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## **Separated/Divorced and introducing a new partner to children.**

This topic comes up a lot from parents who are separated or divorced and in a new relationship. How to introduce a new partner in a way that is successful for both children and new partner? What happens if your child's other parent is unhappy about this decision, how to balance your needs with that of your children?

### **Tips:**

Introducing, a new partner to your children after separation or divorce is a delicate process that should not be rushed. Ultimately, it's best to wait until children have come to terms with the divorce and you are confident about your relationship and its future before introducing them to your new partner.

- **Let their other parent know** – Let your children's other parent know that you will be telling your children that you have a new partner, so that they are prepared and can support the children with this change in their lives. Ultimately, your child's other parent hearing this news from your child may not go down well and you want to focus on the best outcome.
- **Don't involve children early on** – ideally children shouldn't be involved in the early stages of a relationship as it may not last and you'll risk exposing children to a variety of partners leaving them confused.
- **Reassure them** – Reassure your children by both words and actions that dating doesn't affect your love for them or mean they are taking second place.
- **Set aside special time** – Set time aside that is just you and your children on your own so that they don't feel like they are losing you or have to share your time too much.
- **Explain the new relationship well before you introduce your new partner** – Once you are clear that it is a serious relationship, explain your new relationship to your children and give them time to get used to the idea before they actually meet your new partner.
- **Listen to your children's views** – When your children have met your new partner be open to their opinions and listen to what they have to say. This is not to say that your children get to decide who you enter into a relationship with, it is simply allowing for their feelings to be different to yours.
- **Accept how your child might feel** – they may have mixed feelings and it is important to accept this. For some children initially, they love that you have a

new partner but then reality kicks in and it becomes more challenging. Being patient is key.

If you are the parent who is hearing your ex-partner has a new relationship and you are not happy about this introduction, look after your self-care and reach out to friends. It may come as a shock to you and that is ok to process separately, but ultimately, we need to stay in control of what we can control and our child's other parent isn't something we have control over. Unless there are clear child protection reasons as to why you are opposed to this choice, you are better off trying to support your child to adjust to this change.

As always, if you need to discuss or explore your particular parenting situation, feel free to drop into our parent drop in clinic any Tuesday morning no appointment necessary. Youghal Family Resource Initiative – Above Dr Carmel Whitford's surgery in the town. (Old Youghal Carpets Building).