



GUIDE FOR PARENTS WHO ARE SEPARATING

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING
YOUR CHILD AND THEIR
WELLBEING

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COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND HONESTLY WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT THE SEPARATION IN AN AGE-APPROPRIATE MANNER

- **Provide age-appropriate explanations:** Tailor your explanations about the separation to your child's age and level of understanding. Use simple language and avoid sharing details that may be too complex or upsetting for them. Reassure them that they are loved and that both parents will continue to care for them.
- **Avoid negative talk about the other parent:** While discussing the separation with your child, refrain from speaking negatively about the other parent. Negative comments can confuse and upset children, causing them unnecessary emotional distress.
- **Avoid using your child as a messenger:** Do not involve your child in communication or conflicts between you and the other parent. Using your child as a messenger or mediator can place them in an uncomfortable position and create unnecessary stress.

REASSURE YOUR CHILD THAT THE SEPARATION IS NOT THEIR FAULT AND THAT BOTH PARENTS STILL LOVE THEM

- **Create a safe space for communication:** Encourage your child to express their feelings and concerns about the separation openly. Let them know that it's okay to feel sad, confused, or angry and that you are there to listen and support them.
- **Reinforce love and support:** Remind your child frequently that the separation is not their fault. Assure them that both parents still love them unconditionally, regardless of the changes happening in the family structure. Emphasize that the separation is an adult decision and does not reflect any shortcomings on their part.

MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY AND ROUTINE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE STABILITY FOR YOUR CHILD

- **Establish predictable routines:** Structure your child's daily activities, such as mealtimes, bedtime, and homework, to provide a sense of stability and security. Consistent routines help children feel safe and grounded amidst the changes brought about by the separation.
- **Coordinate co-parenting schedules:** Work together with the other parent to create a consistent and reliable schedule for visitation, holidays, and special occasions. Consistency in co-parenting arrangements helps minimize disruptions and confusion for your child.
- **Maintain consistent rules and boundaries:** Collaborate with the other parent to establish and enforce consistent rules and boundaries across both households. Consistency in parenting practices helps children feel secure and understand what is expected of them, regardless of where they are staying.

BE PATIENT AND UNDERSTANDING AS YOUR CHILD ADJUSTS TO THE CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE SEPARATION

- **Acknowledge the adjustment period:** Understand that the process of adapting to the changes brought about by the separation takes time. Your child may experience a range of emotions and behaviours as they navigate this transition, and it's essential to be patient and supportive throughout.
- **Provide reassurance and stability:** Offer your child reassurance that they are not alone in this process and that you are there to support them every step of the way. Keep up with regular activities as a way of providing a sense of "sameness" even when other things are changing.

LISTEN ACTIVELY TO YOUR CHILD'S THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND CONCERNs WITHOUT JUDGMENT

- **Practice active listening:** When your child opens up about their emotions or concerns regarding the separation, give them your full attention. Maintain eye contact, nod to show understanding, and avoid interrupting them. This demonstrates that you value their feelings and perspective.
- **Validate their emotions:** Acknowledge and validate your child's feelings, even if you don't fully understand or agree with them. Let them know that it's normal to feel a range of emotions during challenging times and that their feelings are valid and important.
- **Offer support and empathy:** Show empathy and support by offering comforting words, hugs, or gestures of affection. Reassure your child that you are there for them and that you will do your best to help them navigate through the difficulties of the separation.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILD IF THEY ARE STRUGGLING TO COPE WITH THE SEPARATION

- **Recognise signs of distress:** Be attentive to changes in your child's behaviour, mood, or academic performance that may indicate they are having difficulty coping with the separation. Signs of distress can include withdrawal, aggression, low mood, or academic decline.
- **Consult a psychologist or counsellor:** If you notice signs of distress or if your child expresses significant emotional struggles related to the separation, consider seeking professional support from a psychologist or counsellor who has a special interest in working with children and families. A qualified mental health professional can provide your child with coping strategies and emotional support tailored to their needs.

Separation is a difficult process You don't have to do it alone.

Reach out for support to those who care
about you and your child

And if you need professional support, get in
touch with us

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