

## WHEN PARENTS ARE SEPARATED

There can still be a stigma around separation and divorce. It is sad when a relationship between parents ends. But it does not have to be negative. In fact, if both parents are happier as a result, it can be a more positive experience for the child who, even at a young age, can sense the atmosphere in the house when there is fighting, disagreement, and disharmony.

### Considerations for our child

**Stability is important for the child.** The child will want to know what to expect, so establish a regular schedule with each parent. Young children in particular have a strong sense of order. Make it a priority.

**Be honest with the child in an age-appropriate way.** Don't assume they are too young to know what is going on. On the other hand, they don't need to know all the details. Stick with the facts and keep them involved and updated as the situation evolves.

**Being kind about the other parent in the child's company is critical.** We can talk to our friends, our family, or a counselor about difficulties we are having with the other parent, but not to the child. Avoid arguments and conflict when the child is present, even if that means physically removing yourself from the situation.

**Do not use the child as a messenger between parents.** It is not the child's role to pass messages between the parents and households.

**Allow the child responsibility for their things.** The child can be responsible for preparing their bag/s to go between homes; as they get older, they may be able to take public transportation or bike between homes. Always be clear on the days they are at each place so that everyone knows who has responsibility for the child on which days.

## Considerations for the adults

**We can see our part in things.** The end of relationship is usually not one person's fault. We can acknowledge how both played a part and could have done things better. Both partners are responsible in a relationship.

**Agree on the big picture.** We will not have control over what happens in our child's other home. What they are eating. How they spend their time. However, it is ideal to have regular co-parenting meetings to make sure everyone is on the same page, to discuss anything to do with the children, and check in with how things are going in both homes. The rest we need to let go of.

**Get support.** We may need to see a therapist to navigate the transition. We may need additional support from an osteopath, chiropractor, or another health provider to care for our body and mind.

Remember, despite the separation, we will always be the child's parents and their family.