



STOWE
FAMILY LAW

/guide

Your questions answered

TELLING CHILDREN YOU ARE SEPARATING

The purpose of this Stowe guide is to share advice on how to tell children you are separating or getting a divorce.

Telling your children you are getting divorced or separating is not easy and requires some sensitive handling. This is certainly a conversation there is no script for, however, some planning will go a long way.

Our specialist children lawyers at Stowe Family Law take great care to resolve a wide range of issues regarding child(ren) arrangements. Every case is different and our lawyers adapt their approach to the circumstances of the case to ensure a resolution which places the children's interests as the paramount consideration.

It is always preferable to resolve matters by consent, even if that involves the advice and assistance of a lawyer. However, the practicalities surrounding this are often very difficult, with parents and family members being unsure about the way to approach it with the children.

The following points have been written with younger children in mind, but the concepts can be applied to children of all ages. Needless to say, any separation or dispute between their parents can have a profound effect on a child of any age.

This is only intended to be a guide, as of course, every case is different. If there are any safeguarding concerns, you should seek immediate advice specific to your case, as the points set out below are unlikely to be appropriate.

Timing is important

Firstly, make sure any decision to separate is final. Changing your mind further down the line may be confusing and upsetting.

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Pick the right moment (well as close as you can get), when people are relaxed and calm. Avoid bedtime or school drop-off. You need to be able to answer all their questions and have the time to support them.

Tell them together

Any separation is even tougher on children if their parents are not on good terms. Try and sit down to tell them together. By doing so, you are helping them to see that it is a joint decision and that you both care and are still in their lives.

Keep it simple

Young children don't understand adult relationships. They may not know what separation or divorce means. So, keep your language simple and talk openly and honestly, leaving them out of any conflicts which may arise.

Be clear about what will happen practically and changes to day-to-day life for the family. Children need structure and routine to feel safe. Explaining the changes will help prepare them. Many parents make a planner for the week so the children can easily check when they are seeing each parent.

Make it clear it's not their fault

Children often think it's their fault if their parents argue, so take time to reassure them that this is not their fault at all. Explain gently that separation is a difficult decision for adults and that it happens to a lot of families.

Telling them it is tough at first but that things will get better, helps them to understand this is not forever; life and the family will move on.

Don't play the blame game

However tempted you are to put your side of the story across, it will not help the situation. Don't make it about who has done what. The most important thing is helping them to adjust and show them that you are both still there for them.

Don't tell them everything – just what they need to know

In most cases, children don't need to know the finer details. Hearing about an affair, financial worries, and other arguments will only cause more anxiety.

Constant reassurance

Finally, reassure them. Not just in this conversation but throughout the process. Love, security, safety and clear boundaries throughout the divorce process will help your children to deal with the divorce the best way they can.

Need some advice?

Our family solicitors will guide you through a separation/divorce and advise on the best options for you and assist with resolution of any questions or disputes which may arise in relation to the children.

Need more information?

Call our Client Care Team on **0330 838 7456** to speak with one of our specialist family lawyers or visit www.stowefamilylaw.co.uk



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