



ARMSTRONG MEDIATION
Managing Conflict Compassionately

Surviving the separation tsunami: 6 tips

Separation is a tough gig. The image I conjure about the period after my relationship ended is a tsunami. It was scary, confusing and out of control.

Calm eventually descended though. Here are six things I suggest will help you survive the separation tsunami.

1. Be certain

The leaver generally contemplates separation for a long time. The left often doesn't get much say. Sometimes we can end our relationship in a turmoil of emotion and anger.

Step back if you can. Explore your role in the demise of the relationship. Be sure separation is the choice you want to make.

If things have not gone too far, suggest counselling with your partner to see if you can make your relationship one worth staying for. Whatever your choice, if you're certain about it, the next steps will generally be easier.

2. Be soft

Be [kind](#) to yourself. You likely have done the best you could. Usually you both have had a role to play in the end of your relationship. Try to focus on something positive each day, eat well, rest and care for yourself.

Try to find a perspective which includes some understanding for your ex-partner. You don't have to agree with them to see that they are in their own struggle, just like you. This is especially important where there are kids and you will need to co-parent.

Fostering empathy and compassion helps you both make wiser, less reactive choices.

3. Be supported

This is a time when you need help. Separated people may experience the [patterns of grief](#) that can occur after the death of someone you love. Ask for help. Be specific about exactly how others could help you: listening, minding the kids, or just spending some normal time together.

But don't wear your friends out. You should also seek help from a range of expert, impartial professionals: a grief counsellor, a coach who can help you clarify your goals, a family lawyer who is an accredited specialist or collaborative professional, a family mediator, and/or a financial adviser experienced in separation finances.

4. Be safe

When a relationship ends it is important to establish boundaries to maintain your emotional safety. This can be particularly hard if you are still living under the one roof. You need [boundaries](#) to acknowledge the end of the relationship, to allow for self-care and recovery, to help your children understand the relationship is over, and to minimise the chance of abuse.

It is also important to monitor your personal safety. For some, separation can be a very dangerous time. If there has been a history of violence, you may need to [plan](#) your separation carefully. This can also be an unsafe time for [children](#).

You have a right to be safe. Seek immediate [help](#) if you are feeling unsafe. It is also important to get [help](#) if you are the user of violence.

5. Be a survivor

If you can, try to imagine yourself five years from now. How do you want to be? How do you want to remember how you managed your separation? How do you want your children to remember it? You can have a respectful, honourable, gracious separation.

Make a choice about that now. Think about the narrative you are telling yourself and others about your separation. Is this serving you?

Katherine Woodward Thomas in her book on [Conscious Uncoupling](#) talks about the importance of cultivating gratitude for what you have had together, and how this can ultimately support your wellbeing. [Science](#) supports this approach.

People can also [grow](#) when their relationship ends. Whilst it may not feel like it now, it is [possible](#). And how you choose to manage your separation now will determine that.

6. Be savvy

This is a time when you will likely be making big long term decisions. Try to find as much impartial, accurate information about the emotional, legal, financial and practical implications of separation. [Family Relationships Online](#) is a good place to start.

Seek professional advice so that you can make informed decisions about what is best for you and your family. If you can't work it out between you and your ex-partner, choose professionals and processes that will help you to make your own decisions. [Mediation](#) or [Collaborative Practice](#) will support you and your ex-partner to stay in charge and to make choices together in a way which might meet the needs of everyone in the family.

Separation doesn't have to be a tsunami. If you can implement some of these suggestions you will ultimately find a place of calm.

I'd love to help you separate compassionately. Let's talk.