



# **5 types of emotional support when going through a divorce or separation**



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“I’m fine” - this is a standard response that the vast of majority of us will give when asked the question, “how are you?”. Sometimes we really are fine. Sometimes, we do not elaborate because we do not want to and other times it may just be easier to say, “I’m fine”, when we are anything but fine.

### Do you feel emotional, isolated and overwhelmed?

Going through a relationship breakdown, separation and subsequent divorce can be one of the most emotionally challenging times of your life. The standard response of “I’m fine” will probably be far from the truth of how you are actually feeling. Whether you are leaving a difficult marriage or where you have simply agreed to part ways, the impact on your mental and physical wellbeing can be overwhelming at times and should not be underestimated or ignored. Having support from friends and family can be crucial, but it can be really difficult to find support from others who have not been through what you are experiencing. We understand that it can be an extremely isolating time and that all you need is someone to whom you can talk openly, who understands the fragile circumstances in which find yourself.

### 5 types of emotional support you can seek when you are going through a divorce or separation

As well as the following you should speak to your GP if you feel low, depressed or have suicidal thoughts.

#### 1. Talk to friends and family

One way to seek emotional support during a divorce or separation is talking to family and friends. As these will be the closest people to you, though, you may refrain from seeking support from them because you feel you are troubling them with your issues, but essentially they are the most trusted individuals in your life.

Some people in your circle of family or friends will have experienced what you are going through, so getting reassurance from someone who has been there can help to make your journey easier. Others may not have gone through what you have but they will be around just to listen. “Most people don’t need advice during a divorce, they just need to know that they’re not alone and that people care”, says David Klow, a licensed family therapist and author of *You Are Not Crazy: Letters From Your Therapist*.

One of the most anxious and worrying stages during a divorce can be attending meetings or Court hearings. If you have someone within your family, or a friend, who is available to attend the meeting with you, or meet you after a Court hearing, this could be a really good way of calmly reflecting upon the meeting or Court hearing and unwinding so that you can move forward and take your mind off the situation.





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Usually your family and friends will look out for you and your wellbeing on a personal level, even if it is just for a shoulder to cry on. So, the first stop for emotional support should be within your family and/or friendship group. If you do not feel this is possible then you should consider one of the options below.

### 2. Relationship/marriage support groups

Support groups provide a safe and confidential space for people to speak openly about their feelings, without any discrimination. This might be especially important if your family does not approve of your decision to separate or divorce or you do not feel comfortable confiding in them. These can be face-to-face or online meetings for members to come together and share their experiences about the challenges they face whilst in a difficult relationship or during/after separation.

As a member of these groups, you could go from being the person seeking support, to then helping and educating new joiners on the different stages of divorce and separation. This also helps many people develop supportive relationships with others who are in the same boat.

Attending these groups can help reduce the isolation and loneliness that can come from a relationship breakdown. It is not uncommon to feel low or depressed during a separation, however big your support network is, and you should not feel ashamed about feeling this way.

Some examples of support groups available for people going through a divorce or separation are:

**a) The Divorce Club** – This is a club hosted by people who have been through or are going through a divorce. They share their experiences and information with one another. A link to the website is: <https://divorceclub.com/support/>;

**b) Gingerbread** – This is a leading national charity aiming to support single parents/families. Their mission is to improve the lives of single parents through championing the voices and needs of all single parent families by providing effective support services. A link to the website is: <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/>;

**c) Local online support groups** – There are many more of these than you think, whether supporting single mothers, single fathers or even grandparents.

The internet is a wonderful tool for moral support but be wary of any 'legal' advice you are given thereon.

In addition, the Samaritans provides emotional support to those going through despair, suicidal thoughts or distress. A link to the website is: <https://www.samaritans.org/>.

### 3. Psychotherapy or counselling

Psychotherapy and counselling are both excellent options for obtaining divorce support. These are both talking therapies used to treat emotional problems and mental health issues. As well as talking, your therapy could use a range of methods including drama, movement, art and music.



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A qualified therapist is trained to be an empathetic listener who will have an understanding of how divorce and separation can affect and change a person's life. Therapists and counsellors will be able to give you expert guidance on managing grief, stress and any self-defeating thoughts. You will be able to vent your emotions and talk about your fears, especially those feelings that are too private and intense to talk about elsewhere. It is a good idea to interview more than one therapist or counsellor as the chemistry between you and the therapist or counsellor needs to be strong.

**a) Counselling Directory:** On this website, you will be able to find a counsellor or therapist near you. A link to the website: <https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/separation.html>.

**b) Relate:** This organisation provides relationship support. The services include relationship counselling, family counselling and mediation, along with other types of therapy and informal workshops. You can find your nearest Relate on this website: <https://www.relate.org.uk/>.

**c) Clinical psychologist:** A clinical psychologist is someone who has studied psychology for many years and who has extensive training in specialist techniques, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and has several degrees in psychology. Sessions with a clinical psychologist will be more expensive but are generally more appropriate when the individual is seeking to alter their mindset or behaviour rather than seeking help through self-expression alone.

### 4. Meditation

Meditating coaches believe that during a divorce or separation, meditation and mindfulness skills are highly beneficial for emotional healing and emotional resilience. Meditation provides different techniques and mindfulness knowledge to be able to step out of what is called an 'emotional hijack' state of mind. This basically means that, in moments of sadness, worry, anxiety, stress and despair, we are literally hijacked by a part of the brain that controls this 'state of mind' and we become that emotion. Meditation can enable us to step out of this emotional hijack. Essentially, the aim of meditation is to make life richer and more balanced – even the emotionally challenged moments.

### 5. Physical exercise/sport/leisure

When going through a divorce or separation, it is normal to experience changes in moods and, most commonly, low moods. Physical exercise can help improve mood and mental health. Exercise promotes and releases 'feel good' chemicals such as endorphins throughout the body, which help improve your mood and make you feel more relaxed. So, if you find yourself feeling low, try to go for a walk or a jog, head to the gym or carry out home workouts. These can help reduce anxiety and enhance your self-esteem.

Remember, there is no shame in feeling low. And when a friend or family member asks how you are, think about giving them an honest answer that does not include the words, "I'm fine".

