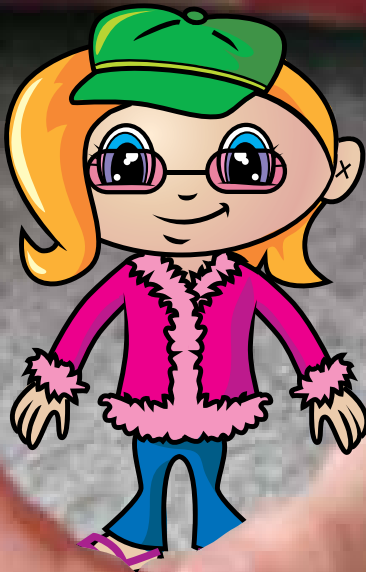


What happens to us when our parents break up?



This booklet will help answer your questions.

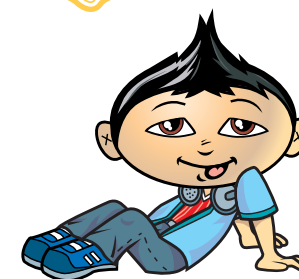
It also tells you some helpful things to know. Things like:

- It's **really** common for parents to break up.
- Most children find that things get **much easier** as time goes on.
- Most children do keep **seeing** the people they love seeing and **doing** the things they love doing.
- Your parents will **always** be your parents. They'll **always** love you.

"When your parents break up it's a confusing time. You're probably wondering what's going to happen."



If the answers to your questions aren't in here, at the back there's a list of people you can contact for help.



Does this happen
to lots of other
children?

Breaking up happens a lot, even
to families that have been
together for years. Several
thousand families in New Zealand
split up each year. That means
thousands of children belong to
a family or whānau where the
parents live apart.



IS IT MY FAULT?

No! You are **never** to blame when your parents split up. Your parents broke up because things went wrong **for them**.

WILL IT GET EASIER?

For some children, life gets easier as soon as their parents split up. Other children say it takes a while. One thing's for sure – nearly everyone says things get better as time goes on.

