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How do we tell the children?

For parents who are separating

What do you say?

When you tell the children that you have decided to separate it is important to consider what will be the best time to do this. Take account of their age, level of understanding and how you are going to manage the situation afterwards:

- Think through and discuss beforehand what you will say. Try not to use any words which indicate blame or criticism of your partner.
- Ideally, you should both be together when you tell the children. It's important to tell all the children at the same time so that one child does not hear about it from their sibling.
- Children need to know why you are separating and how things will change for them and the family.

Most of all they need your love and assurances. It is important they know it's not their fault you are separating.

How can you help them?

- Each child's needs are different; they all need their parents' support and understanding to cope with change.
- Make sure you are 'available' for your children even though you may be going through a painful situation yourself.
- Consider your children's feelings and take account of their needs and wishes when you make decisions.
- Where possible continue existing routines. This helps children feel more secure and able to cope with changes.
- Children will have lots of questions. Be patient and reassuring; ask how they feel and if they have any worries. For example, children could be very worried about where a family pet is going to live. This may not have occurred to parents as a problem.





- Children need to express their feelings. These can be shown outwardly or they may become quiet, withdrawn or clingy. Try to appreciate how they may be feeling and encourage them to express themselves. It may help you and your children to talk to somebody independently, perhaps with a **relate** counsellor.
- Avoid saying or doing things that will make your children feel torn between both parents and that they have to take sides.
- Don't avoid talking about your partner, but try to keep any negative feelings you may have out of your discussions. They are still your child's Dad or Mum.

Stick to arrangements, build trust and don't use the children to get back at each other. Keep telling and showing your children that they are loved.



relate Lincolnshire
Tel: 0845 6046206
www.relate-lincs.co.uk

Gingerbread
Tel: 0808 8020925
www.gingerbread.org.uk

Association of Shared Parenting
Tel: 01789 751157
www.sharedparenting.f9.co.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service
Tel: 0800 616101
www.nyas.net

Parentline Plus
Tel: 0808 8002222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

ChildLine
Tel: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Families Need Fathers
Tel: 0300 0300363
www.fnf.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre
Tel: 0808 8020008
www.childrenslegalcentre.com

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www.separating-parents.org.uk

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