



PARENTING

resource kit



Congratulations

on agreeing to participate under these difficult circumstances.

By being here, you have acknowledged the importance of the other parent and possible others in your children's lives. Your commitment to having your children grow up in a safe environment with the love and support of both of their parents is commendable.

In their future, your children will look back and really appreciate the effort you both made to sit down and calmly discuss what they needed.

This resource kit will help you prepare a parenting plan to help meet your child's needs.

Studies have concluded that children benefit when both parents are involved and co-operating in their lives.

Children:

- do better at school
- are generally less likely to get into trouble
- establish better relationships
- are less likely to have mental health problems
- eventually become good parents themselves



Contents

| | |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| 01 | About my children |
| 02 | A reminder for you |
| 03 | About us |
| 05 | Preparation |
| 06 | Responsibilities |
| 09 | Checklist |
| 09 | Healthy parenting behaviours |
| 10 | Parental responsibility |
| 11 | Parenting time |
| 11 | Special days |
| 12 | Maintaining contact |
| 12 | Other family members |
| 13 | Children's activities |
| 13 | Transportation |
| 15 | Education |
| 15 | Housekeeping |
| 16 | Parenting decisions |
| 16 | Other matters |

About my children

In coming to dispute resolution, it is important to remember these sessions are about the wellbeing of your children now and in the future.

To help keep your children as the focus, please fill out the details below.

My children

| Name | Age | Write one word to describe them |
|------|-----|---------------------------------|
| | | |
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A reminder for you

about what children need from mum and dad

Children having a say...

1. It's ok to love both mum and dad without being judged.
2. I don't have to 'choose sides' if mum and dad are fighting.
3. I don't have to deliver messages for mum and dad to each other.
4. I don't have to listen to bad things about either parent.
5. I have the right to feel safe and to be safe.
6. I don't have to be a counsellor for my parents.
7. I shouldn't be asked to keep secrets from mum or dad.
8. I don't have to fix things for other people.
9. I have the right to express my views about things that affect me.
10. My feelings are important and I can tell others about how I am feeling if I want to.
11. I can talk to (insert name of someone safe that is not either parent) or call the KIDS Helpline on 1800 55 1800 if I am not feeling good about what is happening.

Contact your local Interrelate centre for a copy of this resource

About us

Interrelate is an innovative and flexible provider of relationship services in NSW. We specialise in supporting parents and children and strengthening family relationships.

Since 1926, we have been delivering quality relationship services to individuals, couples, families, children, schools and communities through our network of centres and outreach locations across NSW. We are strengths-based and child focused in our approach.

Our vision and values

Our vision is to lead the way in providing responsive, cutting-edge, transformative relationship services with and for our diverse communities.

Our guiding principles are our **RELATE** values:

Respect: Foster an environment of respect and a strength-based culture in all contact with clients and each other

Equity: Provide people with equitable access to services and information, acknowledging the diversity, needs, rights and worth of all people

Leadership: Be recognised as a leader in providing quality relationship services in a way that maximises outcomes for a diverse range of target groups

Accountability: Commit to sound ethical principles and standards of practice and operate within an outcome-based framework that recognises shared responsibility and accountability

Transparency: Serve the needs of staff and clients in a fair, ethical and impartial manner and providing consistent and transparent practices and procedures

Empowerment: Offer services that focus on empowering people to build capability and resilience



We support the right of a child

- to know that their mum and dad love and care for them
- to have both their mum and dad safeguard them from being hurt
- to see both their mum and dad regularly
- to be heard
- to be included
- to be protected from involvement in conflict
- to have mum and dad stop fighting – and keep talking

*It's within our reach to give our children
happy childhoods even when the family
lives in two different places*



Preparation

At the beginning of your dispute resolution session, your practitioner will ask each of you if you would like to make a brief opening statement.

In this statement, it may be helpful to include:

- ways you would like to address the needs of your children and your parenting arrangements
- issues you would like to discuss
- what you hope to achieve from the session
- concerns you may have about your current situation

Jot down some notes for your opening statement



Responsibilities

As a parent, I will take responsibility for the following aspects of my child's life.

