



Toolkit for Divorcing with Dignity
Conversation Starter #2: Telling my children

As a parent, it is normal to want to shield your child from pain. Divorce can make children sad, angry, or even anxious. It's hard to know how to begin the conversation, but once you and your partner decide that the relationship is over it's important that the child know so they can have time to process the change. Below are several prompts to facilitate that discussion:

1. "I've been wanting to share with you some things going on in our family, and this might be a hard conversation. I want you to know that I'm here for you and I love you."
2. "It is okay to ask me questions, and to feel lots of different feelings, like maybe relief, sadness, anger, or confusion."
 - a. Depending on the age of the child, validating their feelings indirectly can be very helpful. Stating, "Often time children feel sad or have lots of questions after learning their parents are divorcing," can feel less threatening than directly asking the child for initial reactions.
3. "You are very loved by your family, and we want you to know that even though the next few months will be difficult."
4. "You may have noticed that there has been arguing and tension in our house lately, and I'd like to help you understand some of why that's been happening."
5. "Though things may have seemed like they are fine in our family, your mother/father and I have decided to get a divorce. I want to have a conversation with you about why we think that is the best option for this family."