

Parents' Responsibilities

When you are dealing with a divorce it's a complicated and stressful time. It may be natural to display your emotions, talk about what's happening and be angry at the other parent, but you have to remember everything you do and say affects your child.

Here are some of your responsibilities as a parent during a divorce:

- Do not talk badly about the other parent in front of children, or argue with the other parent in front of the children
- Do not ask children to relay messages to the other parent
- Do not ask children to keep secrets from the other parent
- Do not ask children to ever choose sides
- Do not use children to "get back" at the other parent
- Make sure children know what's going on especially if it involves them.
- Do not talk to children about child support or financial issues.
- Always take care and provide for your children, no matter what.

- If you have a new partner, be patient with your children. It may take them time to adjust to the new situation.

Take Care of Yourself

A very important responsibility you have as a parent is to take care of yourself. Divorce is emotionally draining; dealing with all the changes that are taking place can have a harsh impact on your health. During times like these your children need you more than ever and that means taking care of yourself must be a priority, so you can be there for them.

Contact Information

How to contact Supreme Court Family Division across the province:

St. John's: Phone: (709) 729-2258

Corner Brook: Phone: (709) 637-2227

Gander: Phone: (709) 256-1115

Grand Bank: Phone: (709) 832-1720

Grand Falls - Windsor: Phone: (709) 292-4260

Happy Valley - Goose Bay: Phone: (709) 896-7892

Family Justice Services: Call 709-729-1183 to ask for the office nearest to you.

The Family Law Information Line of the Department of Justice Canada: 1-888-373-2222

Public Legal Information Association of NL: 1-888-660-7788

How to protect your children from the fallout of separation and divorce



Supreme Court
of Newfoundland and Labrador
Family Division

Please note: The information provided in this brochure is general in nature and not intended as legal advice. To discuss a specific situation we suggest you contact a lawyer.

Separation & Divorce

Separation and divorce are difficult processes to go through for any adult, so imagine how difficult it is for a child. It can be stressful, upsetting, confusing and hard to deal with in general. The effects of divorce on children can be seen in different ways, depending on the child in question. Some common behaviours are: acting “extra good” in an attempt to get parents back together, acting out or showing aggression in an attempt to get attention, and becoming depressed or withdrawn because they feel responsible. Children, no matter what age, may not understand entirely what is happening or why it’s happening, which is why it is so important to protect your child as much as possible during a divorce.

Telling Your Children

Here are some tips to help you explain to your child/ren what is happening. The tips are sorted by developmental level.

Infants to age 5

Children in this age range will find it most difficult to understand what’s going on. They have very limited comprehension of complex issues. Preschool children may have some ability to think about feelings, but often have limited ability to talk about those feelings. Consistent care and nurturing is important. Be sure to try keeping the same schedule for them as you did before the split. For example, no matter which parent the child is with, bedtime is always at eight o’clock.

Age 6 to Age 11

Children in this age range will be able to understand what is happening around them, but not necessarily why it is happening. They have more of an ability to have a conversation about their thoughts and feelings. It’s important to make sure you talk about the separation or divorce with them and make yourself aware of how they are feeling. Stable care and routines are important.

Teenagers

While children this age seem more like young adults it doesn’t mean that they will deal with the separation or divorce easier than younger children. As much as you probably need someone who knows the situation to talk to, you shouldn’t rely on your child to be your sounding board. They need stability, to know it’s not their fault and for you to first and foremost be their parent. Keep the lines of communication open even if the teen appears not to want to talk.

All Ages

Common tips no matter what the age of children:

- Let children know it’s not their fault
- Let children know both parents love them
- Let children know they aren’t losing their family, it’s just changing
- Seek professional help for your children when necessary. Some children may need counseling or other care.