

How to Have that Difficult Conversation

Telling Your Children That Your Relationship with the Other Parent Has Broken Down

Try to put a boundary around your own feelings toward the other parent

Remember your feelings and experiences are not those of your child. So, although you may be feeling angry, hurt or rejected by the other parent don't put those feelings onto your child. Remember that although your relationship with the other parent has changed, your child has a right to his/her own relationship with the other parent.

Where possible, parents who are separating should tell their children about the separation together. Then decide together the best way to tell the children. For some families with children of similar ages and understanding, it may be best to tell them all together. For other children, it may be best that they are told individually so that you can focus all of your attention on each of them and any worries or questions they may have.

Explain the situation gently but clearly

Be honest, but remember that the news may be a huge shock to your children and they may find it hard to take in what you are telling them. Be prepared to answer hard questions.

Don't over explain

Trust that your child will come back to you for more information if they need it. Better still tell them that they can always ask questions or talk about their family anytime

Time for questions

It's really important to leave plenty of time for children to ask any questions or raise any worries they may have. In separation, children may want to know about practical things like where will I live? Who will I live with? How often will I see Dad/Mum? Be open and let your child know that it is okay to ask anything and that you will do your best to answer their questions and talk with them about the situation whenever they need to.

Listen

It is really important to give your child time to say how they are feeling. Don't try to rush them or move on with something else.