

Reducing the impact of separation on your children

Parents facing separation and divorce are often deeply concerned about the effect their actions will have on their children. However they can easily lose sight of their children's needs and fail to hear their concerns.

Younger children will have a strong desire for their parents to get back together. Teenagers may be highly critical of one or both their parents. Children will frequently feel rejected and blame themselves for the breakdown of their parent's relationship. They will be anxious about the future and in need of reassurance and love.

Parents can help their children by listening to them and responding to their needs, offering love and reassurance. Where possible parents should sit down together with their children, and talk to them about what is happening, allowing their children to ask questions and voice their concerns. Parents need to protect their children from their own adult issues and avoid criticising each other.

Family mediation can help parents to minimise conflicts which can so easily damage their children's long term wellbeing. Mediators provide a safe place where parents can discuss their children's needs and make arrangements for them. Disagreements about how much time the children will spend with each parent, where they will go on holiday, and questions about their future schooling can be resolved. In appropriate cases mediators can talk with children and give voice to their views.

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