



## Coping with Divorce or Separation: Tips for Extended Family Members and Friends

You play an important role in the life of your friend or family member who is going through a divorce or separation. Below you'll find simple ways to offer support and guidance.

### Lend an ear

Your friend or family member may be looking for your advice or opinion at certain times; at others, she may just want to discuss her experiences and emotions. Encourage her to call, e-mail, or stop by.

- **If she asks for your advice**, provide her with your opinion, but assure her that she can and will make the decision that is right for her.
- **Help her find someone who can counsel her during these hard times.** You might ask others who have been in a similar situation to recommend mental health professionals, religious leaders, or school counselors whom they found helpful.
- **Help your loved one create a list of people** she can reach out to, and assure her that she is not alone.

For more Sesame Street resources on divorce:

- 📺 Explore [sesamestreet.org/divorce](http://sesamestreet.org/divorce)
- 📘 Connect with [facebook.com/sesamestreetincommunities](https://www.facebook.com/sesamestreetincommunities)
- 📱 Download the FREE *Sesame Street* divorce app

Give us your feedback at: [sesamestreet.org/divorce/feedback](http://sesamestreet.org/divorce/feedback)



It's OK to talk about things other than the divorce or separation. Try to talk about unrelated topics with your friend or family member, and highlight the positives in their life.

LITTLE children  
BIG challenges: divorce

## Offer a helping hand

Divorce or separation can leave your friend or family member with less free time and energy. Through simple actions you can help to ease your loved one's struggles.

- Call, write, or send an e-mail just to let that person know that he's on your mind. You might include a fun memory to remind him of good times that you've shared.
- If you live nearby, drop off a meal, offer to help out with daily chores and responsibilities, pick a child up from school, shop for groceries, or help cook dinner.
- Encourage your loved one to take some time for himself by offering to babysit. Help him think of things to do during his time off that would be relaxing. Even a walk through the park or a quiet hour to read a book or magazine can help relieve stress.
- If you live far away, share your favorite Web site or a good article on a topic that interests your friend or family member. This will let him know that you're thinking of him, and can help direct his mind toward something other than the divorce or separation.



## LITTLE children BIG challenges: divorce



### Support your loved one as she cares for her child

Your friend or family member may find it particularly challenging to address the divorce or separation issue with her child. There are ways to help her.

- Begin conversations that focus on the positives in her life, and encourage her to share with her child positive thoughts and details about fun, upcoming events.
- Suggest possible routines that she may begin or continue with her child in order to provide consistency, such as giving her child two kisses and a hug before he goes to school or reading a bedtime story with him each night.
- When offering your loved one and her child support, avoid speaking negatively about the other parent. Because the other parent may always be a part of the child's life, it's important not to confuse or damage that relationship with disapproving words.

### Be part of the child's support system

Children experience many difficult changes as a result of a divorce or separation. You can be a source of support and encouragement.

- Offer to spend some fun quality time with the child by going out, reading books, or drawing. Doing so can help remind her that it's OK to feel happy and have fun even when hard things happen. If you live far away, you might share a story over the phone or computer, or send a package with such things as bubbles, art supplies, a ball, or games.
- Let the child know that you are one person she can turn to for a hug or to talk. If she asks a question that you feel should be addressed by the parent, offer to help her approach her mother or father.
- Help the child to feel good about herself by pointing out things that she does well. Tell her, "I'm so proud of you for [ability]."



*If there is a strenuous relationship between your loved one's family members after a divorce or separation, try to be patient and give them time and space to work things out. Things can get easier and tensions can subside.*