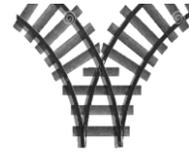




Family Centre Information Package



Separation and Divorce

Some marriages end suddenly while others seem to fall apart over a long period of time. No matter what the cause, a divorce is often a stressful and emotional experience, turning your world upside down and triggering many emotions. Everything in your life can get disrupted: routines, responsibilities, dreams and life goals, relationships with family members and friends, how you view yourself, and bringing about confusion and uncertainty about the future (helpguide.org).

GRIEVING THE DIVORCE

A Divorce and/or separation is a loss of a relationship, but it can also be a loss of plans, hopes and dreams, a loss of support including financial, social, and emotional, and a loss of self (e.g. who am I, what will I do). Going through the grieving process helps you heal and move through this life transition. Here are some tips to help support the grieving process.

- Your feelings are valid
 - Do not fight your feelings
 - Recognize that it is okay to have different feelings and they can change over time.
- Talk about how you are feeling
 - Talk to someone you trust
- Remember that moving on is the end goal
 - If possible, keep a familiar routine for yourself and your children
- Remind yourself that you still have a future
 - Give yourself a break, it is okay to take it “one day at a time”
 - Avoid making major decisions until your life is settled
- Know the difference between a normal reaction to a breakup and depression
- Take care of yourself
 - Allow yourself time to heal.
 - Make time each day to nurture yourself
 - Pay attention to what you need
 - Stick to a routine
 - Take a time-out
 - Avoid using alcohol, drugs, or food to cope

- Explore new interests
- Make healthy choices: eat well, sleep well, and exercises

CHANGES TO EXPECT

Divorce and separation bring a lot of change, two important things to keep in mind with all the changes are that: you, your children, and your former partner are still a family, just a different kind of family and divorce doesn't mean your children lose a parent.

- Living Arrangements
 - New Home
 - Two Homes
 - Time with parents
- New Lifestyle
 - Finances
 - Responsibilities
 - Relationships with extended family members and friends
- Positive Change
 - Reduced tension and fighting

Your children may also experience some positive changes. They may be relieved that any tension or fighting is reduced. By spending more time alone with each parent, they might get to know each of you better and have better relationships with you. You and your former partner might even be happier and more fun to be with. After a separation, parents often value the time they have with their children differently.

- How Long the Adjustments may take
- Before the separation or divorce, you and your children knew what to expect of daily life. The changes in lifestyle brought on by the separation or divorce will happen quickly. However, it will take a lot longer for the new way of life to feel normal. On average, it takes between one and two years for children to adapt to their new situation. Try to be thoughtful and reasonably cautious when introducing new partners to the children.
- Your parenting skills and focus on your children's well-being over the next few years will help them to eventually adapt and prosper. There will be progress and setbacks, but in time your family will once again have that sense of safety that comes from predictable, normal routines.

Keep lines of communication open with your children

THE EMOTIONAL STAGES OF DIVORCE/SEPARATION:

1. Denial – A refusal to accept that the relationship is over and struggle with trying to find solutions to the marital problems
2. Shock – intense feelings of panic, rage, numbness, or a sense of “going crazy”. There will be a swing between despair that your relationship is over and hope that it will be restored
3. Rollercoaster – It is hard to settle the feelings and thoughts that come from divorce, one might bounce back and forth between hope and despair, a lot of intellectualization will occur at this stage
4. Bargaining – There is still hope that the marriage will work out; one may try to change themselves to make the marriage work. Realizing that you cannot control the thoughts, feelings or actions of another human being is an important thing to learn during this stage
5. Letting Go – This is the stage where you will finally realize that the marriage is over, you will be able to forgive your ex-spouse’s actions and your actions. A sense of liberation might be felt.
6. Acceptance – the feeling of needing to heal your marriage is behind you and you begin to feel like you will have a meaningful and fulfilling life

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE CO-PARENTING

DO

- Set hurt and anger aside, the co-parenting relationship is all about the well-being of your children.
- Encourage children's time with their other parents, as well as visits with grandparents and other family members.
- Encourage phone contact with the other parent, or other parent's family members.
- Have your child ready for drop off when it is time to see the other parent.
- Allow extra time for your child to be with the other parent on special occasions.
- Encourage positive boundaries. For example, "adult issues" stay with the adults and "kid issues" with the kids.
- Establish the best way to create conflict-free communicate with your co-parent (e.g. e-mail, text, phone) and keep conversations focused on your children.

