



tips for
Parents
Relationships

MAKING TIME
to be together

TALKING
it through

Having fun **AS A FAMILY**

How to deal with
FAMILY BREAKUP

Getting **SUPPORT**

Family balance: *WORKING IT OUT*

Maria feels her husband Nino is being a bit hard on the kids. Since Michael and Antonietta got to high school, he hassles them about working harder at school. He also expects them to work more in the shop. They complain they have no time to do anything else. They are all at each other all the time... Maria feels like she's stuck in the middle.

One day Maria reads about a talk for parents on how to balance their kids' study and home life.

She tells Nino she is sick of all the arguing. She thinks this talk might help them work something out with the kids. Nino agrees to go.

There are other parents that they know at the talk. They are all trying to deal with the same problems. Nino and Maria find the talk helpful. But it doesn't really stop the arguments at home.

Maria suggests to Nino that he goes to a parents' group to talk about it more. Nino finds it interesting listening to the other parents talk about their kids and their ideas about parenting. He doesn't always think they are right, though, and he talks to Maria about the things they say in the group. Maria thinks this is great because at least he is talking about the family. They realise they have to try to balance Antonietta and Michael's activities a bit more.

They decide to encourage them to spend more time with their friends. They also roster them in the shop at the same time each week.

Michael starts to plan his study time more, so that he can fit everything in. Antonietta even begins to enjoy helping her dad in the shop. There are still times when they are all at each other, but everyone notices the arguments are happening much less now.



Get **INVOLVED** with your kids' school so you can **MEET OTHER PARENTS**

Kids *LEARN* from *WATCHING YOU*



Have a good time

- Being a parent can be hard work. Organise things you will enjoy both by yourself and as a family.

Make time for yourself

- It is easy to forget to make time for yourself. Taking time out is important. Spend time with the people you are close to.
- Parents need support. Ask friends and family to help you out and give you a break.

Spend time individually with each of your kids.

- Every child is different. What suits one may not suit your other children.

Spend time with other parents

- Talk to other parents about their experience. While every family is different, you may get some new ideas about what may work for you and your children.

Kids learn from watching you

- Kids learn from their parents. They watch to see how you express your feelings. Name your feelings and be open about how you deal with them.

Parents are always learning

- As kids grow up their needs change. You will keep learning with them. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes.

Try to be consistent

- Try to set limits for your kids that are suitable for their age. Talk to them about the limits you set. Try not to be overly strict and controlling as this may have negative effects on your kids.

Ask for help and support when you need it

- If the first person you ask doesn't work out, try someone else. Keep trying until you find what is right for you and your kids.

Anxiety and depression are common

- Many children, adolescents and families have mental health problems, like depression or anxiety. Get help early as this will make a difference.



Family *BREAKUP*



Family arguments

- Kids are affected by parents arguing. Try not to involve your kids in your arguments.
- Let your kids know that it is not their fault that you are arguing or breaking up.
- Each kid will respond differently to family break-up. But they will cope better with the break-up if you don't fight in front of them.

Seek counselling early

- The earlier you seek help through counselling and mediation, the more likely you will resolve problems in your break-up. 95% of all these arrangements are sorted out without having to go to a court trial. You can get counselling from a range of community organisations.
- You can also get help from mediation services. They will help you reach practical agreements about separation, living and contact arrangements for the kids, and money and property. Mediation is available from community organisations and private mediators.
- If you can agree on arrangements for your kids outside of court, you can make them legally binding by registering a Parenting Plan.
- It's best if you can try and settle things with your former partner in this way, as court battles are often long, draining and costly. You can also seek legal advice throughout the mediation process if you need to.

During the process

- Be positive about the other parent to your kids. Let them know that it is OK for them to have a continuing relationship with both of you.
- It will take time for everyone involved to cope with the family break-up. Be careful not to take at face value what your kids say to you in the early stages.
- They might tell you what they think you want to hear because they feel divided loyalty to both parents.
- Let your kids know that it is OK to cry and feel angry about what has happened. It is best they can show their feelings.

After the break-up

- The best thing you can give your kids is your time and yourself – expensive presents and outings will not necessarily help.
- Talk with their teachers or child care workers so they understand the situation.
- It is likely that both parents will find new partners. Introducing them to your kids can sometimes be stressful for the kids. It's best to wait until your new relationship is established before your children become involved with your new partner.

Ask for **SUPPORT**

Everyone finds parenting hard at times. You are not alone. Support from family and friends is important in good times as well as in hard times. There are lots of people you can talk to. Friends can listen to your concerns. They can also tell you where they get help.

24-hour support

Lifeline and Parents Help Lines have phone counselling services 24 hours a day. They will listen to your concerns. They can help you find a professional in your local area to talk to.

Link in with local people

Find a good GP or doctor who can give you advice and support. They will know who you can contact in your area. If you don't know a good doctor, ask other people you know who they use.

Most schools have a welfare officer or counsellor who could help you or your child. Ask at the school.

Courses and groups give parents new ways to look at their situation. Most areas have a community health centre. Ask them about local groups and if they provide free counsellors. Some offer groups that support people in your situation.

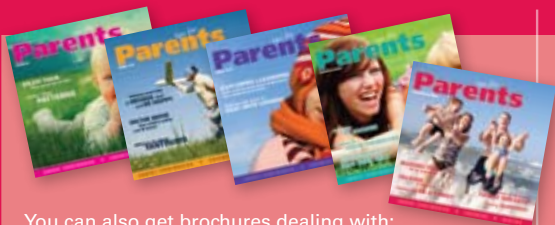


"I feel **CALMER, MORE IN CONTROL**, comforted that other families have the **SAME PROBLEMS** as our own."



"The course has reaffirmed some of my beliefs in how to approach conflict and has helped me to be more focussed in finding the right solution. It has also strengthened our relationship as parents because we are pursuing a common goal with a common set of objectives."

Get the set!



You can also get brochures dealing with:

• **Babies** • **Kids 1-4** • **Kids 5-11** • **Adolescents**

To order your copies from the Commonwealth
Department of Health and Ageing:

Fax 1800 634 400 to order now, or phone 1800 066 247

Useful numbers

Parent help lines in the following States and Territories:

NSW 1300 1300 52

VIC 13 22 89

SA 1300 364 100

QLD 1300 301 300

NT 1300 301 300

TAS 1300 808 178

ACT 02 6287 3833

WA 1800 654 432

LifeLine 13 11 14

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800

Raising Children Network

The Australian
Parenting Website
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

You can also contact Maternal and Child Health services, social workers, community health centres or your GP. Check the White Pages for phone numbers.

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