

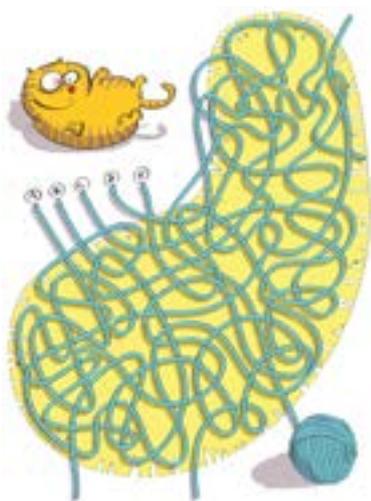
Hello and thank you so much for downloading this PDF. It's great to hear that even in the midst of all of the emotions and challenges that comes up when you separate, you are focusing on your children and what they need from you.



I am Louisa Whitney and I am a family mediator. I help separating couples to make arrangements that are tailor made to them following a separation. I facilitate constructive discussion and provide lots of support and information to help you ensure you get things right for both of you – and, crucially, for your children.

I was a solicitor specialising in divorce for 11+ years and I draw on this experience. I am also a Reiki II practitioner and I strongly believe in following a holistic approach that looks at your legal, financial, emotional and practical needs following a separation.

It can feel overwhelming when the decision to separate has been made (either by you or your partner, or by you both mutually). You feel like you have so many things to think about and it can be a big jumbled up mess that I like to call 'washing machine head'. I often think it looks like this:



On top of this you still have to be a steady presence for your children, make sure they have eaten, done their homework and all of the day to day tasks you have always done. Oh, and somehow go to work and look like you know what you are doing.

This is a tough hill to climb for anyone and worrying about what is happening and how this will affect your children can feel like it's eating away at you. That's why I have put together these top five tips from working with separating couples for 18 years. Even if only one of you is putting these into practice your children can still benefit.

TIP 1

REASSURE YOUR CHILDREN THAT THEY ARE LOVED BY BOTH THEIR PARENTS UNCONDITIONALLY.

Do this every day at least once if not two, three, four.....you get the picture. With such a big change on the cards it's natural for children to worry if they should question everything that they have known. They need to know, and be reassured, that even though changes are happening their parents still love them very much.

TIP 2

GIVE THEM YOUR ABSOLUTE PERMISSION TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER PARENT GOING FORWARD.

Make sure that this comes out of what you say and do in every way. It can be easy to say this and then grimace when they mention the other parent (especially if you have recently had an argument) but remember children pick up on body language and moods as well as what you say and this can suggest to them that you're not very happy about them seeing their mum or dad (or step parent. Family dynamics are different for everyone and there is no 'one size fits all' family).

TIP 3

BE POSITIVE ABOUT CHILDREN STAYING WITH THE OTHER PARENT.

It can be gut wrenching when your children first go and stay with the other parent and you are left alone at home. Try not to let this show to your children or this can make them reluctant to go if they think the parent 'left behind' will be sad. Make plans to do something either with friends or family – or take up a new hobby. Do whatever you need to do to show your children that you have plans and will not be sat moping at home. You will miss them of course, but reassure them that you will be using the time to do something fun for you.

TIP 4

TALK ABOUT WHAT ARRANGEMENTS YOU WILL PUT IN PLACE FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

If you can't do this easily with just the two of you then use a [dispute resolution process](#). There are various processes that exist to help couples who are separating to resolve all the issues that crop up. You can [find a practitioner](#) who will help you manage this process and who will help you to work in a way that is constructive and focused on your children. The best way to find a resolution that works for you all is by talking, taking time to understand each other's point of view (even if you disagree with it) and finding a constructive path forward.

TIP 5

GET SUPPORT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

If either of you feel you're struggling, or you are worried that your children are finding it hard, then get support as quickly as possible. You could start with your GP, or your children's school as they will know what local support is out there. You may also find the following links helpful:

- [Parenting after parting](#)
- [Una Archer](#) – a psychologist specialising in helping separated/separating parent(s)
- [Voices in the Middle](#) – a charity that supports children whose parents are separating. Aimed primarily (currently) at 13 to 18 year olds.
- [Parenting Plans](#) – these can be drawn up by mediators or lawyers.
- The following books may help you support your pre-teen children:
 - [Jack and Black Cat](#) by Helen Victoria Bishop and Simon Murray
 - [Mum and Dad Glue](#) by Kes Gray
 - [The Huge Bag of Worries](#) by Virginia Ironside

If you'd like more help with managing your separation constructively then have a look at the blog on the [LKW Family Mediation website](#) or have a look at our social media channels:



If you have found this helpful then please share. Helping those going through a separation to minimise the effects of their separation on their children is my biggest passion in this world.

Thank you!

Louisa



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