

Supporting Children Through Effective Co-Parenting

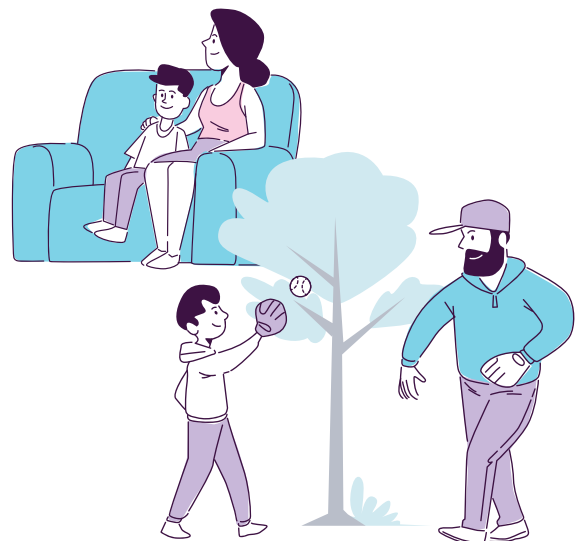
Article 01

Co-parenting can be defined as the shared responsibility for parenting, alongside mutual respect for each parent's role and authority in children's upbringing.

It is **an important factor** in determining the quality of the parent-child relationship and supports positive child adjustment following relationship breakdown.

However, co-parenting can present **several challenges**. Parents may experience **uncertainty** and find it difficult to maintain an effective parenting relationship for various reasons, including **mistrust**, **anger**, and **grief**. Research highlights that the level of cooperation between parents, as well as how couples experience and manage conflict, plays a key role in the success of the co-parenting relationship.

Cooperation is essential for successful co-parenting, as it reflects mutual respect between parents and supports healthy communication. It also promotes shared responsibility for the children's wellbeing and enables parents to support each other both practically and emotionally. When conflict is not managed effectively, parents may undermine each other, creating additional tension for themselves and their children.



Studies indicate that children thrive when parents cooperate and handle disagreements **respectfully**.

Whilst some parents remain on friendly terms after separation, others may find this difficult.

Nevertheless, **co-parenting can still be effective when parents work together as a team** to raise their children and provide them with a sense of unity and consistency, even if they are not friends.

The risk of high or poorly managed conflict is that children may feel caught in the middle of their parents' arguments. Children are sensitive to parental conflict, and clinical evidence shows that they may experience sadness, anxiety, and even blame themselves for the conflict between their parents. Research also suggests that children's mental health and behaviour are influenced not only by the parent-child relationship, but also by the **quality of the parents' relationship** and **co-parenting dynamics**.

A common barrier to effective co-parenting is **blame**. Following relationship breakdown, parents may become locked in a **'right versus wrong'** narrative, which reinforces blame even when both individuals are attempting to act in the best interest of the child. Parents may also be affected by emotional pain and unresolved conflict, making it difficult to appreciate different parental approaches. However, long-term parenting does not have to remain as stressful and exhausting as it may feel during the separation phase.

Effective co-parenting prioritises children's emotional well-being, avoids placing loyalty demands on them, and does not involve parentification, where children are placed in adult roles or expected to provide emotional support to their parents. It is important that parents develop a co-parenting relationship that addresses their own needs while, most importantly, supporting the long-term needs of their children. Even when a relationship has ended, children still need to feel emotionally safe, secure, and supported across different aspects of their lives.



Supporting Children in Adult Life

Article 02



When we think about parenting, we often picture the early years: raising children, setting routines, or guiding teenagers through adolescence.

Yet parenting does not end when children become adults. Instead, the relationship shifts into something different — often more complex — as parents continue to care deeply while learning to step back in new ways.

For many parents, this stage can bring a **mixture of emotions**. There is often pride in seeing children grow into their own lives and identities, but there may also be moments of worry, sadness, frustration, or even helplessness. Adult children may make choices their parents do not agree with, experience difficulties in relationships or work, struggle emotionally, or grow more distant both physically and emotionally. Unlike when they were younger, parents cannot always protect them or solve problems on their behalf.

