

Ten Top Tips



When you need to manage and survive separation and divorce

1. **Acknowledge** that experiencing divorce or separation can represent a serious life crisis, involving major changes. The loss and changes also impacts on other family members, including the children.
2. **Separation in itself is not harmful for children**, however conflict is. Avoid using the children to gain information about the other parent. Avoid speaking disrespectfully about the other parent to or within hearing distance of the children. Focus on your children's needs. They need your support.
3. **Understand** that you will be experiencing a range of confusing and painful emotions. Some of these may include anger, resentment, despair, relief, grief, fear, the inability to think clearly and a sense of injustice. Be aware that separation takes place at two levels, physically and emotionally. Emotional separation may take place long before the physical separation or vice-a-versa.
4. **Recognise** that one of you may be at a different stage to the other in the grieving process. One may be keen to move on and plan for the future, whereas, the other may still be trying to make sense of the separation, asking why, or trying to get the other partner back.
5. **Be informed and decide** for yourself what you want to do rather than listen to gossip.
6. **Ask yourself** whether you want to maintain an amicable ongoing relationship with your ex-partner, especially if you have children.
7. **Decide** whether you want to get into a fight over settling issues or deal with them cooperatively.
8. **Explore your options**. Basically, you have three options. These are:
 - Come to an agreement between yourselves;
 - Go down the adversarial path by going to court which will cost you time and money; or
 - Attend FDR where you can discuss your needs and concerns with a skilled impartial facilitator.
9. **If you decide on Family Dispute Resolution (FDR)**, seek out a FDR service provider that is approved and funded by the Federal Attorney General and where the Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner are qualified professionals who meet the requirements of the Family Law Regulations. Seek independent legal advice before signing any agreements or legal documents. Be aware that the legal process can prolong the agony as you will have little if any control over the system which can take up to 12 months.
10. **Start dealing only with immediate priorities**, especially if the separation is recent. Don't be in a hurry to settle things fast. You will be making important decisions that need careful consideration. Remember – there is a light at the end of the tunnel and you will gradually begin to feel better and commence building a new life.

