

Separation: What Might I Feel?

Worries and feelings about relationships

- Is it my fault?
- Should I try to put it right?
- If I am good, will it make things better?
- No-one cares about or understands or is there for me
- If I am bad will they notice it is not okay with me to do this?
- I hate daddy/mummy for doing this
- Mummy or Daddy's behaviour with the other person disgusts me
- I love daddy/mummy
- I want mummy/daddy to be okay – I must look after him or her
- I miss mum/dad/grandparent/friend, etc.
- I hate these newcomers in my family
- I'm really jealous of new partner/'step' siblings
- I have to be careful what I say and do
- I love them both, but that doesn't feel okay
- They keep quizzing me and involving me in the arguments
- They are always talking about money now
- How can I make it all alright again?

How it might affect me generally

- I feel ashamed – I don't want people to know
- I can't enjoy myself
- I can't be spontaneous
- Nothing will ever feel the same
- Everything feels false and different
- I don't feel safe anymore
- I don't understand all the different rules in the different houses
- I'm scared of all the fighting
- I feel like a parcel being handed about
- I must just keep my head down, my feelings down
- I hate having to talk about it

Worries about what else may happen

- Will the parent I am with leave too?
- What is happening at home while I am at school?
- Who will pick me up?
- Will I have to move house or school?

How it might affect me in school and socially

- My friends are laughing at me/despise me
- I can't commit to social things – I'm not sure where I will be
- I dread the public scenes and arguments
- I never know where anything is – I feel confused

Effects of Separation: How might it look?

- Stomach ache, headache, visits to school nurse
- Withdrawing from friends, teachers, family
- Uncharacteristic application to work
- Upset at quiet moments – or at night
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety attacks
- Bullying, kicking, fighting
- Short fuse – angry or rude
- Difficult behaviour in class or playground
- Overreacting when things go wrong

What can teachers and others outside the family do to help?

Listen and try to understand!

- Notice changes in behaviour
- Acknowledge
- 'Normalise'
- Find opportunities for children to share feelings
- Give informal opportunities for adult attention, approval, etc.
- Praise for what has been done right
- Apologise if you get it wrong
- Find a time when the heat is off to have a talk
- Recognise that children may not want to talk
- Don't promise confidentiality
- Don't falsely reassure
- Keep things the same – stable and safe, with same rules for all
- Think about how parents can best be supported
- Create good channels of communication home to school and vice versa