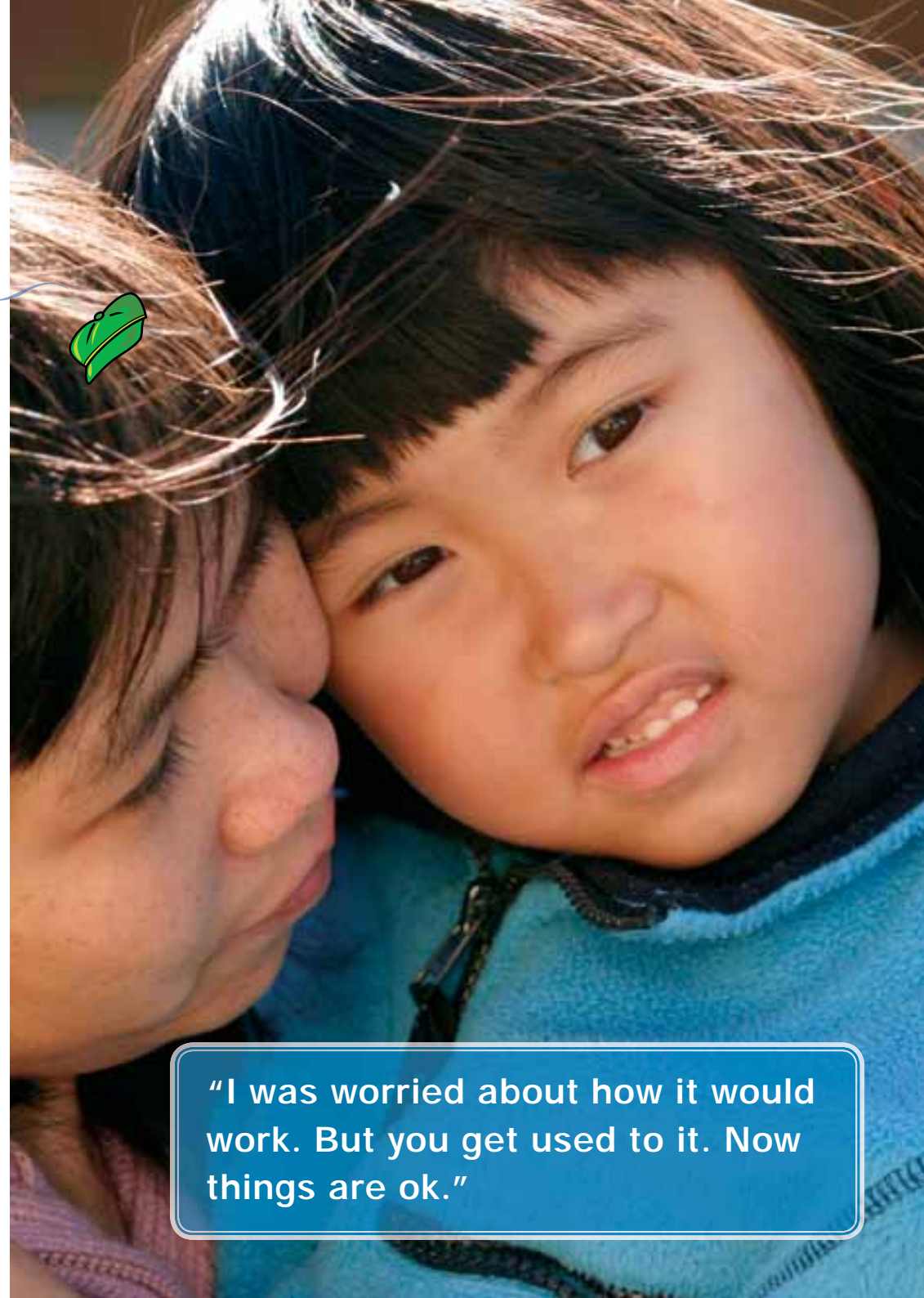


**"I really like spending time
with my mum, she's a lot
more relaxed now she's on
her own."**

Tanya

WHY HAVE I GOT SUCH STRONG FEELINGS ABOUT THIS?

It's okay if you have really strong feelings about your parents breaking up. Most children do.



**"I was worried about how it would
work. But you get used to it. Now
things are ok."**

There's a whole mixture of feelings you might have.

- You might be angry
- You might be scared
- You might feel relieved
- You might be worried
- You might feel guilty
- You might even be feeling happy



Sometimes you might feel fine, and sometimes you might suddenly feel bad, when you're in class, or during sports, or in bed at night.

"At first I didn't know what was going on or who was going to look after me. Now we've got a new routine and it's ok."

