



Helping My Children: Checklist

Check off the ways in which you are helping your children adjust.
Underline the things you want to work on.

- I tell my children that this separation is not their fault.
- I do not speak badly about my partner to my children.
- I try to avoid arguing in front of my kids.
- I try to agree with the other parent about how to discipline the children.
- I am making special efforts to spend time alone with each child.
- I tell my children that it is okay to love their other parent.
- I do not compare my children to my former partner.
- I do not blame my children's concerns, fears, and problems on the other parent.
- I am trying to help my children not feel shame about the separation or divorce.
- I understand that separation or divorce does not make me a failure.
- I have let my children's teachers know about the separation so they can help the children.
- I am not making too many changes in my children's life at once.
- I am dividing up family chores so that they get done.
- I do not ask my children who she or he wants to live with or loves more.
- I am encouraging my children to resume their normal activities.
- I understand my children's hope that we will get back together.
- I am trying to maintain as much emotional control as I can.
- I am not turning my children into my adult friends.
- I am encouraging my children to stay connected to their extended family and the larger community.

Look at **Tips for Children** and share them with your children.

TIPS FOR CHILDREN: Surviving Your Parents' Separation

When parents separate, children have a difficult time. Here are some tips from children who have been through it:

1. **IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.**
Don't feel guilty about the separation or when your parents argue. It's not up to you to get them to stop.
2. **THINGS WILL GET BETTER.**
Life at home won't always be like this.
3. **DON'T TRY TO SOLVE YOUR PARENTS PROBLEMS.**
Don't take sides. If one parent asks your opinion or advice about the other, say, "I think I'd better stay out of this."
4. **LEAVE WHEN YOUR PARENTS ARGUE.**
If you can, do something that helps take your mind off it. Call a friend, listen to a CD or watch a video.
5. **THESE EXPERIENCES ARE REALLY HARD ON EVERYONE.**
You're not crazy to feel the way you do.
6. **DON'T KEEP YOUR FEELINGS INSIDE.**
Find someone you can trust and talk to: your schoolteacher, school counsellor, family doctor, or a family member that you trust.

You can also call the **Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868** at any time. Here you can talk to a counsellor who will give you support and information. Or you can check out the website: www.kidshelpphone.ca. You can also visit www.familieschange.ca which provides resources of kids and teens on separation and divorce.

7. **ASK YOUR PARENTS FOR WHAT YOU NEED.**
For example:
 - "Please spend some time alone with me, even five minutes of my very own time (not related to school or cleaning my room)."
 - "Don't get angry when I say I want to live with my other parent. When I say it, I am angry, hurt and scared and I really miss my other parent."
 - "Let me tell you what *I want to* about my visits with the other parent. Sometimes I'm afraid I'll hurt your feelings if I say I had a good time."
 - "Please don't call me the 'man' or the 'mother' of the house; I need to be a child."
 - "Please trust me if sometimes I don't want to talk. You may be ready to talk when I'm not."