



STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

DIVORCE ISN'T EASY

It can be uncomfortable to have a conversation with a friend or family member who may be going through the process of a divorce or a separation. You can show your care, concern, and respect. So how do you do that? What do you say? How do you show your concern without being perceived as crossing the line? How do you support the friend or family member through this process?

SIGNS SOMEONE IS HAVING A HARD TIME COPING WITH A SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

- Appearing overly anxious or sad
- Withdrawing and turning away support
- Disengaging from responsibilities
- Losing sleep and feeling restless
- Appearing physically disheveled
- Not caring for personal environment (dirty home, car, etc. when that was not previously the case)
- Distracting self with high-risk behaviors such as substance use, excessive alcohol use, promiscuous behaviors

TIPS ON STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Check in to let the person know you care. You can do that through a telephone call or a quick text message. "Hey, I haven't seen you in a while. I know that you are going through some difficult changes. Why don't we hang out?"

- Don't judge. Every marriage and relationship has very different dynamics and what works for one may not work for another.
- Be willing to listen to the person express his or her feelings without needing to know all of the events that led up to the divorce/separation. Don't ask for the details. When you start asking lots of questions, you may unintentionally make the person feel judged. "I'm here for you to listen or just sit quietly. We can talk if you would like to, but we can also sit in silence. I just want you to know that I'm here for you."
- Acknowledge that this may be hard. Also, understand that you may not be able to help the person and that there are people who are trained to provide assistance. "Divorce isn't easy. It's normal to still have feelings for the person but recognize that it is not going to work out. That takes a lot of strength."
- Support the person in seeking support from a counselor or a chaplain. Look up the number to the Community Counseling Center, the Family Advocacy Program, or walk with the person to the chaplain's office. "I know of a great counselor that I used to talk to. Here is her name and number."
- Understand that the person may be alone for the first time and may just need to be around people. Invite the person over for the Thanksgiving meal, your ultimate Frisbee tournament, or for a Friday night pizza and movie night. "Come on over. I've missed spending time with you."
- Remind the person by your words and actions that you are there to help and provide support through this process.

TIPS FOR SOMEONE GOING THROUGH A SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

Going through a divorce or separation is never easy. It does not matter if you were married for one year or 25 years. The decision to end a marriage has a profound impact on your life. Families face huge changes to living arrangements, finances, and daily living. Here are some tips to help someone get through this difficult time:

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Be good to yourself mentally and physically. Make sure you are eating properly, getting enough sleep, and exercising. Take time to relax, do something you enjoy, and recharge your batteries.

INVEST IN YOURSELF

Do something that you have always wanted to do. Sign up for a painting class, join a club, take a class, or volunteer somewhere. Take the time to enjoy life, have new experiences, and make new friends.

FIND SUPPORT

You are not alone in this. Lean on your friends and family to help you. You can also join a support group either online or in-person to talk to others who are having similar experiences.

A divorce or separation can have additional complications when there are children in the family. Here are some tips to help kids in this situation:

MAINTAIN ROUTINES

Try to keep your family schedule. Maintain the schedule for homework, dinner, sleep, or whatever family routines you might have. Kids thrive in a predictable environment.

LISTEN

Listen to their concerns. Kids will often place some degree of blame on themselves. Reassure them that the divorce is not because of something they did or did not do.

PROTECT THEM

Your kids do not belong in the middle of the conflict. Do not make them take sides or use them as messengers. Avoid badmouthing their parent in front of them.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Services and resources are available to support families and children during this difficult time. The local [Community Counseling Program](#) and/or [Family Advocacy Program](#) can provide individual and family counseling. Financial support is available through the [Personal Financial Management Program](#).

Military OneSource is available 24/7 at 800-342-9647 or militaryonesource.mil and offers counselors to talk to as well as additional resources and information on its website.