Separation is a difficult time for everyone in the family

A decision to separate is one of the hardest choices you may ever make, and it has consequences for everyone in your family. Both you and your children may feel confused about what is happening, and be unsettled about the impact of such change.

Separation can evoke strong feelings for everyone – you, your partner, your children, and even extended family members like grandparents, aunts and uncles. Your family is undergoing significant change - separation usually means that the family is dividing, and that one parent will be leaving the household.

With change comes emotion. You may feel sad or lonely, angry, guilty, or like you have failed in some way. Many parents have experiences of depression and anxiety. In fact, you may feel all these emotions at different times.

It is important to remember that your child also has strong feelings. They may feel grief, shock, insecurity and worry whether the remaining parent will leave them as well. Some may feel that they are to blame for the situation, while others may feel angry.

As a parent it’s important to understand that your children are also going through a distressing time, and to do what you can to reduce the impact on them. Here are some basic tips to assist with that:

- Prepare children as best as you can. Give them a simple explanation of why you are separating.
- Let your children know that both parents love them very much.
- Remind children that it is not their fault – it is a decision that you as parents are making about your relationship.
- Focus on the positives. Give lots of love and attention. Try to avoid conflict in front of your children, and avoid blame.
- Try to minimise the change to your children’s environment and routine.
- Acknowledge how your children are feeling, and that these feelings are okay.

For more information on separation or any parenting issue, call our professional counsellors for the cost of a local call from a land line, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1300 1300 52 or read our information sheets on separation on [www.parentline.org.au](http://www.parentline.org.au)