

# Separation and Stress



FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA  
FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT OF AUSTRALIA

## Separation and stress

It has been acknowledged that separation and divorce are one of the most stressful life events a person can experience.

Regardless of the terms in which a relationship ended, there are a number of emotional, practical and legal matters that may need to be addressed, all of which contribute to heightened stress.

In addition, the end of a relationship can be a source of significant transition and disruption to normal routines, living arrangements, financial security and relationships with family and friends, resulting in potential feelings of uncertainty about the future.

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### Every situation is different

There is no common way to respond to separation or divorce – every situation is different – however there are some things you can do that may help guide you through this stressful time:

- Establish a support network around you to provide emotional support – don't try and do it alone.
- Be kind to yourself and allow yourself time to work through the emotions you are experiencing.
- Prioritise and practice self-care by maintaining a healthy diet, and ensuring you get regular sleep and exercise.
- Plan for things you enjoy doing. This includes maintaining your daily routine for stability where possible.

## Recognise the signs

The important thing is to look after yourself and learn to recognise when you just might need a bit of extra help and support. Stress is normal but if you feel stressed all the time and have been living with these symptoms for a while, it can lead to depression and other mental health issues in the future.

Look out for some of these symptoms:

- trouble sleeping
- feeling overwhelmed
- irritable or anxious all the time
- trouble concentrating
- feeling moody and easily frustrated

If you are experiencing any of these on an ongoing basis, you may benefit from additional support. There are a number of organisations that offer support and advice – see the support services listed on the next page.



## Who can help?

There are many organisations that offer support and advice.

Organisation	Phone	Website	Services offered
<b>Crisis and Mental Health</b>			
Lifeline	13 11 14	<a href="http://www.lifeline.org.au">www.lifeline.org.au</a>	24-hour telephone crisis support service.
Beyond Blue	1300 224 636	<a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au">www.beyondblue.org.au</a>	Support programs to address issues related to depression, suicide, anxiety disorders and other related mental illnesses.
Black Dog Institute		<a href="http://www.mycompass.org.au">www.mycompass.org.au</a>	Self-help tool for your mental health.
<b>Family Relationships</b>			
Family Relationship Advice Line (FRAL)	1800 050 321	<a href="http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au">www.familyrelationships.gov.au</a>	Service that helps families affected by relationship and separation issues.
Relationships Australia	1300 364 277	<a href="http://www.relationships.org.au">www.relationships.org.au</a>	Relationship and support services.
Parents Beyond Breakup	1300 853 437	<a href="http://www.parentsbeyondbreakup.com">www.parentsbeyondbreakup.com</a>	Support services.
<b>Kids and Young People</b>			
Headspace		<a href="http://www.headspace.org.au">www.headspace.org.au</a>	One-stop-shop for young people who need help with mental health, physical health, alcohol and other drugs or work and study support.
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800	<a href="http://www.kidshelp.com.au">www.kidshelp.com.au</a>	Counselling service for young people.
Reach Out		<a href="http://www.au.reachout.com">www.au.reachout.com</a>	Support services for under 25s.
<b>For Men</b>			
Mensline Australia	1300 789 978	<a href="http://www.mensline.org.au">www.mensline.org.au</a>	Counselling service for men.
<b>Financial</b>			
MoneySmart		<a href="http://www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling">www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling</a>	Free confidential financial counselling service.
		<a href="http://www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/urgent-help-with-money">www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/urgent-help-with-money</a>	Information on services to help with food, housing and bills, as well as emotional support.
<b>Family Violence</b>			
Respect	1800 737 732	<a href="http://www.respect.gov.au">www.respect.gov.au</a>	Sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling.
The Women's Services Network	1800 937 638	<a href="http://www.wesnet.org.au">www.wesnet.org.au</a>	Support for women and children who are or have experienced domestic or family violence.
inTouch	1800 755 988	<a href="http://www.intouch.org.au">www.intouch.org.au</a>	Support services for refugee and migrant women experiencing family violence.
<b>LGBTI</b>			
QLife	1800 184 527	<a href="http://www.qlife.org.au">www.qlife.org.au</a>	LGBTI support services.

## Additional resources

Relationships Australia has published two booklets to help men and women who are going through separation and divorce. *Men and Separation - Navigating the Future* and *Women and Separation - Managing New Horizons* can be found at: [www.relationships.org.au/relationship-advice/publications](http://www.relationships.org.au/relationship-advice/publications)

## Mental health

Although it is important to recognise that it is ok to have different feelings and experiences as you navigate the life changes associated with separation or divorce, it is also important to recognise when these feelings or experiences start to impact your ability to participate in day-to-day activities.

If this is the case, you may wish to seek additional support through a mental health care plan.

A mental health care plan is a support plan for someone who is going through mental health issues. If your doctor agrees that you need additional support, you and the doctor will make the plan together.

Further information on mental health care plans can be found on the following websites:

- [www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-care-plan](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-care-plan)
- [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare)

## Family violence and your safety

If you have fears for your safety, you should contact the police. The police are equipped to respond quickly and appropriately. Most police departments have trained family violence officers who can put your case into a state or territory court and arrange a family violence order (also called protection, domestic violence or apprehended violence orders) for you. Once such an order is made, the police will respond to and deal with breaches of it.

If you have fears about attending a court appointment at the same time or in the same room as your former partner, please tell the Court you are attending as soon as possible.

There are many options that can be considered. See the brochure [\*Do you have fears for your safety when attending court\*](#) at [www.familycourt.gov.au](http://www.familycourt.gov.au) for more information.