

Hints for separated parents

At the time of the separation

- Reassure your child that both you and his other parent still love him.
- Make sure your child knows that she is not the cause of the separation.
- Help your child understand that the separation is final. She needs to know that there is nothing that she can do to change it.
- Keep your child's daily routine as consistent as possible.
- Reassure your child that he will visit the other parent.
- Be open to your child's painful feelings. Don't let bad or disruptive behaviour go too far. Help your child talk about any anger, fear or sadness.

After the separation

- Don't speak negatively to your child about the other parent, his or her extended family, or friends. If you are still angry, find a supportive friend or counsellor to talk to about your feelings.
- Do not suggest, either with words or actions, that your child is disloyal if he enjoys time with the other parent.
- Be polite when your child is picked up or dropped off. If you smile and have him ready on time, it may help him cope with the transition.
- Make sure your child is clean, well rested and fed when he is on his way to a visit or returning home after a visit. It's best not to send a suitcase of dirty clothes.
- Let your child talk to the other parent on the phone.
- Support your child, and respect reasonable limits set by her other parent.
- Don't ask your child for information about the other parent's activities, friends or income.
- Discuss visitation arrangements with the other parent before you suggest a plan to your child. Confirm with the other parent visitation arrangements for teenagers.
- It is best not to discuss divorce disputes with your child. Don't let your child hear you discussing any differences of opinion with the other parent.
- Never falsely accuse the other parent of any form of child abuse.
- Make sure you give important medical information to the other parent.
- If your child does not want to go to school or seems not to want to visit the other parent, she may be concerned about your well-being. Make sure your child knows that you are well.

A Canadian Paediatric Society statement is also available, **Promoting mental health for children of separating parents**

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Posted by the **Canadian Paediatric Society**.