

Survival kit for separating dads

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team has developed a range of tips to help support you during difficult times. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

For Dads who are currently going through a separation, it can be a very challenging time. Experiencing strong emotions and distress while separating may be a normal reaction for some, especially with children involved.

Here are four key survival tips to help you during the separation:

1. Feelings are normal and you are not alone

Separation is a very difficult time for most men. You may feel complex emotions and feelings of loss around your partner, your role, the change in your family structure or change in your routine or social life. You may also experience feelings of loss from a reduction in contact with your children. Try to remember that all of these feelings and emotions are normal and there are other Dads experiencing the same things as you – you are not alone in this experience.

Action: It is normal for some men to become depressed or anxious during separation – if your depression or anxiety lasts for more than two weeks and interferes with your ability to function at home or while working, then contact your GP, counsellor or psychologist.

2. Managing angry feelings

When our former partner initiates the separation we may find ourselves feeling anger and frustration and choose to blame them. What is important to keep in mind is that anger in this case is not a primary emotion. Underneath our anger may be feelings of loss, hurt, pain or embarrassment. Having **self-awareness** of the feelings underneath our anger creates space for these feelings so we can better express and manage them.

Action: Managing these feelings can be difficult. Some steps you can take include writing a list of the positives or opportunities presented by separation, take a time out to go and do something you find enjoyable and relaxing, or practice five minutes of slow conscious breathing to calm yourself.

3. Taking care of yourself

During this challenging time it may become difficult to take care of your children the way you would like to. One way to make sure you look after your children is to take care of yourself. Self-care is a method of caring for one's own body and mind, and is an important practice to partake in.

Action: Take care of yourself by exercising your body through movement and giving your mind a break. You could move by walking or running around your neighbourhood, going to the gym or an exercise class or finding the time and space for stretching and bodyweight exercises. Give your mind a break by meditating, watching a comedy movie, take a relaxing bath or walking slowly and consciously. Find the practices which best work for you.

4. Stay connected

Maintain contact with your friends and family as best you can - even a 15 minute daily phone call is enough to stay connected. With so many emotions and thoughts spinning in your head it is great to have people you know and trust listen to you without judgement. If what you are experiencing feels too sensitive to share, speak to your GP, psychologist or counsellor for support.

Action: Regularly stay in touch with family and friends, reach out to others who are going through similar situations and seek professional support if needed.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on **Survival Kit For Separating Dads** or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.