

# Telling the Children about your Separation

Now that you have made the decision to separate, how do you tell the children?

The early days of separation are often the most difficult, as people truly are often grieving the loss of the relationship. People also describe emotions such as blame, fear and mistrust. Telling children about the decision to separate is a delicate matter that needs to be carefully planned.

## If possible, tell them with both Parents present

This is important because the children may blame the Parent who is not present. When children see their parents working together to have this conversation, it sends them the message that both are still their parents and that is not going to change. They can see you are working together to help them through it.

## Try to keep the relationship information general

It's essential that children ***not*** know all the details of why the separation happened as this confuses them. Telling children that adult relationships are complicated and that we have decided we will live in different houses may be enough. Try not to blame the separation on one Party, even if one Party is initiating the separation.

## Provide lots of assurance

Children need to hear that they are not to blame for the separation and that you love them. If you have your parenting plan arrangements, share it with them (calendars are very helpful tools for children). If you haven't got details of the new parenting plan yet, assure them that you are working together with professionals to make sure they will be cared for and they will get to spend time with both parents.

Sometimes children will ask if they can go to the same school or if they will have to move. If you are having financial difficulties, try not to make promises about this. It's better to tell them you don't know at this point unless you are absolutely sure. Tell them you will keep them informed of what is happening when you know more. So many people become emotionally attached to the family home even when they can barely afford it. While this is natural and comes from a place of good intentions (keeping the children in the same school), if you can't afford it, the stress of deep financial burden may be harder on your children than a move and adjusting to a new school. Their sense of security and comfort comes from knowing you are ok. Reassure them about routines where you can. For example, "Dad will continue to take you to hockey, that isn't going to change", can be very reassuring.



If you have more than one child and there is a big age difference, you may consider telling the children separately. Older children often have more questions and it may not be appropriate to answer those questions in front of younger children. Be sure to have a communication plan with your older children. Today's teens post messages on Facebook and Twitter on an hourly basis. You'll want to talk to your teen about allowing you the time to tell grandparents, friends or other relatives if you don't want relatives to hear through Social Media networks. Don't confide in older children about the relationship problems. Be sure to seek out a personal or network of support for yourself.

## Helpful Tips

If possible, stay in the house for a little while after they have been told. This can provide children with the assurance that you are both still there for them and give them a chance to ask questions or express themselves once the news has settled in.

Counseling can be very helpful for children, particularly in the early transition. Consider seeking additional support for them and even for yourselves. Some couples even continue counseling during the transition so they can help their children through this. Just because you are separating, it doesn't mean you have to hate each other.

This is a very emotional time for everyone, by pre-planning the conversation with your children, you can help ease some of those early challenges that children face.

Spend quality time with your children. Be present.

Consider giving your children a voice in this process. Children may feel powerless and at the mercy of their parents' decisions. This can also create a feeling of uncertainty and stress. Stress manifests in different ways depending on circumstances, personality and level of maturity.

At Fairway, we encourage you bring in your children for an interview with your Mediator. Even if your child chooses not to come in, the fact they are asked can have a positive effect

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