

taking positive steps

Many parents describe feeling that they have lost control over their lives after divorce or separation. All the things that you once took for granted around your family are suddenly uncertain. You need to be able to make arrangements for the care and financial provision of your children whilst trying to deal with the emotional fallout of the separation.

Dealing with your emotions not only makes you feel happier and in more control of your life. It also allows you to do the best for your children. If you are in a better emotional state, you are more likely to be able to agree workable arrangements with your child's other parent.

Pay attention to how you are feeling

- Stop and think about how you are feeling
- Think about the things that are the most difficult to come to terms with
- Use the list of organisations below to learn more about how you and your children are likely to be feeling
- Work out whether you need help to move on from where you are
- Find ways of dealing with the emotional fallout

Find ways of reaching agreement

- Try to find ways of communicating with your child's other parent
- Deal with one issue at a time
- Don't mix up the issues of care and contact with maintenance – they are different
- Find a way to agree arrangements for care and contact
- Find a way to agree arrangements around maintenance
- Agree that you will put the needs of your children first and not withhold contact or maintenance to get what you want... it is your children who will suffer in the long-run.

Your adult relationship may be over, but your children still see you as just mum and dad.

more support...

NCH it's not your fault: this wonderful online resource with practical information for children, young people and parents going through a family break-up.

Child Maintenance Options: the new government service that provides impartial information and support to help both parents make an informed choice about child maintenance. Online or 0800 988 0988.

Citizens Advice: CAB provides independent advice on your rights and practical, up-to-date information on a wide range of topics. Find them online or in your local high street.

Parentline plus: a national charity that works for, and with, parents. It offers support to mums, dads, grandparents, stepparents, other relatives, friends and foster carers. 0808 800 2222.

Cafcass: Cafcass looks after the interests of children involved in family court proceedings. Their website also has lots of useful information for children and parents alike.

MATCH - mothers apart from their children: a much needed organisation dedicated to offering non-judgemental emotional support to mothers who are apart from their child. Find them online.

Families Need Fathers: founded in 1974, FNF works and campaigns to support a child's relationship with both parents during and after family breakdown. 08707 607 496.

Relate: Relate offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face, by phone and through its website. 0300 100 1234.