

## **CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: LOST IN THE SHUFFLE**

Divorce affects more than just a husband and wife. Seventy five percent of all divorces occur in families with children. The 1990 statistics from the US Census Bureau indicated that, by the time they are 18 years old, 70% of white children and 94% of African Americans born in 1980 will live with only one parent. These are alarming statistics,

No matter how much parents try to hide their marital conflicts, children sense the tension and may act out reactions to it. Once a divorce is announced to children, their reactions go through much the same stages as if a parent had died. Initially, they may deny the reality of the divorce, insisting that the separation will only be temporary. Denial is then followed by anger, which may be directed at one or both parents, or even turned inwards. The third stage, depression, is marked by fear of abandonment, ridicule from friends and classmates, or lifelong misery. Conscious acceptance of the changes the divorce will bring marks the final step. However, new research indicates that children sometimes harbor the unconscious hope, long after the divorce is final, that their parents will reconcile.

Temperament, experience and developmental