



# Parenting Apart

Messages for Children

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### About this booklet

Children often find that there are a lot of changes to cope with when their parents decide to separate. This can be a very difficult and confusing time and you might be wondering whether things will ever get better!

If this sounds familiar, this booklet is for you! Here are some ideas that might be helpful for you to think about.

### Safety

These ideas are for children when it is safe to spend time with both parents. If you are worried about your own safety or someone else's safety it is important that you talk to someone you can trust, like a teacher. One organisation that can help is ChildLine, they can be contacted for free by phone on 0800 1111 or via [www.childline.org](http://www.childline.org)



## It is not your fault

Remember that your parents have decided to separate because of problems between them as grown-ups. You wouldn't have been able to change that decision by doing or saying anything differently.

## Time

It can take time for your parents to get used to living apart. It can also take time for you to get used to your parents' separation – this will be different for different people.

You might feel that you don't want to talk about your parents splitting up because that makes it seem more real. Perhaps you feel angry with one parent or both. You might think you could try to get your parents back together if only you did this or that, or maybe you feel very empty inside. It can be difficult, but there will come a time when you will understand that your parents will not be getting back together and that you are OK with that.



It's not your fault.



## Feelings are OK

There isn't a right way or a wrong way to feel when your parents separate. You might feel relieved, angry, sad, guilty, and lots of other feelings and sometimes all at the same time – it can be very confusing!

You are not alone and it's important to have people to talk to about how you feel so that you don't just keep those feelings inside. This could be your Mum or your Dad or another trusted family member such as a grandparent, it might be a teacher or a counsellor. Try to find someone you can trust to talk to.



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## What do you think?

Your parents might want to know what you think about the changes that are happening during a separation. They might want to know what you think about the time that you spend with each of them or about school. This can help your parents make the best decisions for you. Although they might want to know your views, it is your parents' job to make the final decisions, not yours.

## Your parents are still your parents

Just because your parents have separated doesn't mean that they stop being your Mum or your Dad. The sadness and upset that can happen during a separation can make it difficult for them to remember that sometimes. If you can, let your parents know how you feel so that they can help you to have a good relationship with both of them.

## You are not a referee

Don't feel guilty when your parents argue. It's not up to you to get them to stop – that is a grown-up job. Maybe you could try to leave the room when they argue or do something that helps take your mind off it – watch television, play a game or listen to music.





If you can, let your parents know how you feel so that they can help you to have a good relationship with both of them.

## Caught in the middle

Remember that your parents have decided to separate because of grown-up problems. Sometimes children see a parent is upset and can become angry at the other parent. Relationships between grown-ups can be complicated – try not to get caught in the middle. It can be really difficult if one of your parents is criticising the other parent in front of you or asking you information about the other parent. If this happens, and if you can, tell your parents how you feel so that they can keep you out of their arguments.



If you can, let your parents know how it feels to be a messenger or go-between so that they can find a way to talk directly to each other about decisions that affect you.



## Go-between

Sometimes it can be difficult for parents to talk directly to each other when they separate and they might ask you to take messages to the other parent. This might be really tricky for you and might put you in a difficult position. If you can, let your parents know how it feels to be a messenger or go-between so that they can find a way to talk directly to each other about decisions that affect you.

## Talk to your parents

If you can, try to talk to your parents about how you feel and what you need. They will want to listen to you so that they can work together and do what is best for you.

## Help

Everyone needs a little bit of help some times. Remember that it is OK to ask for help!



If you can, try to talk to your parents about how you feel and what you need.



## Support

Sometimes it can be helpful to get professional support. Relationships Scotland's network of Member Services supports individuals, couples and families experiencing relationship difficulties through relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across all of mainland and island Scotland.

Some Services provide support directly to children affected by separation such as children's counselling, children's groups and direct consultation with children in mediation.

## To find out more:

[www.relationships-scotland.org.uk](http://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk)



## References

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# Parenting Apart

It isn't easy for parents or children to go through separation or to live in separate homes. At a Parenting Apart session parents will gain the knowledge they need to:

- Understand what they and their children are going through
- Help their children to cope
- Work together as parents
- Plan for the future

Parenting Apart helps families put their children first and move forward positively when living apart.

**To find out more:**

**[www.parentingapart.org.uk](http://www.parentingapart.org.uk)**

For more information, videos and resources go to  
[www.relationships-scotland.org.uk](http://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk)



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