

Moving on after DA/DV

It can be very difficult for parents to explain to children why they have left a relationship following domestic abuse. Your children may have witnessed or been a victim of the abuse themselves, and need help and support to move on from this.

Equally, your children may not be aware of the abuse you have experienced and you may be concerned about what to tell them and how this may affect their relationship with their other parent.

The organisations below offer services tailored to children or can help parents to support their children.

Childline 0800 1111 Childline provides confidential support, counselling and information on a range of issues to children and young people. Services can be accessed by phone, instant messenger, and email.

NSPCC 0808 800 5000 Information for parents and carers supporting children who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence.

The Hideout A website for children and young people to help them understand domestic abuse and explain how to take action if it is happening to them or to a family member.

Managing Challenging Behaviour

If your child displays challenging behaviour there are extra demands on your time and energy. Parenting a child with challenging behaviour can bring up all sorts of issues and you may need some extra support.

If you have friends who are also parents, try to find out how they are dealing with challenging behaviour and what their tips are. You could speak to an organisation such as Family Lives, who offer support and advice on a range of parenting issues, including challenging behaviour.

If your child seems troubled by something but is not telling you, it could help to talk to someone else. Sometimes children are willing to confide in another adult. This could be a relative, family friend, teacher or there is also the option of a mentor. A mentor is another adult that a child feels safe with, either a family member or someone from a professional registered mentoring organisation.

You may find one of the organisations below useful:

Family Lives 0808 800 2222 Provides information, advice and support for parents on a range of parenting issues including discipline, living with a teenager, relationships, school, bullying and more. The website includes informational articles, blogs, live chat, and confidential email support.

Young Minds 0808 802 5544 Provides a telephone helpline service for parents concerned about their child's behaviour or mental health. The website has resources for both parents and young people, including a parent's survival guide.



Separation and Divorce and Advice



Tel: 01245 354605

Melbourne Avenue
Chelmsford
Essex

If you have recently split up with or divorced from your partner, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Children are a life-long commitment and all parents, whether separated or together, should aim to work in partnership to provide a safe and loving environment.

Children's development will benefit from both parents finding common ground; discover how parenting plans, co-parenting and shared childcare may help.

It might be helpful if you can:

- ◆ Accept that your ex-partner is still a parent and has an important role in your child's life and it's best to try shared parenting as long as it is safe.
- ◆ If you can't agree and end up going to court, the judge will look to try to involve both parents in the child's life, with a shared parenting arrangement that is best for the child.
- ◆ The judge will also expect you and your partner to think about how family mediation could help.

Shared parenting is a collaborative arrangement after divorce or separation in which both parents have the right and responsibility of being actively involved in the raising of their child or children.

- ◆ Try to remain focused on the needs of your child rather than your 'right' as a parent.
- ◆ A parenting-plan can be a useful tool to help you focus on the needs of your child and give you the opportunity to think through their needs.
- ◆ Focus on building a business-like relationship with your former partner when making arrangements for the children. A family mediator can help you with this.
- ◆ Don't have adult discussions in front of the children, particularly if you are finding it hard to agree.

What to avoid

Children are usually very loyal and trusting so it is important to look at the ways in which you behave with them to make sure you are not abusing their loyalty and trust. Here are some of the subtle ways in which parents can take advantage of their children.

'Messenger' – using your children as messengers between the two of you teaches children that adults cannot talk honestly or directly to each other.

'I Spy' – asking a child to report on the other parent is destructive – it is using a child for your own ends.

'Your father is an idiot'/'Your mother is stupid' – name calling and anger between parents has a destructive effect on children.

'Disneyland Daddy'/'Mummy Santa' – when visits are used just to give the child a good time, or outings and gifts take the place of normal parenting.

'I still love him but he doesn't love me' 'I want to keep the house for the kids but she wants to sell it' – this puts pressure on your children to take sides.

'You can go if you like ... but we are going on a picnic' – don't set up competing activities, it spoils children's pleasure in being with either parent.

For more help and advice and support with putting a parent-plan together please visit: www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk

Your Child's Wellbeing

If you're worried about how your child is coping with a separation or other change in family circumstances, talk to those who come into regular contact with your son or daughter.

Tips for talking to children about separation

- ✓ Make it easy for your kids to love both parents.
- ✓ Tell them they are loved.
- ✓ Tell the truth.
- ✓ Keep it simple.
- ✓ Be civil - don't criticise or belittle the other parent in front of the kids.
- ✓ Reassure your children that the separation has nothing to do with them.
- ✓ Stay future focused

Help and Support

Domestic Violence Helpline:

24-hour National Domestic Violence
Freephone Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Family Lives 0800 800 2222 The helpline provides information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life. There is also online chat, an email support service and forums.

My Family's Changing These booklets are for children whose parents are separating. There are two versions, one for children under 12 and another for older children. They include stories from children who have been through similar experiences, games, and spaces for children to explore their feelings.

www.cafcass.gov.uk

Resolution 01689 820272 The Resolution booklet 'Separation and Divorce – Helping parents to help children' is a practical guide to handling the emotional aspects of separation or divorce. It covers how children may react at different ages, tips for talking to children about separation, and managing your relationship with your child's other parent. Copies can be downloaded free from the website.

Young Minds 0808 802 5544 Young Minds provides information and advice about mental health and emotional wellbeing for children, young people and their carers. The website provides help and information on how divorce and separation affect children, and parents and carers can call the helpline for free and confidential support.