



**Toolkit for Divorcing with Dignity**  
**Conversation Starters #4: Family Patterns**

One thing that is often helpful to consider when going through a divorce is thinking about how your family of origin interacted with one another. Consider these conversation starters for communicating with your parents or extended family members about your impending or finalized divorce:

1. Is divorce common in our family? If not, is there a sense of judgement aimed at couples who divorce?
2. What ways might I combat that judgement and gain support for this transition?
3. Are there certain family members more likely to support me during this time than others? Who is in my “corner”?
4. Does our family tend to be emotionally expressive and express what’s on their mind or do they tend to be more cut off and removed from difficult conversations?
5. How is conflict typically handled in our family?
6. Do we have any religious beliefs about divorce? If I am religious, how can I still seek support from my religious community during this time?
7. What are the non-romantic relationships like in my family? Are certain family members closer than others? Are some completely cut off from one another? In what ways might those relationships impact the way I share the news of my divorce with them?
8. What patterns of communication in my family do I want to keep, and which do I hope to change as I enter this transition?
9. Is there someone in our family that has gone through this before and can be a support for me? In what ways could their experience be helpful?
10. Can I foresee any additional conflict occurring in my family as I go through my divorce? Are there ways to buffer myself from that added stress?