

Tips for Separating Parents

Separation can be a difficult time for families for many reasons and it takes time to adjust and adapt to. Decisions about the future can be challenging when our emotions are fragile. Coping as an adult may feel difficult at and there are your children's emotions to consider too. There are many ways of helping children through this transitional period and we would like to share some with you that may help with communication between you and your children.

'The kids don't know yet, how can we tell them..?' Children need to know what is happening and how this will affect them. They do not need adult information but need to understand that changes may be happening and that their parents are working together to make sure everyone is happy.

'I don't know what to say, it's the other parent's fault...' Children need to know that you are still in control. They look to you as their role models so often, how you handle challenges in life, is how they will also respond when things are difficult for them. Hearing negative comments or placing blame on the other parent is very difficult for a child no matter their age. This is because they are made up from both of you. Often in a child's mind, 'If you don't like that part of that parent, then you don't like/love that part of me.' This can have a negative impact on their self-esteem and knock their confidence in the present time and future.

'I just can't be around the other parent. I am so upset and angry.' Not fighting in front of the children is challenging. Equally, silence is as much of a conflict as yelling at one another. Conflict is an important part of adverse outcomes, particularly behavioural ones in later life.

'So what do I do..?' You are only human and you have emotions. There is nothing wrong with talking about those emotions as children have them too. It may be helpful to talk to your child/ren about how you are feeling but what is **really important**, is that we tell them it is going to get better soon and that both parents are working together to make sure they are all happy with the changes being made.

'I want to be honest with my children, so I will tell them what is happening and why' Be careful with the information you provide your children. We often feel that our children are very intelligent so they understand or can cope with what we are telling them. Ask yourself the question 'What will my telling them this information achieve? Does it make them turn against the other parent? Does it make them more likely to side with you? Is the information actually benefitting the child or is it benefitting you?' Children in most cases find it very difficult to choose between their parents and this type of conflict can often cause inner conflict for the child. They will feel a need to protect either parent and will often say what they think the parent in their presence needs to hear.

Relate promotes healthy relationships and is there to support you when relationships change. Relate is a registered charity and has staff that wholly support helping you move forward from where you are now. We offer Separated Parenting Information Programme courses (funded spaces available) as well as family counselling and mediation

Contact: office@relate-bournemouth.org.uk or call 01202 311231 to book on a course or for further information.
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