The Anchor Fact Sheet 3

Keeping kids out of conflict

Things parents can do

Kids can spend a lot of energy in managing their parents and trying to stop the conflict. This is a really unfair burden. Kids need parents to manage the conflict and keep the adult issues between the adults. They also need their parents’ support and understanding to help them transition smoothly into a separated family. Here are some practical things parents can do:

1. **Find ways of communicating that keep adult issues between parents and protect kids from open conflict.**

   Use different methods of communicating, such as email or writing, if verbal communication is not going to work. Seek out another adult if necessary – this may be a relative, friend, or third party (such as a mediator) – who can help facilitate communication between parents.

2. **Do not offload adult feelings onto the children/young people.**

   Speak to friends, family and/or a counsellor about your thoughts and feelings regarding the separation. Keep your negative thoughts about the other parent to yourself; don’t share them with your child. Don’t respond with an insult about the other parent if your child repeats an insult about you they have heard. Find ways to communicate with children that promotes their relationship with both parents.

3. **Ask questions that show interest in them and show they have your permission/support to love their other parent.**

   “What did you do at your Mum’s/Dads?”
   “What was the best part of the weekend for you?”
   “What did you like doing the most?”
   “What was it like for you?” and
   “What can I do to make it better/easier for you?”
4. **Be careful not to ask kids to carry loaded messages to the other parent:** not to quiz them about new partners; not to put down the other parent; not to recruit the kids to be on your side.

The impact of parental conflict on kids can be devastating.

They may feel bad about themselves, become anxious and carry their parent’s feelings of anger and resentment about the other parent. Their relationships can be damaged forever and they may end up with behavioural, emotional or academic difficulties.

**Kids need protection from conflict**

If you are concerned about how your child is coping with separation, call Uniting Counselling and Mediation to see what support services we can offer your child.

**The Anchor - Supporting kids through separation**

Contact our customer service team on 1800 864 846 email ask@uniting.org or contact The Anchor at one of our Uniting Counselling and Mediation Centres:

**Campbelltown** (including Campbelltown Family Relationship Centre) -
(02) 4629 7000
E: UCMCampbelltown@uniting.org

**Fairfield** – (including Family Relationship Centre) - (02) 9794 2000
E: UCMFairfield@uniting.org

**Gosford** - (02) 4325 9666
E: UCMGosford@uniting.org

**Newcastle** - (02) 4925 6000
E: UCMNewcastle@uniting.org

**Parramatta** - (02) 8830 0700
E: UCMPParramatta@uniting.org

**Penrith** - (02) 4732 3836
E: UCMPenrith@uniting.org

**Wollongong** (including Wollongong Family Relationship Centre) - (02) 4220 1100
E: UCMWollongong@uniting.org

**Sydney** - (02) 9373 5500
E: UCMSydney@uniting.org