



# 4 Guiding Your Children Through the Separation Process

## How to Tell the Children

Tell the children about your separation only when you have made clear plans about what will be happening to them.

- Tell your children together, if you can.
- Pick a time and place where there will be no distractions or interruptions.
- Stay calm.
- It may help to tell all your children at the same time, rather than separately, so they can provide support to one another.
- Discuss your future living arrangements. Tell them they will be loved in two homes now, if that is going to be the arrangement.
- Talk about their particular needs such as friends, toys, and school.
- Allow your children to show grief and sadness and invite them to talk it out, draw it out, write it out, or cry it out.



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## What Children Need to Hear

Telling the children may be the most painful part of the entire separation process. Here are some statements you may find useful to make together. If you are speaking to your children without the other parent, you can adapt them. (Some of these statements may not work if you have concerns about safety.)

- “You did not cause the separation/divorce.”
- “We are not going to ask you to take sides.”
- “You will continue to be loved, taken care of and provided for.”
- “When we married/began living together, we loved each other and believed things would work out.”
- “The divorce/separation was not an easy decision. After a lot of effort to save the relationship, we decided we could no longer live together.”
- “While our feelings for each other as husband and wife have changed, the special relationship between parent and child goes on forever.”
- “Dad and Mom won’t be married or living together anymore.”
- “Relationships with parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives will continue. Sometimes though, these relationships change.”
- “You may wish we’d get back together again, but that is not going to happen.”
- “We are sorry for the hurt this decision is causing you.”
- “We will never stop loving you. Never.”



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