One of the biggest adjustments is finding the balance between being supportive and becoming overly involved. Wanting to help is natural, especially when a child is struggling. However, adulthood also requires space to make mistakes, learn through experience, and build independence. Sometimes, support is less about giving advice and more about being emotionally available, listening calmly, showing understanding, and trusting that an adult child can find their own way through challenges.

Communication also tends to change during this phase of life. Adult children are more likely to stay connected when they feel respected rather than controlled. Open conversations, curiosity rather than criticism, and room for different opinions can all help strengthen the relationship. Even small moments — such as checking in, sharing a meal, or expressing appreciation — can make a meaningful difference.

At the same time, **healthy boundaries remain important**. Supporting an adult child does not mean carrying every responsibility for them — emotionally, practically, or financially. Parents can still offer love and support while encouraging accountability and independence.

It is equally important for parents to focus on themselves. After years of prioritising others, this stage can become an opportunity to reconnect with friends, interests, personal goals, and self-care. In many families, the relationship between parents and adult children grows stronger when both are given space to develop as individuals.

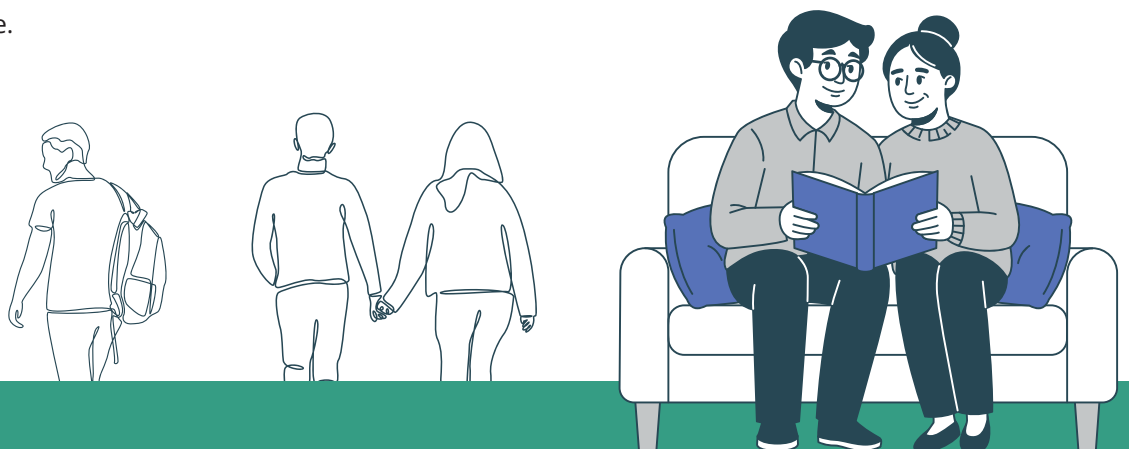
There is no perfect way to navigate parenting in adulthood, and every family experiences this stage differently. Relationships continue to evolve over time. What often matters most is maintaining a sense of connection in which both parent and adult child feel heard, respected, supported, and valued as life continues to change.

The Empty Nest

Article 03

The Empty-nest syndrome is the emotional transition some parents may experience when their adult children leave home and become more independent. Although this is a normal stage in the family life cycle, it can still affect a parent's sense of identity, routine, purpose, and emotional wellbeing.

- **Common responses** may include sadness, loneliness, anxiety, mood changes, emptiness, or uncertainty about the future.
- Parents who strongly identified with their caregiving role **may find the adjustment more challenging**, and in some cases, it may also affect close relationships or family communication.
- **Not every parent experiences the empty nest syndrome**, and those who do may respond in different ways, with both difficult and hopeful emotions appearing at the same time.
- With time, many parents come to accept their **children's independence as a healthy** and natural part of development.
- This stage can also **create opportunities** to refocus on personal wellbeing, relationships, interests, and goals that may have been set aside earlier in life.
- **Helpful coping strategies** include reconnecting with a partner, strengthening important relationships, rediscovering hobbies, pursuing further learning, and building new routines.
- **Maintaining social connections** through friendship, community involvement, or volunteering can reduce loneliness and increase a sense of purpose.
- **Prioritising physical and emotional wellbeing** through healthy habits and staying connected with adult children while respecting their independence, can support a positive adjustment.
- **Support from trusted friends, family members, or professionals** can help parents move through this phase with greater confidence, clarity, and resilience.



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