Special needs of children of separated parents

Yes

No

I support my children's right to communicate with both parents and others who are important to them, particularly if they are distressed

When my children have complaints about the other parent – as children do – I will help them deal with the problem without criticising the other parent

I understand that my children are also suffering from grief and loss and I will support them emotionally to adjust to living in a separated family

I understand that my children may also be suffering from grief and the loss of extended family members from both sides and will help them to keep in touch

The practical aspects of parental responsibility

Yes

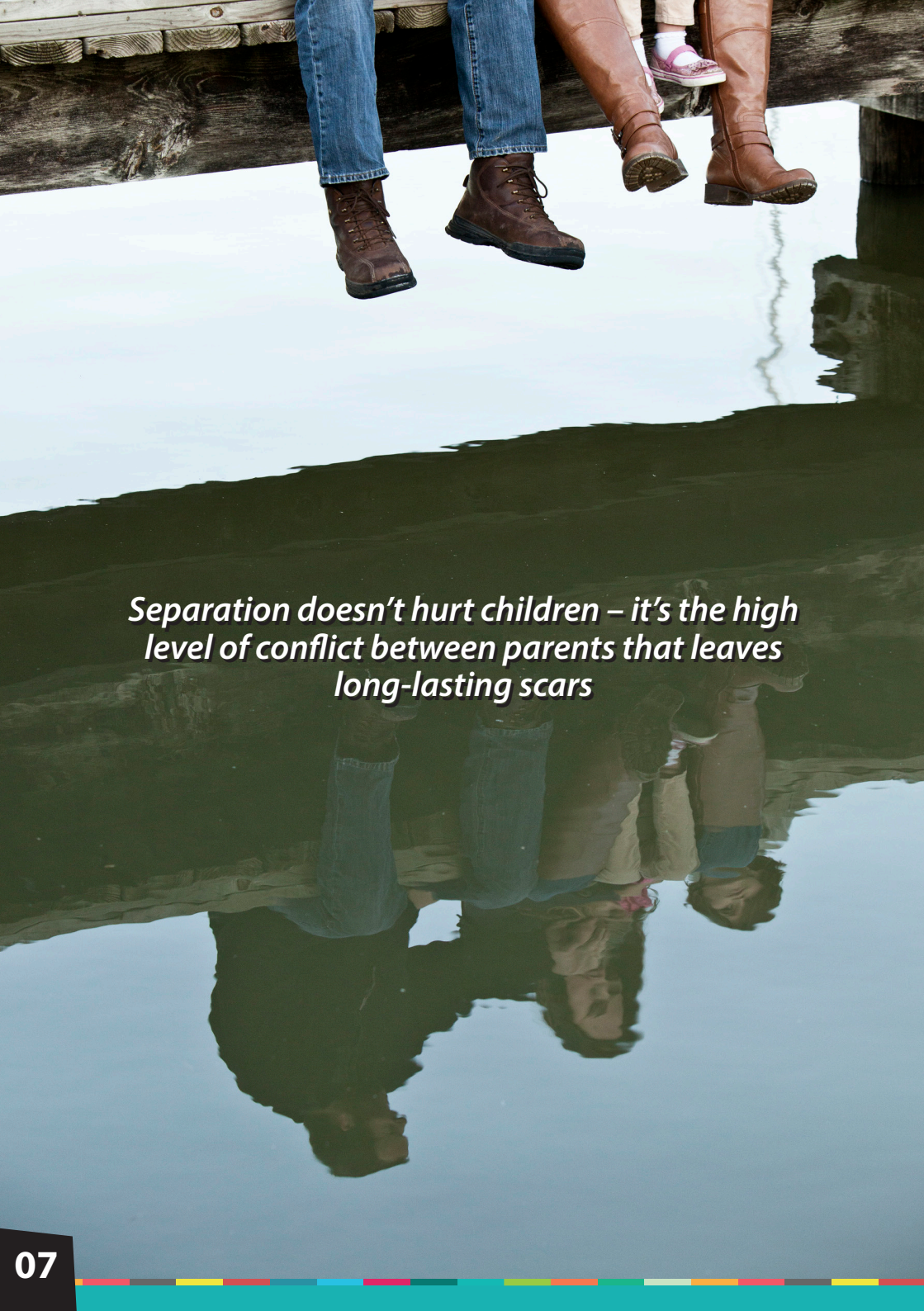
No

I agree to take responsibility for my children's physical and mental health when they are with me.

I support my children's right to alter their contact arrangements for special events.

