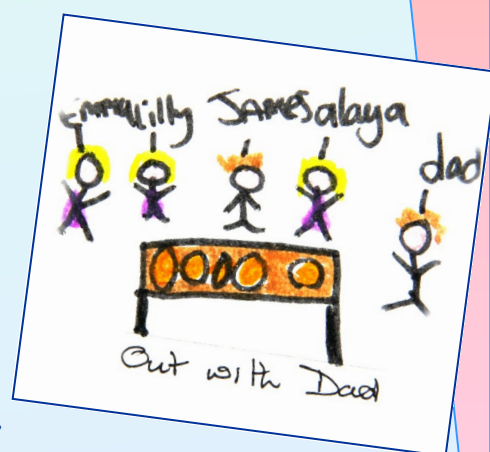
that it wasn't my fault and that it was adult business. He made me do some breathing exercises, one was called the Woodcutter. You have to stand up tall, raise your arms up and breathe in. Then bring your arms right down as though you are chopping a log and let you breath out with a whoosh! I did it ten times and felt better. He said that he often does breathing exercises because he is a sportsman. He taught me another one that you can do anywhere, just by breathing slowly in counting and then slowly out again. In the end it didn't feel like a detention. I trusted him and he understood.

Out with Dad

Dad called in at the house to see us and promised that he was going to take us on a special outing. Alaya was still cross with him and said he just felt guilty for leaving. Lilly thought it sounded like fun. I just wanted to spend more time with Dad. The day came at last and Dad announced he was taking us to a theme park. Mum fussed over us and said she would keep her mobile on so we could ring if there was a problem.

It was great fun, we went on loads of rides and Dad really spoiled us, he said we were going for a special meal before he took us home.

Special it wasn't! When we got to the restaurant we were surprised when Dad took us to a table where a woman was sitting.



"This is Emma. She is my friend and she wanted to meet you. We work together."

"We don't want to meet her!" Alaya had enjoyed her day but was angry that Dad thought that he could share 'our time' with Emma. "I'm ringing Mum. We are leaving."

When Mum picked us up she was cross with Dad. She bundled us into the car and drove home. She sent us into the garden so she could talk to Alaya. I heard her later on the phone saying, "I'm not letting you take my children out with a stranger."



Sorting It

After that we didn't see Dad for ages. When I rang him he made excuses but said he loved us and would work something out. I heard Mum telling Nan that he wouldn't pay the bills if he couldn't see us. Nan told us that Mum and Dad were going to see somebody who would help them sort things out properly so that we could see Dad again and he would give Mum money for the bills.

When she came back from seeing the person she was smiling.

"That wasn't too bad. We have drawn up an agreement about Dad paying me and you will spend every other weekend with him. He has got a flat and has promised that he will spend his time with you without Emma being there." I was pleased about that because I didn't want to share Dad.



Sorted

Time has passed, it all seems so long ago. Dad and Mum got divorced. Lilly and I still spend every other weekend with Dad. Alaya sometimes doesn't come because

she is studying for her A levels and wants to see her friends. At school I work really hard at PE. Mr Fellowes looked out for me after I got into the fight and he got me to join some of the after school sports clubs. He says I have talent.

Mum got us a dog called Sammy. He's great, we all walk him in the park after tea. He's really friendly with another dog called Scruffy. Scruffy's owner Bob walks with us. He comes for tea sometimes and it's a laugh! Sammy and Alaya never stop chasing round. I think Bob is Mum's special friend. We don't mind because he's our friend too.

Alaya asked Mum outright if they were an 'item.' Mum just said "I'm taking things slowly and enjoying having a friend. Why change what is working." I'm pleased she isn't mad at Dad anymore.

Latest News

Last week when we were all at Dad's he said he had something special to ask us. I think Alaya and I had an idea what it was because Dad was still seeing Emma. He always

asked us if he wanted to meet up with her when we were staying. Mum didn't seem to mind.

"What would you say if I asked Emma to marry me?"

"Can I be a bridesmaid?" Lilly was jumping up and down with excitement.

Alaya spoke for all of us when she said "Dad we are pleased if it makes you happy. Mum has moved on. Will you invite her to the wedding?"

"Yes, Lilly, if Emma says yes. I will invite your Mum but it will be her decision whether she comes. I would like all of you youngsters there. Are you O.K with this James?"

"Fine. Everything's fine with me" and it was.

I wanted to tell you my story because when you are in the middle of grown ups rows it is hard to believe that things can work out. Life is never perfect but there is lots to look forward to now. **THE END**

Do breathing exercises
to relax yourself!



Try visualisation exercises
to get rid of stress!