

When you feel caught in the middle

Remember: It's ok to **ask for help** if you feel stuck between your parents.

It's terrible when parents fight.

It might feel very scary. You might worry that they'll hurt each other.

Maybe you just feel fed up like: "Why can't they just sort things out? They're worse than kids!"

It probably **feels even worse when they're fighting about things to do with you**, like:

- How much they each get to see you
- What time should they pick you up
- Who will pay for excursions
- What you should be allowed to do
- Time together in the holidays.

"I do get caught in the middle. Mainly when they are fighting about money."

SELENA, 15

Sometimes when parents fight they don't want to talk to each other.

Then **they might ask you to send messages** to your other parent like:

- "Take this note to your father."
- "Tell her I won't be picking you up at that time."
- "Remind him about that party."

This is when kids often feel caught in the middle.

Because parents can get really angry about the messages from the other parent!

You're not alone. Many kids we've spoken to have felt stuck, caught or pushed into the middle. It's important to ask for help if you feel this way!

You can speak to:

A trusted adult

Kids helpline 1800 55 1800

Your school counsellor



Here's what some Anchor kids have told us about feeling caught in the middle.

"It feels like it's my fault."

"I've always felt like the fixer in the family. The bridge. When I'm with Dad, I sort of take Mum's view. And when I'm with Mum, I take on Dad's. I was getting caught in a lot of arguments that way. But it was their argument. I couldn't fix it."

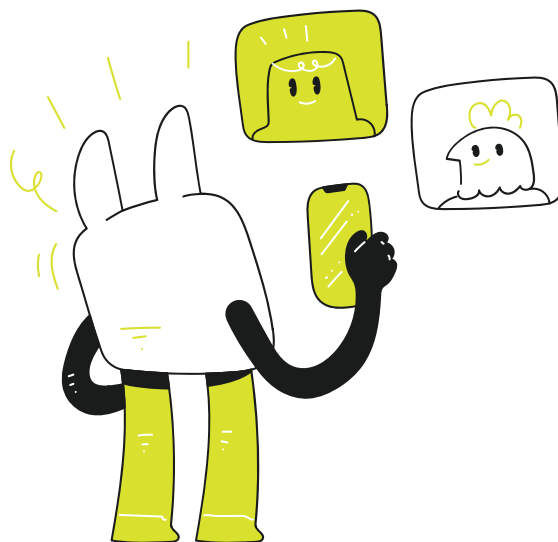
HARRY, 14

Often kids can end up feeling responsible for their parents' fights.

This is especially true when the reason they are fighting seems to be about you.

But adult fights aren't about kids. They are angry with each other and find it hard to solve things. But that's not your fault.

Adults need to find ways to sort things out when they disagree – no matter what it's about. **It is never your fault.**



"Court seems to make it worse."

"I told Mum I wanted to live with her. I told Dad the same thing. Now they're in court fighting more."

SHELLY, 10

When a parent decides to go to court to try and find a solution, it can feel even worse!

Parents have lawyers, judges and child experts to help them work things out – but sometimes they just fight a lot more!

It can feel pretty bad for kids. **Some kids even feel like they caused their parents to go to court.**

They might feel like they're to blame because they say they're unhappy about something at the other parent's place. Or because they can't decide who to live with.



“It’s exhausting being in the middle!”

“Every time I get a note, I have to remember to show both Mum and Dad or they get into a fight. Once I forgot to tell Mum about a parent teacher evening and that was really bad.”

JILL, 10

Kids take on too much responsibility for trying to stop their parents fighting. It’s not a kid’s job! Kids have no power to stop the fights! **One parent thinks things are one way (blue)** and **the other parent only sees them a different way (yellow)**... but kids often can see both sides of their parents fight. To them it’s a mixture, **some blue, some yellow**, maybe a mix, **green**... and then some bits are **red** or **purple**... because kids can have their own ideas too!

The most important thing is to remember even if they fight, they still love you, and want the best for you. There are places parents can go to sort things out, like mediation, or counselling or even for some, they may need to go to court. Hopefully they can write up an agreement and then the fights can stop.

Meantime, it is worth trying to stay out of the middle of fights... and leave the adult stuff to the adults, even if they seem more like kids for a little while!

If you want to talk about what has happened in your family – or you’re feeling caught in the middle – 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

