

CHILDREN NEED PARENTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE GOING THROUGH

A PARENTING THROUGH SEPARATION PROGRAMME FACTSHEET

THIS IS A SUMMARY ONLY. FOR MORE DETAILS, GO ONLINE TO [JUSTICE.GOV.T.NZ/FAMILY/RESOURCES](https://justice.govt.nz/family/resources)

1. You can make separation better for your children

- Most children will want to continue their relationship with both parents.
- Put aside what's happening in your relationship and understand the effect of your separation on your children.
- The more you help your children, the better things will be for them.

2. It takes time for children to accept that their parents are separating

- At first, most children feel pain and insecurity, and may be really upset and miserable.
- Some children get clingy, others may be aggressive.
- Sometimes, even when children seem okay, they may be protecting you from their feelings or they may not know how to ask for help.
- Many times, children will keep hoping their parents will get back together.
- Over time, most children get used to the changes.

3. It's different for every child – watch out for their individual reactions and needs

- Things that will make a difference include your children's age, sex and personality, your behaviour and the support you give them.
- Your children's sense of time is different from yours – for them, time goes more slowly. A week is a very long time for an infant.
- Children aged under 12 often blame themselves for their parents' break-up and need lots of reassurance that it's not their fault.

4. Take time to think about the impact of separation on you as well

- Although your relationship is over, you can't cut all ties with your ex-partner – you're both parents for life.
- Think about your feelings and how they affect others.
- Accept that your feelings are natural with all of the changes going on.
- You and your ex-partner will probably be at different stages of the separation journey when you have to make important decisions.

- You might find it hard to focus on your children's needs but that's what they urgently need you to do.
- If you or your children need protection from violence, ask the Family Court for a Protection Order.

5. Ways to help your children

- Keep them away from conflict (including shouting, fighting, background stress and actions like slamming doors).
- Ensure they don't get involved in any arguments.
- Help them to keep seeing their other parent and their wider family/whānau.
- Tell your children what's happening but protect them from adult issues.
- Make sure they never have to choose between you and their other parent.
- Remember their need for an adult to keep caring for them.
- Try to keep to your children's routine as much as you can to help them feel secure.
- Keep in regular contact with them, even if you're not involved in their day-to-day care. Otherwise, they may feel abandoned.

More information

There's lots more information online at justice.govt.nz/family/resources/

To find out more about Protection Orders, go to justice.govt.nz/family/domestic-violence/legal-protection-you-can-get/

Also, check out these programmes on the Ministry of Justice's YouTube channel:

Families and professionals talk about separation, part 1
youtube.com/watch?v=E_bxlpi9bwU

Families and professionals talk about separation, part 2
youtube.com/watch?v=7k5Rkt5YK8A

Families and professionals talk about separation, part 3
youtube.com/watch?v=ke4ISAMmEzE

Kids talk about separation, part 1
youtube.com/watch?v=RHDhZ1G2z7U

Kids talk about separation, part 2
youtube.com/watch?v=n0dKWs4tHgQ