

## **Children's Transition - Leaving An Abusive Relationship**

Your children's behaviour may be different than usual. Remember that their lives have changed too. It is normal for them to be afraid, upset or angry. Even if they become extra quiet or try to please you all the time, they still need that little bit of extra attention and explanation about what is going on. It is especially important for children to know that the abuse was not their fault.

### **Helping Your Kids:**

1. Assure them that you love them. Give them lots of hugs and cuddles. It is important for them to have physical contact, and in hugging them you will also be receiving hugs.
2. It is important for them to trust you. Tell them as much as you can without name-calling. It is better that they know and feel a part of the decisions being made, than if you say nothing or lie.
3. Listen to their feelings and let them know it is okay to have them. They may be angry with you for taking them away from their friends and home. If they tell you this, it means that they feel safe enough with you to share their feelings. If you show them that you understand their feelings and share some of theirs, you will help them.
4. They may have confused feelings about you and their father/step-parent. You can let them know that they can still love their father/step-parent and he/she is still their father/step-parent, even if you decide not to live with him/her again. They do not have to choose one parent.
5. They may test you by misbehaving. Do not be afraid to set limits on their behaviour in a firm, loving manner. They may be more insecure and confused, and test for your control even more than usual. They need to know that you are there to take care of them.
  - Tell them clearly what they can and cannot do.
  - If they misbehave, make the discipline fit the behaviour and be prepared to carry it out as soon as possible.
  - **DO NOT HIT YOUR CHILDREN!** They have come from an abusive situation and they need to feel safe. Children who grow up with abuse, often become abusive adults.
6. Children need to feel loved, accepted and safe in their family. Living in a home where there is no abuse is better for them than living in a home where they never know when the abuse will erupt.
7. It is important that you take a little time every day to have fun with your children. You can learn new, inexpensive ways to have fun with them. For example, going to parks, to a library, museum or just going for walks. You don't have to have money to spend time with your children.
8. You have needs too. You need your friends, you need time alone. If your children try to make you stay in, tell them your needs and that you are sorry if it makes them angry or sad. Go ahead with your plans. If you are giving them quality time, you do not need to feel guilty about taking time for you.
9. Accept that you are not perfect. Don't feel guilty about it. Keep doing your best and be open to changing what doesn't work and learning new ways.

10. Remember your children need to depend on you. Don't depend on them to act as your best friend or partner.
11. Encourage them to have friends in the community as soon as you settle. Friendships can help them regain security.
12. If you feel that you need help dealing with your children, explore parenting and children's support services in your community.
  - **Merrymount Children's Services** - 434-6848
  - **Childreach** (Parent/Child Resource Centre) - 434-3644
  - **MAPP** (Mutual Aid Program for Parents & Your Children) - 455-9000 xt 396
  - **Kids Helpline** - 1-800-668-6868. Post on fridge. Kids can call it themselves.Sometimes they don't want to burden mom because she is dealing with so much already.
  - **Youth Line** - 660-4357
  - **Group Treatment Program for Children Who Witness Woman Abuse** - 455-9000 xt 316

**You have made positive choices for yourself and your children.  
Remember to credit yourself for your courage and strength.**

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*BC Council for Families  
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