Dean

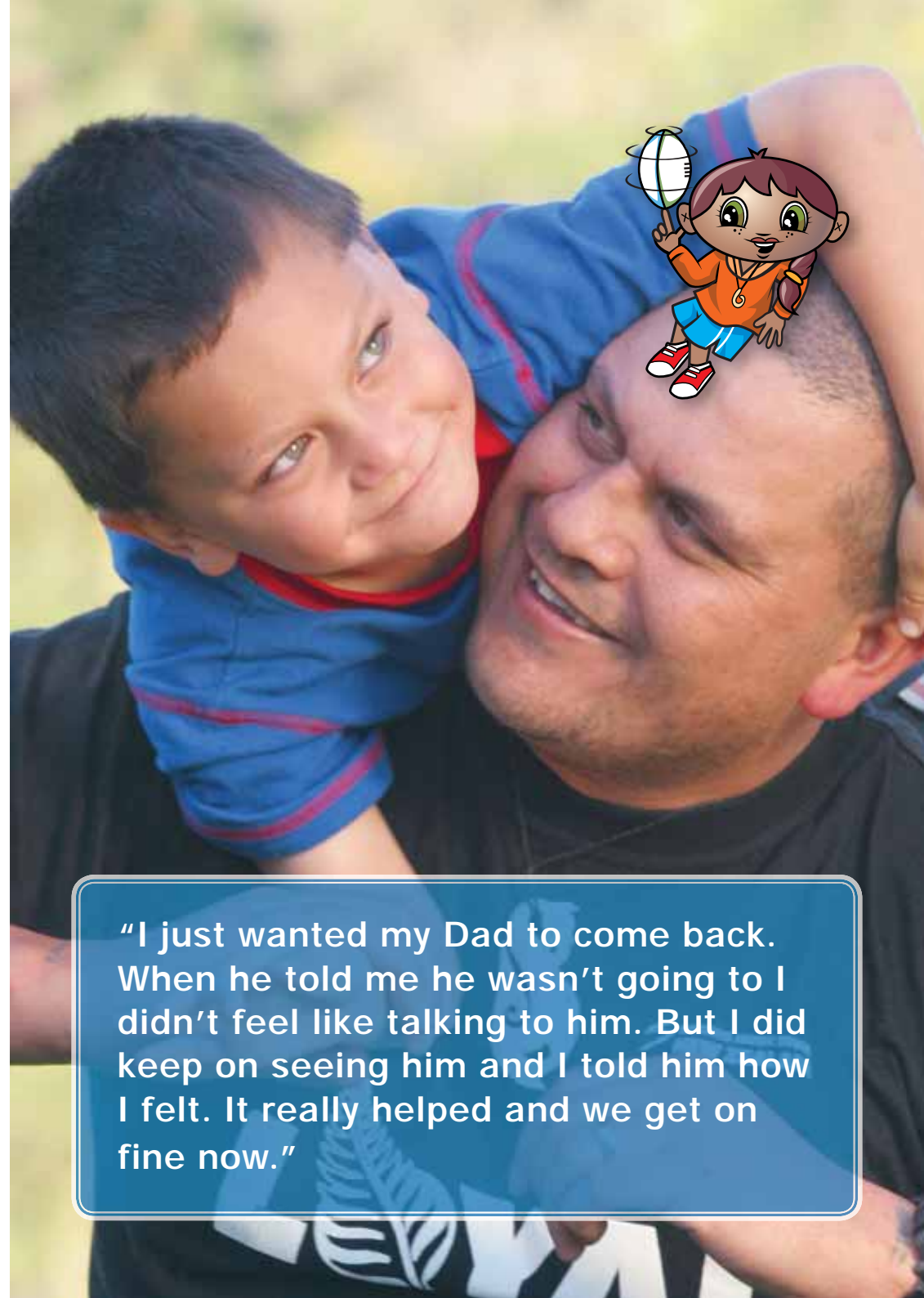
The thing is, whatever you feel is okay. Lots of children have gone through it. Most of them felt a lot like you do and most of them say it gets a lot easier.



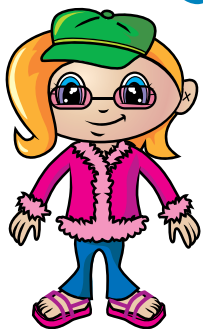
"At first all I wanted was for things to get back to normal and for them to get back together again. But now everything's settled down, I can see they're much happier, and I'm used to it."

Matthew

"I just wanted my Dad to come back. When he told me he wasn't going to I didn't feel like talking to him. But I did keep on seeing him and I told him how I felt. It really helped and we get on fine now."



What can I do to feel better?



Talking to other people about your feelings really helps – maybe your parents, other family or whānau members like a brother or sister, or an adult you trust. There might be a teacher you can talk to or a school counsellor. If you know someone whose parents have broken up, talk to them.

And it's a really good idea to talk to people who are used to helping children in your situation.

