

# Anxiety & Separated/Divorced Parents



No matter what age you are, finding out that your parents/caregivers are separating or divorcing is never easy. You may be questioning why this is happening, maybe you believed they had a strong relationship, and even when it comes as no real surprise it can still be a shock! If, you are also trying to manage the anxiety you may be feeling overwhelmed. Transitions like this, no matter what age you are, or how long your parents/caregivers were together, are challenging. We can easily blame ourselves or think back to scenarios and what may or may not have helped. As much as your parents/caregivers are the ones going through this, it impacts you too. So how can you journey through this?

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## How to journey through this ...

### **1. Ask friends who have separated or divorced parents for their tips.**

As much as everyone's experiences are different, you may find you get a tip or two that is beneficial to you. On top of that, you know that person understands what you are going through. They may be able to support you through this.

### **2. Talk to your parents about how you are feeling.**

In healthy parent/caregiver–children's relationships, your parents/caregivers want the best for you, so informing them what the situation is doing to you may help them understand you better and they can advise you on support and options available. Your feelings are valid too...

### **3. Set Boundaries**

If you feel you are being put in the middle or in an uncomfortable situation, consider setting boundaries, and asking each parent/caregiver to respect these. This could be stating you aren't going to talk about the other parent/caregiver, whom the other is dating, you want to take holidays year about etc.

### **4. Get Support**

When managing anxiety, you may already have tools and techniques that work for you, transitions like this are when it's important to utilise these. Monitor this, and if needed, don't be afraid to reach out for additional support through GP or counselling services.

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## How to journey through this ...

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### **5. Ask Questions**

It's OK to take time to talk to your parents/caregivers together, or separately and ask questions. They may not want to answer all of them, or maybe they want time to heal and you can revisit the questions later. When you know the answers to questions you are informed and can manage the situation better. However, it is also important to balance this with respect for your parents/caregivers, if they are uncomfortable answering, give them space, respect this, and move on.

### **6. Be aware of changes**

Big transitions like this can have their impact, if you find your concentration lacking, or your relationships changing (you may find you resent a parent for the separation, or you lean on a parent more due to feeling unsettled) or how you view relationships changing ( you may find you no longer want a long term relationship/marriage, or start to doubt the validity of your relationships)

### **7. Take Care of Yourself**

We can get caught up in our parent's/caregivers' feelings, behaviours, and emotions, and forget about ourselves. This is not healthy as we then tend to suppress our own feelings and emotions, and eventually, this comes out in unhealthy ways. So, it's important to ask ourselves how we are feeling, how we are coping, what emotions are we experiencing etc, essentially, we are experiencing loss, so it's OK to grieve!

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## Remember ...

Whatever the circumstances around this, how you are feeling is valid, how you experience it is valid, and just because you are not in the relationship that is ending, does not mean you do not feel the sadness, disappointment, hurt etc that comes along with this. You may find comfort in reaching out to those around you, that aunt that you take to regularly, the cousin you meet every Friday night for a drink or a friend that only lives up the road and is always there for a shoulder to lean on. Be mindful though that when dealing with anxiety, you may need to go that step further to seeking additional support through your GP or counsellor to give that helping hand to manage it...but you are not alone!

# How Relate NI can help ...

## Golden Threads Project

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### Group Education Workshops

To promote understanding of healthy relationships, our expert Golden Threads Project Team can provide education workshops in youth & community settings in the Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council Areas. These can be tailored to your group, but will usually cover some of the following themes;

- **Relationships & Mental Wellbeing**
- **Nurturing Relationships**
- **Relationship Transitions**
- **Love Yourself**
- **Communicating Well**
- **Managing Conflict**



### One At A Time Therapy

We have recently launched a new single session therapy service, which can support individuals and couples with "#YourOneThing."

We have a limited number of funded sessions available to individuals in the Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council Area.

If you would like to chat opportunities through further, you can email [lynseyhassin@relateni.org](mailto:lynseyhassin@relateni.org) or by ringing 028 90323454 to speak to one of the Golden Threads project staff.

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