



The Emotions

Break-ups: Parents' Experience

- The end of a relationship is a serious loss, regardless of who started it, both grieve
- You may feel loss of your prior identity, your dreams, partner, two-parent household, the ideal childhood for the kids, financial freedom, steady family or partner childcare arrangement, stable emotional support, your current social life, and other aspects of being partnered that you may not realize you liked or needed until they're gone
- You may have to divide up your friends, extended family, or change affiliations with groups, teams, etc.
- Friends and family might take sides. Some may fuel the fire of your conflict and you may no longer trust certain people to be loyal to you when around the kids
- The changes can bring feelings of happiness, anxiety, sadness, relief, anger, confusion, worry, and shame



Stages of Grief and Loss Through Separation

The process takes 1-2 years, begins at different times for each family member, and usually follows the stages in the order presented, although that can vary



Stages	For Adults	For Children
Denial Feels like emotional numbness	This can't be happening. She or he will come back and we will work it out. This is the BEST thing I've ever done and I can't wait to enjoy it!	Mom and Dad can't be hurting me and each other. It's only temporary. They will get back together.
Anger Hurt, pain and fear turn into negative thoughts	How could she or he do this to me? I'm the responsible one. He or she is not the person I knew. I still have to put up with you!	How could they do this to me? If they loved me, they would stay together.
Bargaining Trying to make a deal with the other parent or yourself to avoid pain	If we get counseling or I change, then we'll get back together. If I give you all the money, I can take kids away	If I am really good, maybe they will get back together.

Stages of Grief and Loss Through Separation, cont.



Stages	For Adults	For Children
<p>Depression Once anger wears off, real feelings of sadness emerge</p>	<p>I'm overwhelmed. I can't cope. It's all too much. No one understands.</p>	<p>It's my fault. I hate school. I hate my life. Nothing is okay.</p>
<p>Acceptance Life is different and you no longer try to keep the status quo, but instead embrace the changes</p>	<p>It's over. I need to get on with my life and career and help our kids get their lives back to normal.</p>	<p>Mom and Dad are not getting back together and it's okay.</p>
<p>Growth You try to improve your life, your child's life and your co-parenting relationship</p>	<p>I've moved on. I know myself better. I'm ready for something new and maybe better.</p>	<p>I don't have to pretend anymore. Mom and Dad want me to love both of them.</p>

Things to Consider:

- Where are YOU in the grieving process?
- What do you need to do to get to acceptance/growth?
- Where are your kids in the process?
What can you do to assist them to get to acceptance and growth?

