



Parenting Apart

Messages for Young People

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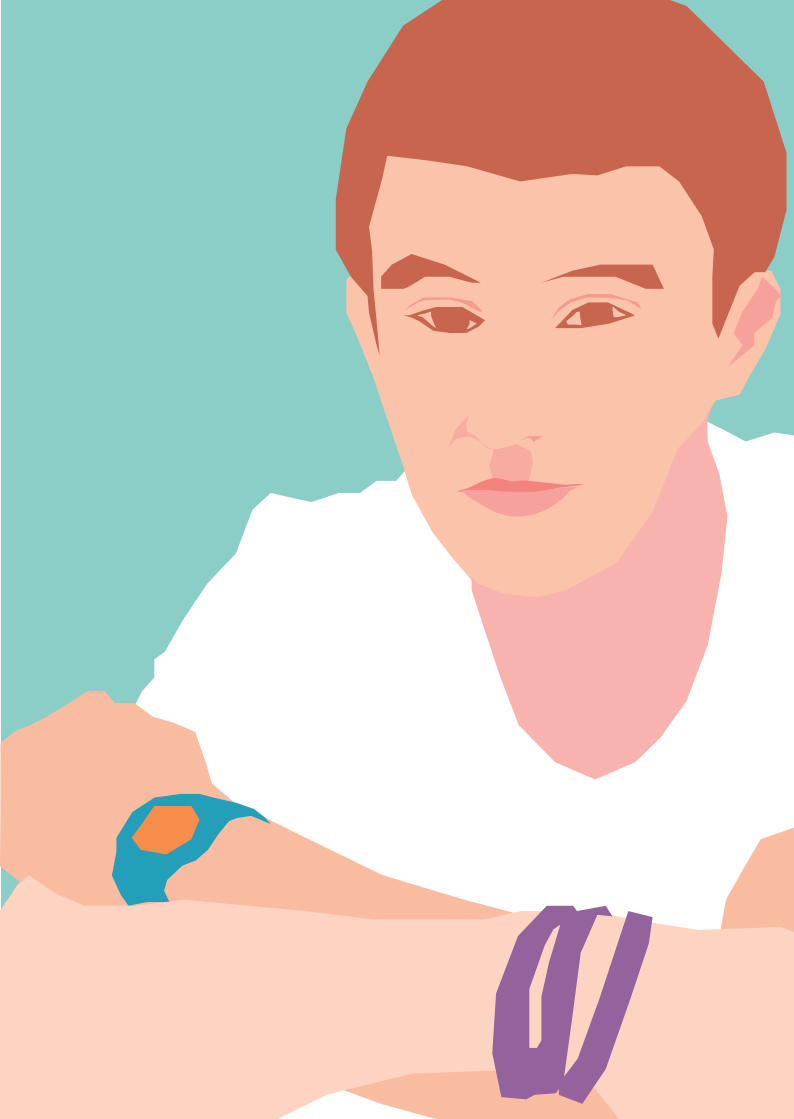
About this booklet

Young people often find that there are a lot of changes to cope with when their parents decide to separate. At the same time as trying to come to terms with your parents' splitting up, you might also be trying to cope with other things that all young people have to cope with such as school and exams.

If this sounds familiar – this booklet is for you! Here are some ideas that might be helpful for you to think about.

Safety

These ideas are for young people when it is safe to spend time with both parents. If you are worried about your own safety or someone else's safety it is important that you talk to someone you can trust, like a teacher. One organisation that can help is ChildLine, they can be contacted for free by phone on 0800 1111 or via www.childline.org



It is not your fault

Remember that your parents have decided to separate because of problems between them as adults. You wouldn't have been able to change that decision by doing or saying anything differently.



Time

It can take time for your parents to get used to being separated. It can also take time for you to get used to your parents' splitting up - this will be different for different people.

- **you might feel that you don't want to talk about the separation because that makes it seem more real**
- **you might feel angry with one parent or both**
- **you might think you could try to get your parents back together if only you did this or that**
- **you might feel very empty inside**

It can be difficult, but there will come a time when you will understand that your parents will not be getting back together and that you are OK with that.

Feelings are OK

There isn't a right way or a wrong way to feel when your parents separate. You might feel relieved, angry, sad, guilty, and lots of other feelings and sometimes all at the same time - it can be very confusing!

You are not alone and it's important to have people to talk to about how you feel so that you don't just keep those feelings inside. This could be your Mum or your Dad or another trusted family member such as a grandparent, it might be a teacher or a counsellor. Try to find someone you can trust to talk to.

What do you think?

Your parents might want to know what you think about the changes that are happening during a separation. They might want to know what you think about the plans for the future, such as the time that you spend with each of them or about school. This can help your parents make the best decisions for you.

Remember that your parents aren't mind readers - let them know if you have an exam or an after school event that you would like them to consider when they make plans. Although they might want to know your views, it is your parents' job to make the final decisions, not yours.



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Your parents are still your parents

Just because they have separated doesn't mean that they stop being your Mum or your Dad. The sadness and upset that can happen during a separation can make it difficult for them to remember that sometimes. This might mean that they start relying on you too much or bad-mouth your other parent in front of you. If you can, let your parents know how you feel so that they can help you have a good relationship with both of them.



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You are not a referee

Don't feel guilty when your parents argue. It's not up to you to get them to stop. Maybe you could try to leave the room when they argue and do something that helps take your mind off it - watch television, listen to music or call a friend.

Caught in the middle

Remember that your parents have decided to separate because of adult problems. Sometimes young people see a parent is upset and can become angry at the other parent or want to know who was right or wrong, but adult relationships can be complicated - try not to get caught in the middle. It can be really difficult if one of your parents is criticising the other parent in front of you or asking you information about the other parent. If this happens, and if you can, tell your parents how you feel so that they can keep you out of their arguments.



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Go-between

Sometimes it can be difficult for parents to talk directly to each other when they separate and they might ask you to take messages to the other parent. This might be really tricky for you and might put you in a difficult position. If you can, let your parents know how it feels to be a messenger or go-between so that they can find a way to talk directly to each other about decisions that affect you.



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Talk to your parents

If you can, try to talk to your parents about how you feel and what you need. It might be challenging! It can help if you choose your moment carefully and think about what you want to say. You can tell them how you feel when something happens and what would help you. One example is: "I feel sad when you shout at Dad when he picks me up. It would really help me if you could talk to him when I'm not there if you are going to be angry with him."

Help

Everyone needs a little bit of help some times. Remember that it is OK to ask for help!

Support

Sometimes it can be helpful to get professional support. Relationships Scotland's network of Member Services supports individuals, couples and families experiencing relationship difficulties through relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across all of mainland and island Scotland.

Some Services provide support directly to young people affected by separation such as children and young people's counselling, children's groups and direct consultation with children and young people in mediation.

To find out more:

www.relationships-scotland.org.uk



References

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Parenting Apart

It isn't easy for parents or children to go through separation or to live in separate homes. At a Parenting Apart session parents will gain the knowledge they need to:

- Understand what they and their children are going through
- Help their children to cope
- Work together as parents
- Plan for the future

Parenting Apart helps families put their children first and move forward positively when living apart.

To find out more:

www.parentingapart.org.uk

For more information, videos and resources go to
www.relationships-scotland.org.uk



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