I agree to my share of transporting the children, which may include:

- to and from the other parent's home
- to and from school
- to and from special events, e.g. sports, parties, visiting friends
- Other (specify)



Separation doesn't hurt children – it's the high level of conflict between parents that leaves long-lasting scars



Healthy parenting behaviours

I agree to work towards parenting behaviours around my children without burdening them with adult problems or responsibility for decisions they don't want to have to make

Yes No

I will not fight with the other parent in front of my children

I will not bicker or put the other parent down in front of my children

I will take steps to manage my own personal issues so my children will not need to bear my burdens

I will not be abusive or violent to anyone in front of my children

I will try not to break agreements or contact arrangements, particularly at the last minute

I agree to support and encourage positive communication with the other parent

I agree to support and encourage positive communication with extended family members on both sides

I agree to support and be involved in my children's schooling, where possible, as follows:

- Sporting events
- Special event days
- Volunteering at school
- School reports
- Short and long-term schooling needs

Checklist

The following is a checklist of what you might consider as you put together your parenting agreement or plan. Not all points will be relevant to your circumstances and you may have other concerns that aren't listed.

If you have any concerns or need clarification, please speak with your practitioner.

1 Healthy parenting behaviours

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I aware of how the emotional impact of separation has affected me?
- Do I need to seek assistance or emotional support to help me clearly see how our family separation has affected my children?
- Do my children need to know we are getting help to sort out an agreement about what time they will spend with each of us?
- Have I given my children an opportunity to be involved in the decisions that are being made about them without burdening them with adult problems or responsibility for decisions they don't want to make?
- Is this whole process of negotiating an agreement overwhelming me? Should I get someone to help me put together a fairer proposal that reflects the needs, concerns and desires of my children?

Your notes



2 Parental responsibility

Am I denying my children the opportunities they need to be with the other parent? Is my proposal designed to benefit me or my children?

What help do I need to be able to meet my responsibility as a parent to support my children's needs, desires and future aspirations whether they happen to be with me or with the other parent?

Your notes

Children's behaviour and feelings of self worth are directly connected to the level of parental conflict.

Needing to win comes at a terrible price.



3 Parenting time

- How much time should each child spend with their mum and dad?
- How structured or flexible should arrangements be?
- If changes become apparent, how much notice is required?
- How will we organise holidays (ours and theirs)?
- How do we make sure that the children spend quality time with both parents?

Your notes

4 Special days

What needs do my children have for special days like:

- Christmas _____
- Children's birthdays _____
- Parent's birthdays _____
- Mother's Day and Father's Day _____
- Other important days in our family _____
- Long weekends _____
- School holidays _____



5 Maintaining contact

Do we need to discuss how our children will maintain contact with us when they are with the other parent (e.g. phone calls, email, letters)?

Your notes

6 Other family members and people who are significant to the child

Do we need to discuss how our children will maintain their relationship with extended family members (e.g. grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) and other people significant to them?

Your notes

Now is the time to resolve to make a difference for your children so they can grow up as healthy as possible

7 Children's activities

How can we ensure our children's participation in cultural, artistic, sporting or other activities?

Your notes

8 Transportation

How will our children move between houses and their activities?

Your notes

I am helping my children by:

- understanding the effects of family separation on them
- understanding the impact of our conflict on them
- improving my communication with the other parent
- becoming a more effective parent



In Australia, around 42% of first marriages and 50% of second marriages end in divorce.

After separation, talking without conflict can be tough, especially when you may no longer have much in common.

9 Education

- What are our children's present and future educational needs?
- What type of school do we want them to attend?
- How much will each of us be involved in school activities?
- Will we each receive information from the school?
- How will homework be managed?
- Will we share contributions to extra costs like excursions?

Your notes

10 Housekeeping

- Will we share responsibility for washing out children's clothes?
- How and by whom will our children be fed during the week?
- Will any of our children's possessions be shared between the households?
- Will we share in the purchase of presents for our children's friends?
- What other practical issues need to be considered?

Your notes



11 Parenting decisions

- What parenting decisions do we think require joint consultation?
- How will we discuss these decisions and if we disagree, how will we resolve our differences?
- Do we need to set up regular meetings to discuss parenting matters?
- How will we decide if and to what extent the children should be included in our discussions?
- Do we need to discuss how we talk to our children about the other parent?
- Do we need to review this plan and if so how do we go about it?

Your notes

12 Other matters

Are there any other matters we need to discuss that will benefit our children?

- Religious, spiritual?
- Special health needs?
- Emergency procedures?
- Important values and principles?

Your notes

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