Phone:

Kidsline

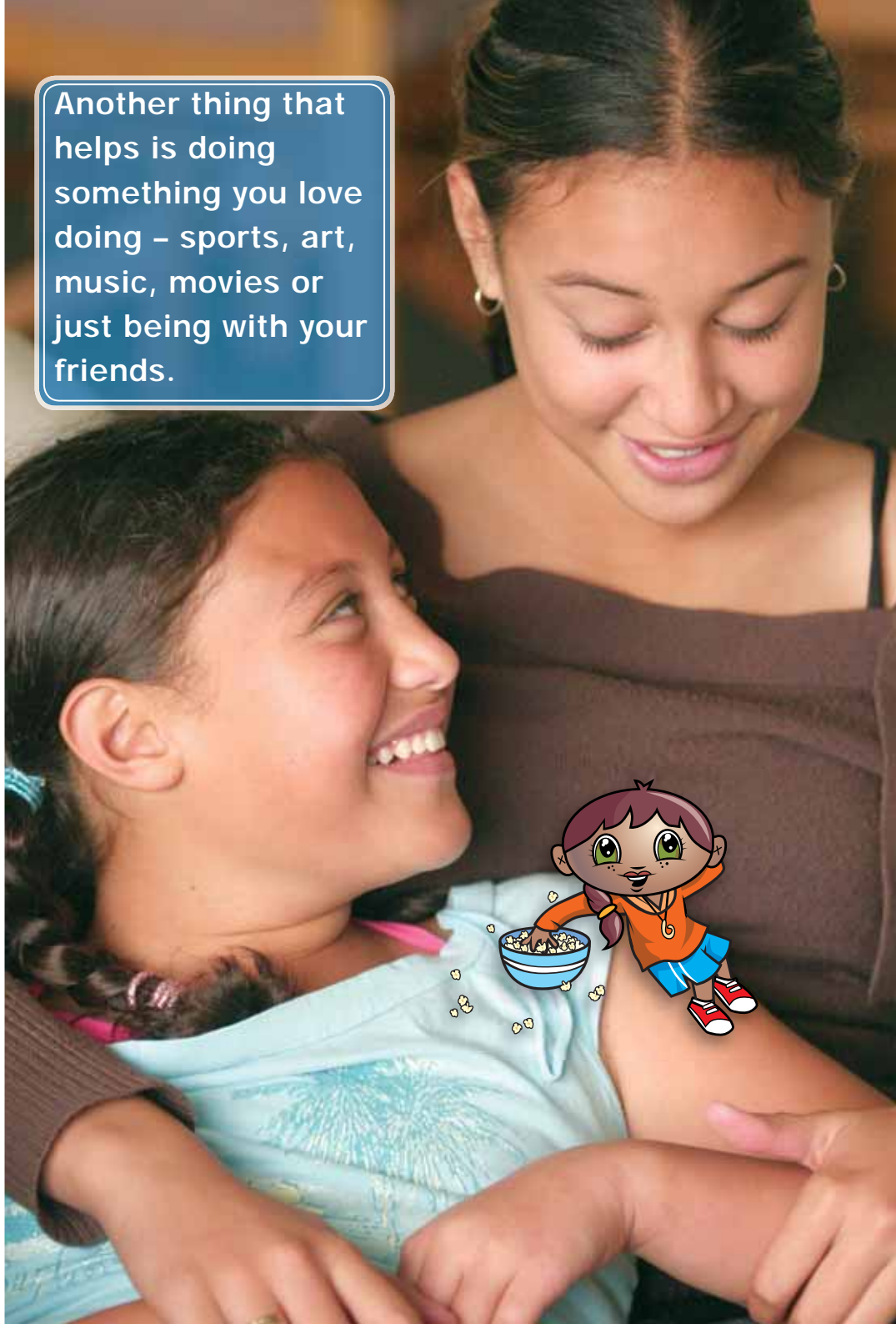
0800 KIDSLINE
(0800 543 754)

What's Up

0800 WHATS UP
(0800 942 8787)

The people who answer the phone are specially trained. They know about things which can make it easier for you to deal with tough times.

Another thing that helps is doing something you love doing – sports, art, music, movies or just being with your friends.



