

# A Note for Parents/Caregivers

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Stories can be a gentle way to start discussions with children. Here are some suggestions on how to approach next steps as a family:

## Answering questions

Children understand the world around them by asking questions and exploring their curiosities. During this process, it's critical for caregivers to agree on what information to share, when to discuss it, and how to express it. Be honest and empathetic as you respond to children's questions and talk about how you will get through it together.

## Managing emotions

Children's emotions in response to change can vary. For some children, talking about their feelings helps them process change, while others struggle to explain their thoughts and feelings openly. Parents/Caregivers can gently explore what children are comfortable talking about. Let children know you're there for them when they're ready to talk, and highlight that their feelings about the situation are important to you.

## Providing reassurance

One of the most common concerns for children is related to fear of the loss of being a family. Parents/Caregivers can reassure children that they will always be a family and be there to love and support one another, regardless of where everyone lives. Children often ask if separation or divorce is related to something they did or whether parents might stay together if the children change their behavior. Parents/Caregivers can emphasize that the adults made this decision and that it had nothing to do with the children.

## Seeking support

Reaching out for support from family, friends, community, or outside professionals can be incredibly helpful throughout this process. Some children have an easier time opening up and sharing their thoughts and feelings with a trusted adult outside the immediate family. Outside support can help children explore their feelings in a safe place and provide guidance to the whole family.

## Taking it one day at a time

It takes time to adjust to changes and new routines, so it's important to recognize that everyone adapts at their own pace, and to show patience and sensitivity during this period of transition.

## Online Resources

Sesame Street Workshop: Divorce

<https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/divorce/>

DivorceCare

<https://www.divorcecare.org/>

KidsHealth: Tips for Divorcing Parents

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/divorce.html>

## Recommended Reading

Brown, Laurie Krasny, and Marc Brown. *Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families*. New York: Little, Brown, 1988.

Coffelt, Nancy, and Tricia Tusa. *Fred Stays with Me!* New York: Little, Brown, 2011.

Masurel, Claire, and Kady MacDonald Denton. *Two Homes*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2003.

Roberts, Jillian, and Cindy Revell. *Why Do Families Change? Our First Talk About Separation and Divorce*. Canada: Orca Book Publishers, 2017.