

## Advice for parents who are separating

When you are preparing to talk to your children about separation, it can help to bear these principles in mind:

- Prepare carefully – rehearse what you’re going to say.
- Talk to the other parent and agree an approach if possible.
- Think about how it will affect the child(ren) – when, where and how will they see each parent?
- Think about what the children might ask and how you might answer.

Important messages for children to hear:

- It’s not your fault.
- We’re still your parents – we still feel the same way about you.
- We’ll work together to help you through this (if possible).
- Feelings are ok – it’s good to talk about them.

A lot of research has been done about the impacts of separation and divorce on children. Many adapt well to the changed circumstances – but they need your help.

## What can help children

- Talking to your children about what’s happening.
- Listening to their concerns, but being clear that the adults make the decisions.
- Giving them your attention, at least as much as you did before.
- Being consistent about arrangements for them, if you can.
- Remembering they love you both.
- Being honest with them about what it and isn’t possible.
- Trying to put the children first.
- Telling the school what’s happening.
- Supporting the children’s relationship with the other parent as best you can. Avoid criticising the other parent to the children.
- Trying to communicate with the other parent so you can make decisions for the children together.
- Helping children to maintain friendships and other important relationships (e.g. grandparents, extended family).

## What can harm children

- Children are afraid of conflict. Ongoing conflict makes it hard for them to cope with change.
- Making them feel bad about the other parent, or that the situation is their fault.
- Losing relationships with those who are important to them.
- Being caught between parents or acting as a ‘go between’.