

WHAT CHILDREN NEED

CHILDRENS' GUIDE FOR SEPARATING PARENTS

Separation and divorce is one of the most stressful life events parents can experience and research has established that family separation is always stressful for children. Through its work, Restored Lives recognises that the voice of children is often lost amidst a breakup. We have brought together this list of the key comments from children that arise again and again. We know that parents are often overwhelmed with the changes that a relationship breakdown brings, so this list is not judgemental, but designed to start a conversation between parents and children to understand each other better and create deeper, long lasting relationships.

You might choose to give a signed copy to your children to demonstrate your willingness to work with them on these and any other issues related to your separation. We therefore suggest that you read these words as if they were written by your children, sign it together and then give it to them. We hope that this will instigate a conversation to minimise hurt and encourage understanding.

TALKING

1. Please communicate well and update each other about me and don't use me as a messenger.
2. Don't say bad things about each other because it hurts me.

ARRANGEMENTS

3. Be flexible and compromise on agreeing arrangements for me. Don't be upset if I also want to see my friends.
4. Make it easy for me to see my other parent or relatives, let me take the things I want to take.
5. Include my thoughts on arrangements and don't exclude me from family events.

I commit to trying as much as I am able to follow these 10 points for the benefit of my children.

6. It's ok if parents do things differently. I may also want something different to my brother or sister.

7. Work out now who is paying for the extras, don't let this stop me from doing things.

RELATIONSHIPS

8. It's ok for me to have good relationships with both parents, relatives and even with a new partner. This doesn't change my love for you.

ATTITUDE

9. Don't ask me to lie or cover things up.
10. I don't expect either parent to be perfect. Please accept mistakes and move on.

.....
Signature of parent 1

.....
Signature of parent 2

This list of 10 wishes has been distilled from a longer list created by Family Justice Young People's Board at Cafcass which is a group of over 50 children and young people aged between seven and 25 years old who live across England and Wales. All of its members have either had direct experience of the family justice system or have an interest in children's rights and the family courts. It supports the work of the Family Justice Board which is to deliver improvements to the family justice system so that it provides the best result for children who come into contact with it.

Find out more at www.cafcass.gov.uk/family-justice-young-peoples-board

About Restored Lives

Restored Lives helps people recover from relationship breakdown by coming alongside them at the time of crisis and giving them skills to move on successfully. Through this work we reduce the negative impact of breakups on individuals, children and communities, increase people's well being and give them hope for their future.

As a charity we are dedicated to creating resources to support anyone going through the breakup of a significant relationship. These resources include an eight-session course for adults, a five-session workshop for teenagers and young adults whose parents have separated, online sessions, abuse support groups, men's workshop, a book, workbooks and how-to guides.

For more information visit:
www.restoredlives.org

What is Your Direction?

Restored Lives offer five-session workshops called 'Your Direction' that brings teenagers and young adults together to talk about their parents' separation or divorce. Together we explore the key challenges they face and highlight tools and skills that help.

Working together with children's charity Spurgeons, the workshop shows experiences from other children who have been through this experience combined with expertise from professional counsellors and parenting specialists to create a course that is stuffed with practical tips that create lively discussions to help 12 - 30 year olds navigate their parents' breakup so they can move forward successfully with their own lives.

Your Direction was developed in partnership with Fegans, now part of Spurgeons

Fegans
Counselling Children, Supporting Parents

spurgeons
children's charity