

## **That Difficult first letter**

It's usually Dad who makes the first move when a relationship starts to fall apart. You leave to let things cool a bit but things don't always cool and you find it more and more difficult to talk to your ex about seeing the kids. Partly because she makes such a fuss in front of the kids and partly because you are trying to sort your life and save your job.

Sometimes it's Mum who moves out with the kids and if you are unlucky with all the furniture too. Either way you need to communicate.

Below is a draft letter to help you get started. There are some simple principles.

- No moaning or complaining
- No accusations or threats.
- No blaming
  
- ✓ Keep positive
- ✓ If you can, apologise. (For anything, the word sorry can be magic).
- ✓ Be completely reasonable.

Even if you think this letter is a waste of time it will, in fact, be very helpful. Because:

- It keeps you focussed on the only important thing... the kids. No vengeance, anger or retaliation.
- It prepares you for the marathon ahead.
- It helps you practice the only strategy that works in separated couples and Family Courts. Being reasonable.

***'Dear (use first name here, it shows you're not vindictive),***

***I hope you and the kids are well.***

***I know we've had our differences over the years about my role in (child/rens name/s) lives and I am truly sorry for any hurt I've caused but I want to convince you I am determined to be a proper Dad and play a full part in his/her/their future.***

***I would like us to put our differences behind us and work to make (child/rens names) life/lives happy and healthy. Let's work together to ensure she/he/they have the involvement of two loving parents for the rest of our lives.***

***I know I've made mistakes in the past but I mean what I am saying. I know you may not trust me to be safe with the kids or be reliable but I want to be.***

***I would love to see (childs name/s) (this weekend) (at...).***

***Also, I would be happy to meet with you to discuss how we can work together or to attend mediation so we can sort out a parenting plan we both agree on.***

***Please let me know when we can meet. I know you will need time to consider so please get back to me within two weeks.***

***Give my love to the kids.***

***(Signed) First Name***

Every letter will be different but the principles remains the same. If you enter this process with the children in mind, their happy faces, their innocence and future then you will be OK. It's not easy to maintain this approach if your ex is uncooperative or worse but if you think of nice things you become a nice person.

If you are entering this process with vengeance, revenge, reprisals or anger

in mind you will likely get it back by the bucket load and the chance to be reunited with your children again will disappear into the distant future.

Before you start writing.

- ✓ Hand written letters appear more genuine.
- ✓ Show a friend before sending it, but remember friends do not always understand the Mr Reasonable approach.
- ✓ If you don't know where she is living send it to her mother/best-friend/ relative and ask them to pass it on.
- ✓ If you suspect trouble, don't hand deliver it.
- ✓ When choosing a venue for your first contact suggest a park/centre where there is somewhere for you and your kids to play while Mum sits and watches.

Good Luck

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