



Tips to reduce the upset to your children

Parents separating can be traumatic for children. It may even have come as a surprise to them, especially if you kept any disagreements behind closed doors.

There are steps you can take to reduce the impact on them:



Agree behaviour in front of children

You and your partner should try to agree ground rules for how you will act together to reduce the impact of your separation on your children.



Listen to your children

Listen to how they feel. They could be feeling angry, frightened or worried. They are entitled to be deeply affected by your decision to separate. You should not stop your children talking just because you don't like what you hear.

Ideally choose a time when both you and the children are feeling happy – perhaps when you get home after a successful day trip. With younger children they may use other ways to express their feelings such as drawings. Ask about the drawings; this can be a good way to start your child talking about their feelings. If it is not possible to do this yourself, speak to your GP about finding a professional counsellor.



Clearly tell your children you love them

Ideally tell them that you and your former partner both agree on this. Make sure they know they're safe and will always be cared for.

Keep talking to your children during any disputes over money or contact arrangements and beyond. This can make a big difference to your children. This can be even more important as they reach their teens and start to form their own relationships.



Never criticise your former partner in front of the children

It can be tempting, but is unfair on your children. Children can feel you are criticising them too.



Do not use your children as messengers

If you need to speak to your former partner about something, you should do it yourself. Children resent being put in the middle. If it is hard for you to talk face to face, then write a letter or email.



Treat your former partner with respect in front of the children

It will reduce trauma inflicted on your children. They quite naturally want both parents to continue to get on together, even if they accept you cannot live together.



Try to both co-operate over issues relating to your children

Disputes will hurt your children. The more co-operative you both are the more the emotional stress will be reduced for everyone.



Try to agree arrangements where both parents remain actively involved

Statistics show that children who continue to have a positive relationship with both parents will have a better start to life, do better at school and stay out of trouble.

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