What if my feelings don't get better or I feel really bad?

Don't try to deal with it on your own. Talk to someone – your parents or whānau to start with. Or ring What's Up (0800 WHATSUP) or Kidsline (0800 KIDSLINE).



They're there to give free help and they know what you're going through. Give them a call – especially if it's hard to talk with someone face to face.

"I'd been bottling it all up for weeks, then I was with my auntie in the holidays and I told her all about it and cried. Afterwards I could talk to my mum as well and I started to feel better."

Grace

You should keep seeing both your parents and your family and whānau

WILL THINGS GET BACK TO NORMAL?

It might take a while because there's a lot to get used to – like having two homes or spending some time with your Mum and some time with your Dad.

There might not be much chance of your parents getting back together again. But there'll probably be less fighting. As time goes on, your parents will probably be able to get along fine.

Whose job is it to look after me now?

It's still both your parents' job to make sure you're looked after.



WILL I BE SAFE?

You have the right to **always** be safe. This applies no matter who is looking after you.

If you have any worries about your safety, tell an adult you trust or contact any of the organisations listed at the back.

If it's an emergency, and you feel really frightened or someone close to you is being hurt, dial 111 and ask to talk to the Police.

If you're not safe with one of your parents then you can be protected from them. It's your right to be safe **all the time**.

WILL I STILL SEE ALL THE PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT?

You should keep seeing both your parents and your family and whānau. Keep seeing your friends too – let them know what's going on.



WHO WILL I LIVE WITH NOW?

Usually you'll spend time with each of your parents in their separate homes.

If you usually stay with other family and whānau and friends some of the time, you should be able to keep doing this if you want to.

Having your say

CAN I SAY WHO I WANT TO LIVE WITH?

- If you're younger than 16, your parents will decide who you will live with. You've always got a right to say what you want to happen.
- Your parents will probably ask you what you want.
- If they don't ask, then let them know what you think.

Do I have to say who I want to live with?



No! You have the right to **say nothing if you want to**. You never have to choose. You can leave it up to your parents to make the decisions for you. But you can still let them know how you feel and what's important to you.

WHY SHOULD I TALK TO MY PARENTS ABOUT WHERE I SHOULD LIVE?

They're the ones whose job it is to look after you. They'll try and do what they think is best for you, but they might not know what you think. The best way to make sure they do is to talk to them.

WHAT IF MY PARENTS ARE SO BUSY I DON'T GET A CHANCE TO TALK TO THEM?

Parents get really busy sorting things out when they break up, but your feelings are important to them.

If it's hard to get them to listen, try some different ways.

Try when it's just the two of you – like in the car.

Ring or text them, or leave them a note on their pillow. It might be easier than talking face to face.



WHAT IF IT'S HARD TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS?

It might feel scary – but just talk! Let them know how you feel and what you think about what's happening.

"My Mum's gone away but we often have phone calls and we text each other most days."

Larissa



Sorting out the new arrangements

WHAT KIND OF ARRANGEMENTS WORK?

You can come to all sorts of different arrangements which might work out best for you and your family. Here are some examples:

"I spend 10 days in a row with each parent. I keep half my things at each house. It's hard looking after things like homework and sports gear, but I've got a system that works."

Lani

"I still have some of my school holidays with my grandparents and my cousins and the rest of the whānau."

Ra

"I like having two homes."

Rachel

How do we sort out the new arrangements for me?

Your parents will usually work out the arrangement that they think is best for you. They'll do this after asking you what you want. If they don't ask, let them know if you want to have a say.



"We live with Mum during the week and see Dad every other weekend and for half the school holidays. We're going to tell Dad we want to see him more."



HOW CAN I HELP MAKE THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS WORK?

Ask your parents to let you know the plans for you and mark them on a calendar.

Mark down "days with Dad, days with Mum", times, arrangements for holidays and arrangements for birthdays.

It helps to be organised. Ask for a special place just for you to keep your things at the different houses you stay in.

