

Separation and Divorce

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When a marriage or common-law relationship fails, both partners (and children) are likely to experience a range of unwelcome emotions.

If you (or someone you know) has decided that separation and/or divorce is the best option, it is important that both partners take the necessary steps to ensure everyone involved is properly considered and supported – especially the children.

If you have children, put their needs first.

Let your children know (by your words and your actions) that they are your first priority. Try to anticipate their questions and be prepared to respond. Reassure them that everyone will get through this period of time and eventually things will settle into new patterns. Be honest about why you are separating and how you feel, but do so in a way that respects their level of understanding, and never criticize their other parent in their presence.

Decide on your goals and keep them in perspective.

Think through the outcomes that you want and always try to create a win/win situation for everyone. Consider: What is the best scenario for the children? What is the best way to proceed legally and financially? What will be the role of extended family members?

Get help when you need it.

This is not a time to 'tough it out.' If you are feeling emotionally stressed, seek out professional help through your Employee Assistance Program. It can also be a starting point for getting legal and financial advice (e.g., counselling, coaching, consultation, workshops, self-help groups). Counselling can also help children express their feelings about the situation and learn to cope with their feelings and the changes.

Please remember that you are not alone during this time and can always speak to our EFAP provider. This service is available not just to our employees but also to their partner or family members.

Canada:

- Call 1-877-847-4525
- Email support@resourcesforyourlife.com
- Visit <http://ca.resourcesforyourlife.com> COMPANY CODE: BMWeCare
- Download the "ICONNECT YOU" app from the App Store or Google Play
PASSCODE: 149301

United States:

- Call 1-800-466-8282
- Access Code 8282
- Visit www.AlternativesEAP.com

- Download the 'Alternative EAP' app from the App Store or Google Play

Don't allow your emotions to control you.

Anger gives a false sense of power and strength. Real strength includes the ability to see the entire situation for what it really is and respond with clarity and compassion. If you have children, hanging on to bitterness is not healthy for them to see.

Take steps to stay healthy.

Sometimes intense feelings and stress create a burden on our health such as interfering with our desire to eat or disrupting our sleep. This is a time for you to take extra care to stay healthy: eat nutritious meals, exercise, get good sleep, avoid indulging in alcohol or caffeine.

After the divorce.

Communicate openly and clearly with your ex-spouse or partner regarding your children. Both of you need to be aware of your child's development, both positive and negative events. Your children should never be a means through which you express your unhappiness or disappointment with your ex-spouse.

Consider your options for proceeding with a divorce. One of the best may be to work with a mediator (i.e., resolving your disputes with the assistance of a neutral party).

A mediation process (using a mediator trained in counselling) can be a better alternative than using the court system because: (1) mediation allows both you and your spouse/partner input into how you will reorganize your family, and (2) mediation can assist both of you to be heard and understood without triggering anger and/or resentment in each other.

If you know someone going through a separation or divorce

Be available and accessible.

Let the person know they can call you anytime for support. Encourage and reassure them. And watch for signs that your friend may be engaging in unhealthy behaviours as a way to cope with the situation (e.g., excessive drinking or drug use).

Be careful not to be judgmental or offer unsolicited advice.

This can make the situation worse. The best thing is to be a good listener.

If you have good rapport with the children, they may appreciate having someone they can confide in.

Perhaps that person can be you.