



## What Should We Tell the Children?

A Parents' Guide for Talking About  
Separation and Divorce ©



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## WHAT SHOULD WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

A Parents' Guide for Talking About Separation and Divorce

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This booklet was designed to help parents assist their children through the difficult family transition of separation and divorce. The materials presented are intended only as a guide for parents for talking with their children about their separation and divorce. Any information presented should not be construed as legal advice or the formation of a lawyer/client relationship. The suggestions in this book are neither a substitute for legal advice nor mental health counselling. Legal advice should be sought for answers to specific legal questions.

# Introduction



When parents are about to separate, the best thing they can do is to prepare their children and adolescents for what is about to happen. Not many parents plan ahead for this important discussion, even fewer do this planning together, and most parents don't say enough when telling children about the separation.

This booklet is designed to help parents think about and accomplish a difficult task: what to say to your children when you are separating.

Separation is the central (and first) event for most children, whether you are divorcing or ending a brief or long-term relationship. The booklet will provide you with ideas about what children need to hear, how to prepare for and talk to your children about separation, and how to handle your own and your children's emotions. It will also alert you to less helpful and sometimes damaging comments to children that emerge from parental anger, conflicts and disappointments.

The primary goal is to make discussions with your children about separation a bit easier for you and more helpful and meaningful for them. A larger, very important goal is to increase your children's and adolescents' ability to deal successfully with the stress and disruptions of your separation.

You will notice that there are nine sections in this booklet. It will be most helpful if you and the other parent read the whole thing. If you can't find the time, or want help with a certain topic immediately, each section is listed here for quick reference.



"Children are the living messages  
we send to a time we will not see."

— JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

# TOPICS



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