

6 PARENTING TIPS FOR SEPARATION & DIVORCE

A Heart-Mind Guide for Parents & Educators



1 **CONTAIN CONFLICT**

[Solves Problems Peacefully]

Research has found that children are particularly affected by conflict that they are directly exposed to - so try your best to contain conflict between yourself and your ex-partner. One way to start is to set boundaries on how you communicate in front of your children. It can be helpful to save emotional conversations for when you are in private. If you find that you, yourself, are deeply affected by such conversations, you might want to create a buffer between yourself and your ex by communicating about triggering topics by email or text only.



2 **SEEK OUT SUPPORT**

[Gets Along With Others]

Your own well-being during family transition is one of the best predictors of your child's well-being. The metaphors aren't wrong: you simply can't pour from an empty cup, and it is imperative that you put on your own oxygen mask first. Show up for yourself by asking for help when you need it, so that you can be emotionally resourced to show up fully for your children when they need you most. Hint: Feeling irritable, impatient, and less forgiving than usual are signs that you may be in need of some self-care or support from others in order to be able to parent your best.



3 **GIVE IT TIME**

[Secure & Calm]

While time may not heal all wounds, it certainly is a positive factor in children's adaptation to family transition. Most children will bounce back from any bumps in the road they encounter as a result of the changes in their family. Taking a long-term perspective - that they will survive this difficult time, and may even thrive on the other side of it - can help you better cope with your fears for your child. Feeling secure and calm puts you in a better position to support your child through their own emotional highs and lows: when we, as adults, are out of our own "fight or flight" zone, we are better able to attune to our children and respond to them with empathy.



4 **PRACTICE POSITIVE PARENTING**

[Alert & Engaged]

Positive parenting is a way of relating to your child that is close, warm, accepting, and supportive, and is a protective factor for children during and after divorce. Positive parenting includes showing your child unconditional love, avoiding harsh discipline and punishment, helping your child understand and cope with their emotions, and problem solving with your child when conflict arises. Before responding to your child, ask yourself: will this strengthen my connection to my child, and their connection to me? If the answer is yes, chances are it is aligned with positive parenting.



5 **FOCUS ON SELF-COMPASSION**

[Compassionate & Kind]

Research has found that self-compassion is a key determinant of parents' emotional well-being following divorce, and can be learned. Self-compassion has three components: self-kindness, mindfulness, and common humanity. Become your own self-compassion mentor by saying something kind to yourself in a difficult situation. Notice the tension you are holding in your body when the kids are making you late - again. Take a page from Mr. Roger's playbook by focusing on the people who are helping out in the throes of chaos and disaster on the evening news. Take a moment each day to use one of these practices, and include your kids to teach by example.



6 **ADOPT A PROCESS MINDSET**

[All 5 Heart-Mind Qualities]

Family transitions such as separation and divorce are a process, and it can take a while before things start feel "normal" again, whatever your new "normal" is. Remind yourself and your kids that it's process and that things will eventually stabilize. While things may feel hard and scary in the present, savoring happy moments when they occur - no matter how small - can build up positive emotions to help you and your children get through the lows.



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