

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Calls to ParentLine Scotland about family relationships cover a wide range of issues, including:

- Separation
- Contact and residence
- Partner relationships
- Lone parents
- Family issues

Family lives can be complex and there can be many different relationships and dynamics within the family at any one time.

Many of the calls we receive at ParentLine Scotland regarding family relationships are triggered by a specific incident, but these are often combined with additional concerns such as alcohol, drugs, financial worries and relationship problems.

All families have their ups and downs and each of us reacts in different ways to these. Key life changes such as moving house, separation, divorce, birth, death and marriage can be difficult not only because they involve change but can often involve coping with feelings of loss as well. It is important that everyone in the family is allowed to express their feelings as they may vary from person to person. In times of change, remember the people that are constant in your family's lives – grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends – can make a difference.

Children and young people often find it hard to express their feelings, and can at times display quite challenging behaviour. It is important to take time to try to find out what the underlying cause of their unhappiness is.

Managing Conflict and Change

- Communication is key to sorting out any differences within the family. If your children will not talk to you, there may be another adult they trust.
- Try to have a consistent approach and set age appropriate boundaries, but also listen to what your child is saying and how they are feeling.
- Often we can listen but we don't hear. Let the person know you have understood what they have said and check out how they are feeling.
- Try to let everyone have his or her say and be prepared to compromise if possible.
- You may not all agree but try to find a way to resolve any disagreements without shouting or smacking. Children can learn from how conflict is resolved in a family

Separation & Divorce

The impact of divorce and separation on children is a major concern for many parents. Although some children are able to adjust to change and the formation of a new family, many find separation and divorce extremely difficult.

For those involved, it is vitally important, where at all possible, that communication between parents remains civil for the sake of the child. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk to someone who can act as a mediator in difficult circumstances.

Within all families, whether you are trying to bring up your children with a partner or on your own, good communication is essential whatever the circumstances.



What You Can Do

- Remember it is important to listen to your children
- Respect their feelings and fears (they maybe different from yours)
- Emphasise that what is happening is not their fault
- Expect a change in behaviour for a time
- Reassure them that your feelings for them remain the same
- Keep them informed of agreements/decisions
- Involve them in decisions about the family but don't involve them in arguments
- Involve outside agencies for additional support and mediation (if appropriate)
- Find support for yourself too!

The helpline opening hours are:

Monday to Friday: 9am-10pm

Saturday and Sunday: 12noon-8pm



Contact us

The helpline can be contacted on:

t: **08000 28 22 33**

e: **parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk**

We can help you take action to achieve change where it is needed.

For further information about CHILDREN 1ST please contact:

CHILDREN 1ST, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh EH9 1AT

t: 0131 446 2300

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For more information on family group conferences or to find out how you can help and to order any of our publications, visit our website: **www.children1st.org.uk**