DON'T

- Insist on primary responsibility for childrearing as if no other parent exists.
- Put your children in the middle – do not use them as messengers.
- Criticize the other parent's behaviour to your child or to another grownup while your child is listening.
- Forget or refuse to comply with the other parent's time with the child or caregiving plans.
- Forget or refuse to inform the other parent of significant events in your child's life.

FAMILY CENTRE SERVICES

Check out our programs at www.familycentre.ca to see what is available.

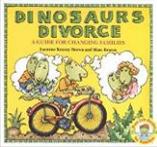
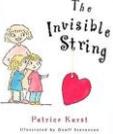
You can also leave a message for our Family Connector at (403) 320-4232 ext. 240 if you are interested in parent support or to learn about other resources available in our community.



Family Centre offers the Kin Family Resource Library. Visitors to the library have access to books, videos, DVDs, and magazines that cover a variety of topics, including separation and divorce. There is no cost for accessing the library; all that is required is a Family Centre library card, which is available at the front desk.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- *Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families* by Laurene Kransy Brown and Marc Brown: In this book you will learn to talk to each other about one of life's most difficult moments. It can assist in building a bridge to communicate with your child but through the dinosaurs that are themselves experiencing divorce. 
- *Rebuilding when your relationships ends* by Dr. Bruce Fisher & Dr. Robert Alberti: This book explores steps that can be used to help support divorce recovery. 
- *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst: in this book Karst explores a simple way of overcoming loneliness and separation from parents. 
- *What Happens Next? Information for kids about separation and divorce* by Department of Justice Canada: This book is to assist children 9-12 years old to increase their understanding about their parents splitting up and to let them know that it is okay and normal to have an emotional response. 
- *Divorce & New Beginnings* by Genevieve Clapp, PhD: A guidebook to help support divorce recovery, and new experiences of solo parenting, co-parenting, and stepfamilies. 
- *The Co-Parenting Survival Guide* by Elizabeth Thayer, PhD & Jeffery Zimmerman, PhD: This book explores how to navigate concerns and potential issues regarding communication, visitation, holidays, and new partners. 

More books are viable in Family Centre’s Kin Family Resource Library

OTHER

- Distress Line 403-327-7905
 - Crisis intervention. Listeners are available 24 hours a day
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
 - Provides confidential, bilingual telephone and web counselling to children and young adults (up to age 25) experiencing problems or concerns
- Families Change Website <http://ab.familieschange.ca/en#>
- Help Guide Website Families <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/dealing-with-a-breakup-or-divorce.htm>
- [Divorce Care](#) offers local divorce recovery groups that meet in Lethbridge to offer supports to parents experiencing divorce and separation
- [Parenting After Separation](#) is a 6 hour course offered through the Alberta Government that explores topics related to building relationships, how separation affects parents, how separation affects children, communication skills, legal issues, alternative dispute resolution, and parenting plans. It is offered online or in person in Calgary and Edmonton.
- [Family Law Information Centres](#) provide free help to individuals about family law matters. They are located in the courthouse and can be reached at 403-388-3102 for more information.

REFERENCES

- [Parenting After Separation \(PAS\) Parent’s Guide \(2017\)](#)
- <http://divorcesupport.about.com/od/copingandemotionalissue/f/stagesofgrief.htm>
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/dealing-with-a-breakup-or-divorce.htm>
- <https://www.mhanational.org/separation-and-divorce>
- <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/2468181f-e2b3-4010-9251-85d57d405d4c/resource/9d267bc0-e54b-4b90-82c0-be718c139bab/download/2017-parenting-after-separation-pas.pdf>
- <https://www.mydomaine.com/tips-for-dealing-with-divorce-stress-1102740>
- <https://ab.familieschange.ca/en/parents/parents-responsibilities>