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## I told you so...

**Are you trembling as you stand by the fireplace ready to tell the family? Worried about their reaction and a little scared? Concerned they'll disapprove or be unsupportive? Ditch the jitters and take control.**



Feelings of apprehension are normal when you're about to tell your parents of a life change. But there's no point delaying — tell them now.

Life-changing events such as separation and divorce can make us feel very alone and scared. Our habitual patterns are being broken; the security that lies in the familiar has been destroyed and we are moving into completely unknown territory. It's at moments like these that, if we are lucky enough still to have them in our lives, we feel the need for our parents.

A perfect parent will love their child unconditionally and will be a constant force of support and understanding throughout their childhood and adult years. But, as we all know, very few relationships are perfect and that is as true for a parent/child relationship as it is for any other. Maybe you're lucky enough to have parents that will give you unconditional support as you go through your divorce, but if not, and you feel let down and upset by their response, it's worth remembering that although you feel it's *you* who should be at the centre of everyone's thoughts, with

Here's an  
idea for  
you...

**Prepare yourself in advance for the waterworks. What will you do? It can be very upsetting to see your parents cry and you don't want to end up running away calling for your grandparents. Be prepared for this reaction before you tell them so if they do become tearful you'll be far more likely to be able to cope. (And, if they don't, you'll be pleasantly surprised.) Give them some time to recover, make a cup of tea and, if you have that sort of relationship, give them a hug.**

your needs coming first at this time, your parents will have their own feelings to deal with too. They may well need some time to adjust to the changes and stresses that your divorce will mean for them. This is especially true if you have children.

So, how do you tell them? Being straightforward and honest about the situation is definitely the best choice. You may feel you want to hide it from them to spare their feelings, but divorce is a final separation between you and your spouse, and it is better to be up front about the situation from the start. Never think that other people cannot cope with the realities of your life.

### **BITE THE BULLET**

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OK, so it's time to break the bad news and you want to do it without quivering, quaking and sucking your thumb. But how do you cope with the face-to-face encounter? Mental rehearsal is key. You've probably got a reasonably good idea as to what their reaction will be. If your mum and your wife happily baked brownies together every Saturday, or your husband and father spent every home game at West Ham together munching on a steak and gristle pie, then they're probably not going to be thrilled with your news.

Imagine what the worst reaction will be and plan some responses. Explain that although you know they were very close to your partner, the intimacy between the two of you as husband and wife is no longer there. Long and rambling explanations will get you nowhere. So be simple, calm and to the point when explaining the situation or responding to their questions. Deep breathing and staying focused on a clear idea of your aims and objectives in the conversation should help you to stay in control.

Maybe they'll pour on the drama and say that losing their son/daughter-in-law is like losing a child. If you feel comfortable with your parents continuing a relationship with your ex then tell them so. If not, firmly state that the situation is very painful for you too, and reassure them that *you* will always be their child no matter what your marital status is.

So what happens if, even after you've told them the news as calmly as you can, your mother or even father breaks down in tears that threaten to drown the dog? Don't panic! This is where the mental rehearsal comes in.

But have you thought that their reaction might be completely different to the one you expected? Maybe your parents always warned you against the evils of being with your spouse and feel their views are coming home to roost.

**If you start to get cross, use the anger management techniques talked about in IDEA 19, *Are you speaking my language?* They'll help you make sure you don't start throwing things.**

Try another idea...

**'Children sweeten labours but they make misfortunes more bitter.'**

FRANCIS BACON

Defining idea...

At least they'll be on your side, but you must also be wary of getting sucked into a negative pattern of demonising your ex.

Your parents aren't perfect and they will have their own views and opinions of your divorce. You must stay strong, focus on your needs, and remember ... if you're old enough to marry and divorce, you're old enough to cope with your mum and dad.

*How did  
it go?*

**Q I was prepared for the initial upset, but how can I help my mother stop crying every time she sees me?**

*A You can't. What you can do is say that her crying upsets you and hope this has an effect. If not, just remember that her reactions are her responsibility ... and buy a bumper box of tissues.*

**Q I explained the situation as best as I could to my dad, so how come he still blames me for the divorce?**

*A Put the question to him. Tell him you're confused by his response and ask him to explain why he blames you. If you're too angry or upset to do so, ask your mum or a sibling to talk to him on your behalf.*