WHAT IF ONE OF MY PARENTS HAS MOVED AWAY?

There are ways to keep in touch – ask about visits in school holidays and for long weekends. You can keep in touch on the internet or by writing letters.

Getting on with your parents

WHAT IF I DON'T LIKE THE WAY MY PARENTS BEHAVE WHEN I'M AROUND?

It's natural not to like it when your parents argue in front of you. You don't have to stick around to listen. Leave the room if you want.

Tell your parents if you don't like it when they're mean about each other in front of you.

Tell them if you don't like it when they ask you to give messages to the other parent.

Tell them if you don't like it when they ask you about the other parent.

If they break an arrangement with you, tell them you don't like it because you feel let down.

WHAT IF I FEEL PRESSURED TO TAKE SIDES?

Say you don't want to choose between your parents and who's right. It's okay to love them both.

New partners

WHAT IF MY PARENT HAS A NEW PARTNER?

It's best just to be polite, even if you don't feel like it. Give them a chance. After all, it's not fair to blame them.

Tell your parent you want them to spend more time with you alone, if that's what you want.

WHAT IF MY PARENT'S NEW PARTNER HAS CHILDREN?

It will take time to get used to other children being around. Things like how it's harder for you to find a quiet place.

It's best to be nice. Remember, you're all in the same situation (they could be feeling the same way you are). Talk to your parent about any problems.

"My brother and I were unhappy for ages about the way that our Mum's new partner Dave treated his own children best. In the end we talked to Dad - he talked with Mum, she talked to Dave ... and everything got sorted out really well."
Alannah



REMEMBER:

**YOUR PARENTS
WILL ALWAYS BE
YOUR PARENTS
AND THEY WILL
ALWAYS LOVE YOU.**

Where can I go for more help now?

KIDSLINE:

Free counselling and support line for all kids (up to 18 years old). The person you talk to is a trained adult counsellor and isn't allowed to tell anyone what you say.

Buddy Support – Kids can talk to someone similar to a big brother or sister.

Information

FREEPHONE:

0800 kidsline (0800 543 754)

24 hours, 7 days a week

4pm – 6pm weekdays

www.kidsline.org.nz

YOUTH LINE:

Confidential youth help and information. For intermediate aged kids and older.

Information

FREEPHONE:

0800 376 633

8am – midnight.

Text 027 4 YOUTHS

Email talk@youthline.co.nz

www.urge.co.nz

www.whakamanawa.co.nz

WHAT'S UP:

Free counselling service for everyone up to 18 years old. Counsellors are specially trained to talk to children and teenagers. They aren't allowed to tell anyone what you say.

FREEPHONE:

0800 Whats up (0800 942 8787)

Mid-day to midnight

7 days a week

CHINESE LIFELINE:

Free counselling available for everyone who speaks Mandarin or Cantonese, including children.

FREEPHONE:

0800 888 880

Monday to Friday 10am – 2pm

Monday to Thursday 7pm – 10pm

FAMILY COURT

Listed under Justice Ministry – District Court in the Blue Pages of the phone book. Ask to speak to the Family Court Co-Ordinator.

Information

www.courts.govt.nz/family

CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY

Can protect and help all children who are not safe or who are not being cared for properly.

FREEPHONE:

0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459)

THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Advice about your interests, rights and welfare.

FREEPHONE:

0800 A Child (0800 224 453)

YOUTHLAW – TINO RANGATIRATANGA TAITAMARIKI:

Free confidential legal service for children and young People nationwide

Ring the advice line or email your question to:

Information

09 309 6967

You can call collect from anywhere in New Zealand. Dial 010 then follow instructions, and tell the operator that Youthlaw accepts collect calls

Weekdays 10am – 4pm
info@youthlaw.co.nz

www.youthlaw.co.nz

SKYLIGHT:

Support for children going through family change

www.skylight.org.nz

click on 'info for you'

Thanks to all the organisations, individuals, parents and children who helped put this booklet together.



www.justice.govt.nz/family