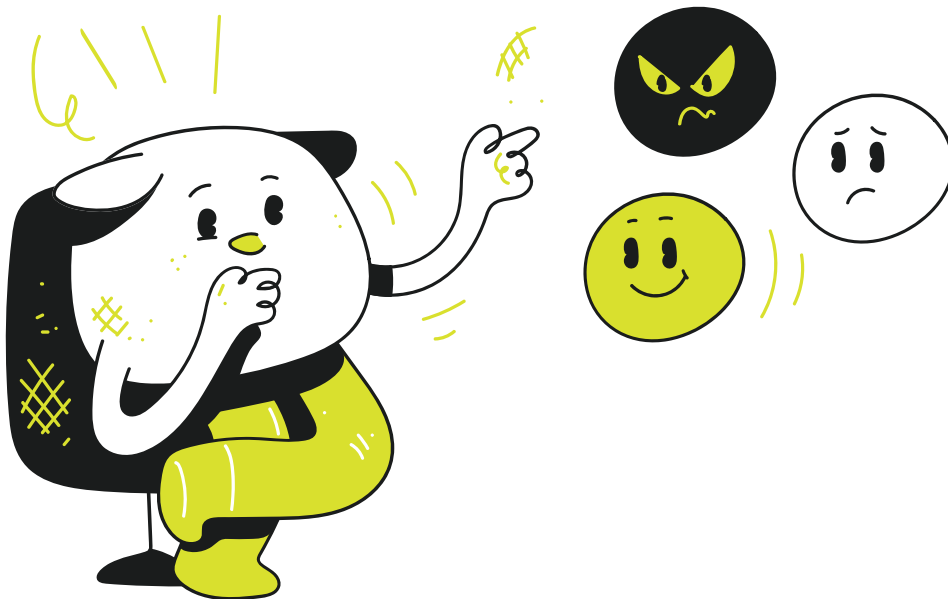


Feelings when your parents separate

Remember: it's normal to have a lot of big feelings about the separation.



There's no one 'right' way to feel when your parents break up.

Whether you're sad, hurt, angry – or even relieved and happy – **however you're feeling is ok.**

If your parents have just separated, it can feel like your whole world has come crashing down. If they separated a long time ago, it is **really normal** to still have strong feelings about it, even years later.

Your feelings may change over time too. For some kids, the initial shock of the change is the worst bit. For others, the grief gets worse further down the track when reality sets in or when stepfamilies come into the picture.

All these feelings can be hard to understand and manage – especially if you've never felt them before.

Whatever you're feeling, know you're not alone. Other kids are experiencing similar things to you.

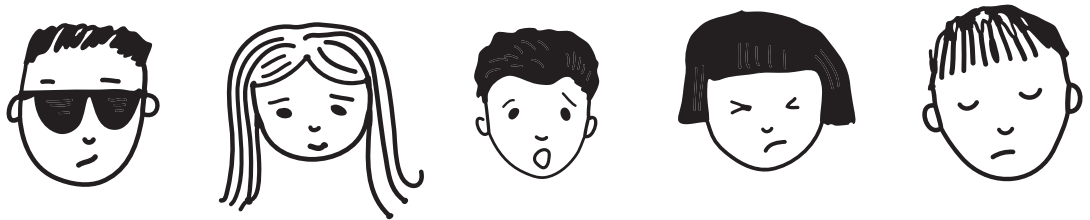
Below, some young people have shared how they feel about separation.



Common feelings at the time of separation

When parents first decide to separate, **it's common to feel:**

- Scared
- Confused
- Sad
- Hurt
- Angry
- Worried.



If things have been bad at home, **you might feel relieved or even happy.**

Maybe your new home can be **safer** and more **peaceful**, less full of anger.

You might feel hope that your parents will stop fighting.

There are also some big 'grown up' feelings you might not have felt before, like **heartbreak**, **shock** and **despair**. You might feel **invisible**, **alone**, **protective** of a parent, **helpless** or even **hopeless**.

Anchor kids share their feelings

These are BIG feelings for kids to have and to manage. Here's what some Anchor kids have shared about how they've felt.

Heartbroken



Feeling like everything
is changing forever...

**"It feels like my heart
is torn in two."**

DAVID, 7

Shocked



When you don't really understand
what's happening and it doesn't
seem real...

**"They were so good together.
I think to myself, 'If they can't
make it, who can?'"**

GEORGIA, 14



Despairing



When you feel like everything is awful, you've lost too much and you'll never be happy again...

"I remember in primary school just being the 'sad kid' – for years – and crying in the classrooms. I can't remember any teacher asking me what was wrong. Things were the worst in Year 4. My teacher was this scary man and you'd try not to cry so he wouldn't get cross with you."

LEIGH, 17

Worried



When the future feels uncertain and you're anxious about what's going to happen...

"Mum told me she wants Dad to be part of my life... and I feel so relieved."

OLIVIA, 8

Invisible



Like your parents are too caught up in their own problems to notice you and how you feel...

"People are always telling me what to think or what I feel... and not really asking me."

HANNA, 13

Alone



Like no one is there for you. No one really cares...

"I always listen. I've always listened... but no one ever listens to me..."

JAKE, 12





Protective

Worried for your parents. Trying to protect them by not telling them things...

“I finally talked to Dad about my feelings – but only after he asked. We went out for dinner and he said, ‘You know, you can say anything.’ But you know, I can’t. He’s really sensitive and I wouldn’t want to hurt his feelings. I told him... but I didn’t tell him everything.”

CHLOE, 14



Hopeless

When you lose hope that they’ll ever stop fighting, or even be nice to each other or that things will get better...

“When my parents kept fighting all the time about me – where I was living, going away interstate to see my granny, paying for things like my school camp – I just felt really bad and hollow. Like there was a big hole inside me and something was wrong with me... I thought they would never be able to solve anything ever again. They’re trying not to fight around me now, so it’s a lot better.”

MALI, 13

Activity time

What feelings have you had?

It’s a good idea to **keep track of your feelings and moods**.

If your emotions become so big they feel hard to manage, it’s important to get some help with them.

If you feel like your feelings are really overwhelming, **check out our ‘When you’re feeling really down’ Anchor tip sheet** or our **Feelings Chart**.

Everyone feels different feelings in a family. Even about the separation. There is no right or wrong way to feel, feelings just are what they are at that moment. And, in time, our feelings will change.



Have you ever felt these feelings about the separation?

Tick the ones that make sense to you:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scared | <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Helpless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad | <input type="checkbox"/> Despairing | <input type="checkbox"/> Alone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful | <input type="checkbox"/> Invisible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeful | <input type="checkbox"/> Heartbroken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worried | <input type="checkbox"/> Shocked | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relieved | <input type="checkbox"/> Protective | |

Or add your own words to express how you felt:

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |
| • _____ | • _____ |

Then maybe you could write a letter to your parents, or draw them a picture, so you can talk to your parents about those feelings you ticked?

If you want to talk about what has happened in your family – or about the feelings you're having – it can be helpful to chat with a trusted adult, a school counsellor or even one of our Anchor counsellors. **Find people who listen.**

You can call this free kids helpline any time day or night:
Kids Helpline 24/7 1800 55 1800

