

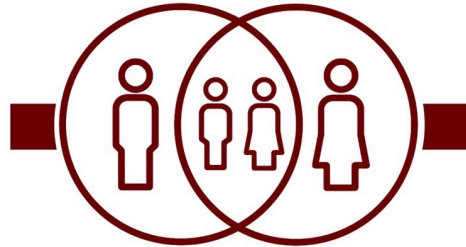
"From Parents to Co-Parents"

Telling your Children You Are Separating

Telling your children about separation is difficult. This expert advice from professionals and research may help you to prepare for how to talk to your kids about separation.

- **IT IS BEST FOR YOU DO TELL THEM TOGETHER.** Think about what you are going to say - script out your thoughts and in whatever way that is possible share your thoughts with the other parent. Having viewed each other's suggestions settle on what both of you think is the right message to give the children.
- **THINK OF A GOOD PLACE AND TIME TO TALK** - often early in the day and or after a meal is the best time. You want to avoid telling them too late in the day or when they may be distracted with other things (hungry/tired etc.)
- **TELL YOUR CHILDREN ONLY WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW**
 - In general terms, describe why you and your partner have decided to part. Take care **not to accuse the other parent of any wrongdoing**, as this will only add to the children's confusion.
 - It is important to **emphasize to the children that they are not to blame. Reassure your children that you still love them and that you will both go on caring for them.** They will need to hear this from you many times and in many different ways, especially during the early stages of the separation.
 - They will also need to hear that adults separate or divorce because of problems in their relationship, but **they don't split up with their children**; reassure the children that you will always be their parent and that you will never stop loving them. **Emphasize that they will not be losing one of their parents.**
 - Let them know there will be **many opportunities to spend time with both of you.**
 - Make a list and tell them **what will be the same and what will be different .**
 - **Be very clear that your children are not the cause of the separation.** Explain that **this is an adult problem** and there was nothing your children could do to prevent it.
 - **Be clear that your decision is final**; do not give false hope for a reconciliation if none exists.
- **ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO TALK OPENLY ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS.**

OTTAWA CO-PARENTING SOLUTIONS



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- When they talk, **listen carefully and try not to interrupt**. It's normal for children to have trouble expressing their feelings, so be patient. Though it may be hard, it's
 - important to let them be honest about their fears and concerns. **Answer any questions as honestly as you can.**
 - If your child feels uncomfortable talking to you, help find them someone they can trust such as another family member, doctor, psychologist or social worker.
 - **IF POSSIBLE TRY AND SPEND THE REST OF THE DAY ACCESSIBLE TO YOUR KIDS ...** be as present as possible. Both of you may want to carve out some small individual time with the children over an activity (walk the dog or pick up groceries) while not staying away from the other parent too long.
- **SOME SAMPLES STATEMENTS YOU MAY FIND USEFUL**
 - *"We have tried very hard, but we just can't fix our problems. We both love you very much and we will still be your parents, but we just won't be living together anymore."*
 - *"We will always be your parents, and you will always be our child."*
 - *"You did nothing wrong, and there is nothing you could do to stop it from happening."*
 - *"We understand how you must be feeling, but remember that the problem is between your parents. There is nothing you could have done differently to prevent this from happening."*

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