



First steps when you separate- 'First Aid'

These are excerpts taken and adapted from the excellent Resolution guide- [Parenting through separation-Putting children first](#).

Please press the blue text below for links to the Divorce Manual

Remember: First aid matters

- Try to take the time to learn about and understand the [emotional separation journey](#)
- Consider building [new rules for communication](#) to manage your separation and how to manage [strong emotions which may be driving you apart](#)
- Try to remember that, [for children, families change shape but they do not end](#);
- Be prepared to keep starting again ... and again...
- Make parental communication [a separate focus in your parenting plan](#)
- Try not to communicate through [your children](#)
- Think carefully about the role model you want to be for your children at this challenging time
- Endeavour to [communicate about your children when they are not around](#); try to get into good habits if you can
- Seek out extra support such as [mediation/coaching](#).

What should my first steps be now that I have separated from my partner?

Emotional First Aid:

Family separation is tough; [the ride can be bumpy](#) and it will take some time to get things sorted out.

- Remember to be patient with yourself and to [ask for help](#) when you need it.
- Be realistic: life is going to feel upside down for a while.
- At the very beginning it is vital to ensure that you are taking necessary steps to make sure that you will be okay. If you feel steady and well-supported then you will be in a far better place to support the needs of your children as your family changes shape.



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- Self-care is vital: on an aeroplane you are advised to put your own oxygen mask on before applying masks to your child/ren. The same principle applies to your separation.

Looking after yourself – why is this important for your children?

The emotional behaviour that occurs when a significant relationship breaks down is important. There has been a great deal of research into [how family separation impacts children](#) and one clear message comes out of all of that research: Children cope well if there is no long-term parental conflict

One positive step that you can take in the early stages of separation is to get your mind ready for [the road ahead](#). Appreciating your [own emotional journey](#) and focusing on self-care from the outset will help you to ride the bumps and manage the conflict.

As mentioned earlier in the guide, you and your partner will start your emotional separation journey at different times and travel at different paces. Understanding this will influence how each of you is coping at any one point in time. If you are coping better, then your children will cope better.

Remember to reach out for support when the emotions feel overwhelming. You can approach friends, family, therapists, [divorce coaches](#) and one of the many organisations that help separating couples.

Your separation [support team](#) – who should you gather around you and why?

Family separation is scary because there are lots of unknown parts to it.

There are many types of disputes that might arise between separating parents (page 24 of the Resolution guide for [parenting through separation](#))

When things are unknown, we don't know how we will cope or respond to them. You would not set off on any significant journey in life without [a road map](#) and separation is no different. Get information, support and [advice](#) support before you set off.

Consider putting in a place a [team to support](#) you;

- A **family mediator**- to reach financial and children agreements together.
- A **divorce coach**-for help individually or as couples with relationship and comms.
- A **legal adviser**- to help with the law
- A **financial experts**-Financial adviser, accountant to help with the finances.
- **Family and friends**- for general emotional and psychological support.



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With a team in place you are likely to feel much stronger and prepared for the journey.

Ask us as the [Compass Resolution Network](#) of family professions for recommendations and seek out professional advisers who are a good fit for you and who will compliment your aims and priorities for your separation journey

Make sure you get information about all of your [separation options](#).

Spend time researching these options with your mediator/coach and share information with your separated partner. You would not set off on any significant journey in life without a [road map](#) and separation is no different.

Summary of 'First Aid' for yourself and your family.

- Try to take the time to learn about and understand the emotional separation journey
- Consider building new rules for communication: parents who are in a relationship become parents who are not in a relationship and need to work out how this new relationship will operate
- Try to remember that, for children, families change shape but they do not end
- Be prepared to keep starting again ... and again...
- Make parental communication a separate focus in your parenting plan
- Try not to communicate through your children
- [Think carefully about the role model you want to be for your children at this challenging time](#)
- Endeavour to communicate about your children when they are not around; try to get into good habits if you can
- Seek out local resources such as separated parenting courses/mediation/parenting coaching. Check out the resources on [useful websites page](#).

SUMMING UP

Is it possible to separate without conflict? The short answer is 'no'.

When any significant personal relationship ends there will usually be some conflict.

Be realistic, aim to [manage your side of the conflict](#), rather than to [eradicate it](#).



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The level of conflict you experience during your separation is likely to be affected by your personalities, your relationship dynamic and the circumstances of your separation.

Trust is always bruised or damaged when a relationship ends. There are three different types of trust;

- personal
- parental
- financial.

One or all of these could potentially be impacted. Trust can be broken in different ways. Imagine a vase. A vase could be broken into 5 pieces and stuck back together again or it could be smashed into a thousand tiny pieces which could not be re-built.

When, what and how do we tell our children?

Pages 10-17 of the Resolution guide parenting through separation provides some information and tips to help you with your new separated parents role including tips about [how to communicate with your co-parent and your children](#)

Telling the children that you are separating is a really hard thing to do.

Putting it off is natural and understandable. Most children of separated parents say that they were told too late and that they were aware of something being wrong, before their parents talked to them. This can feel really unsettling for children of all ages.

It is often better to tell your children something rather than nothing as you work out all the details of your separation.

You may feel that you want to have a complete plan worked out before you tell your children.

Remember that it can take some time to agree a plan and it's not necessary to have all of the answers when you talk to your children.

Consider getting early help from a third party such as a [mediator or a coach](#) so you can make a plan for your children that will take into account the trust and conflict levels between you.

When trust levels are low and conflict is high, it can feel difficult to talk together and reach agreements but [help is at hand](#). Good luck.

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