This tipsheet was designed to encourage parents to focus on their children during separation and divorce, and protect them from their own adult issues and conflict.

How should I communicate the news to my children that their Mum/Dad and I have decided to separate?

• Choose a time and place to speak with your children carefully.
• Make it clear that you and their other parent are still their Mum and Dad and that this won’t change.
• Let them know your arrangements for moving, but avoid blaming or despairing language.
• Be ready to listen to any questions or concerns.

How do I reassure my children when I’m feeling upset or worried?

• Acknowledge their concerns, and how uncertain or “wobbly” people can feel during times of change.
• Invite them to come to you whenever they need a hug or someone to talk to.

Is it ok to let my child know how angry or anxious I am?

• It is fine to let your children know that you are feeling sad or upset, but they also need reassurance that you are able to recover from strong emotions.
• If you are having difficulty coping with intense emotions, it is better to talk with other adults, than vent with your child/ren.
• Let your friends and family know that you are trying not to talk to your children about adult issues and ask for their support with that.
• If you are having ongoing difficulties managing your emotions, seek professional advice.

My child/ren’s Dad/Mum has never done much “hands-on” care of our child/ren. How can I let him/know what they need, when I am not around?

• Many parents who have not been “hands-on” before learn these skills after divorce as circumstances change.
• Do your best to keep communicating, so that either parent can ask the other for advice or support without fear of judgement.
• Use a communication book to support each other in daily rituals, and share things that are working well.
• Children manage their parents’ differences well, particularly if parents don’t argue about them.
I am worried that my child will be neglected or treated harshly at her mother/father’s home.

- The fact that you no longer trust your former partner does not necessarily mean that s/he is untrustworthy as a parent.
- Notice when you are letting your pain or resentment colour your perspective.
- If you still have concerns for your child’s well-being, you will need to find a parenting agency or organization to assist you in addressing your particular concern more directly.

Should I let my child know how worried I am about our finances?

- Remember that finance is an adult issue.
- Expressing your concerns about money too often, affects children’s sense of security and stability.
- Try not to express your anxiety about money as a criticism of their other parent.
- Each time your child sees you working through your emotions, and steadying yourself, s/he is being reassured that you and s/he will be ok.

How can I make changeovers between my former partner and I less traumatic for my child/ren?

- Take time to prepare yourself. Your children need you to be as calm and courteous as possible.
- Changeovers are not the time to express your disapproval of your former partner.
- Your children are letting one of you go, as they embrace the other. Keep your focus on them, and the mixed feelings they are likely to be having.
- Keep change-overs brief, imagining for that short time, that your former partner is a colleague or acquaintance.

Can you suggest anything to make our divorce process less traumatic for our children?

- Remember that mediators are trained to assist you to avoid a long and adversarial court process wherever possible.
- Be aware of how much time, money and energy you are spending fighting with your partner. Consider ways you can preserve these resources to build a better tomorrow for you and your children.

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