

2 Looking at Your Situation

Kylie's Story

Sally and Maurice have a daughter named Kylie who is 5 years old. When Kylie was two Sally decided to leave the relationship since there was a lot of arguing between her and Maurice about issues they were never able to resolve, especially about money and Maurice spending evenings out with his friends. It seemed to Sally that Maurice would get angry at her for little things almost every day, and Sally would often end up in tears. Often when Maurice came home from a night out with his friends, Sally would confront him at the front door, yelling that he should spend more time at home with his family, and not spend so much money on his own fun. Kylie witnessed a lot of the fighting and would get upset and cry when it happened.

When Sally left with Kylie, Maurice was very upset about it. Each parent would drop Kylie off at the other parent's home and would usually end up arguing about something when they did. Often the arguments were about something that one of them had done in the past. They also couldn't agree about parenting issues for Kylie, such as bedtimes and what foods she should eat. Kylie heard them arguing which made her feel sad, guilty, angry, and scared. She often said she had a headache after hearing an argument.

Kylie lived mostly with her mother and spent every Wednesday and every second weekend with her father. Her mother thought that this was too much time spent with her father, and her father thought that it wasn't enough. About six months after their break up, Sally started dating Peter who often stayed at the

house. This made Maurice even angrier since he felt his place as father was being taken over by someone else.

In the three years since the separation, there have been many court applications about custody, access, and child support. There has been so much animosity between Sally and Maurice that they are no longer talking to each other. Now all communication is done through email, and Kylie is picked up and dropped off by a friend, never the parents because they just can't stand to see each other. The extended family has even got into the conflict, taking sides and saying malicious things about the other parent.

At the last court date, a custody and access report was ordered since Sally does not think Maurice should see Kylie anymore. She claims that Maurice drinks too much and cannot properly care for Kylie. Because of this Maurice has stopped paying child support. Kylie is really struggling in school and is getting counselling. Sally and Maurice blame each other for Kylie's problems. Peter says he might leave the relationship because all this conflict is too stressful.

Both Sally and Maurice are struggling financially since most of their money goes to lawyers' fees. After three years they are both emotionally and physically exhausted.

Assessment

Do you recognize any of these things in your own relationship with your former partner?



Personal Story

Think about your personal story and write down 10 important facts about your family break up.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____



Understanding My Separation

This activity helps you to focus on how you understand your separation. It can be a useful step in moving on and in managing your family relationship.

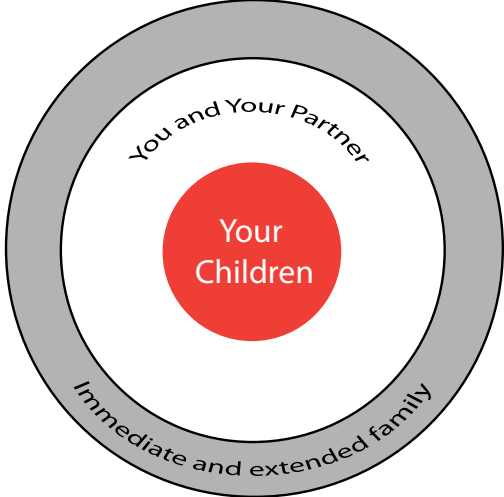
1. The hardest part of being separated is:

2. How did my own parents/guardians deal with conflict in my own family and how did it make me feel? (List examples.)

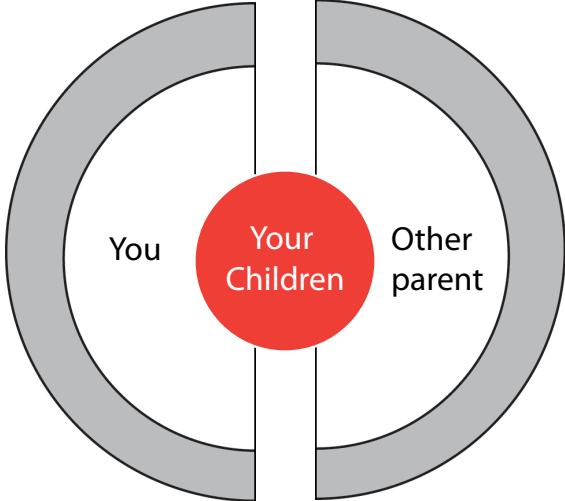
3. How are my children affected?

Parents are Forever

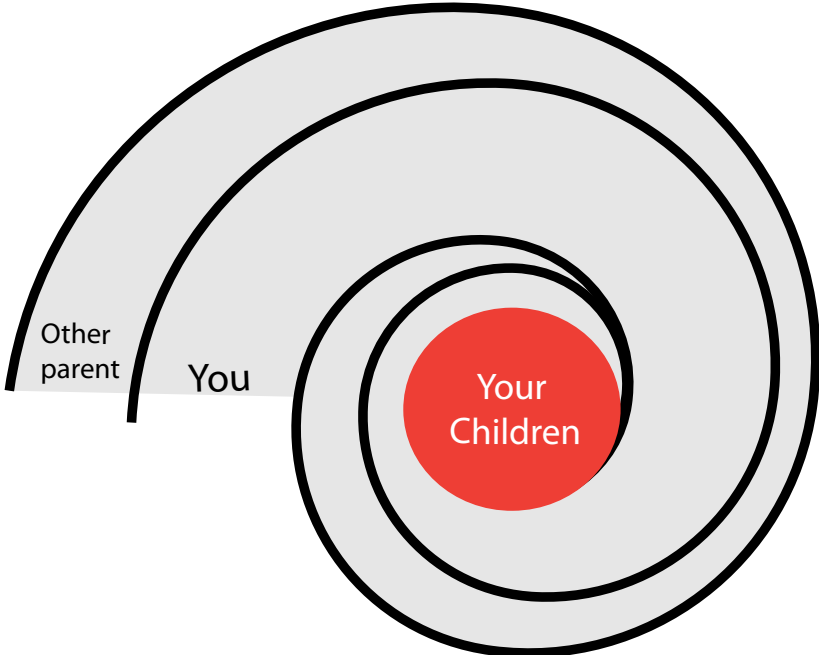
Before Separation



After Separation



Successful Parenting After Separation



Steps of Separation: Where Am I in the Process?

