

Getting On Better

Child roles: for separated parents

Wiltshire Council

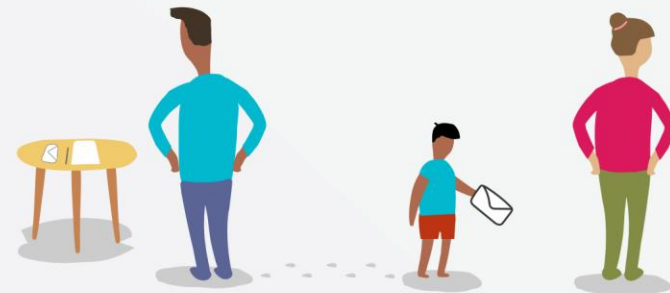


When parents separate, children can often feel like they're being put into these different roles. Can you guess what they are? Flip the card to find out more.

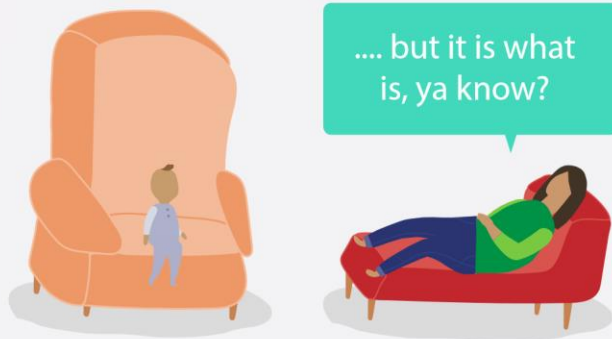
A)



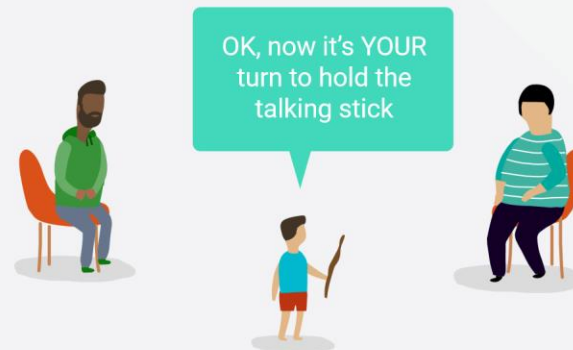
B)



C)



D)



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A) Spy

Asking your child about their other parent can make them feel like a spy. They might fear they are betraying them, or just say what they think you'll want to hear.

Try instead: Stick to general questions. If you find yourself asking more specific ones, like about their new partner, ask yourself why you really want to know, and how it might make your child feel.

B) Messenger

Asking children to pass messages back and forth puts them in an uncomfortable position. They may worry that whatever they do, it will upset one of their parents.

Try instead: If it's not easy to talk to each other, could you ask someone neutral to join a chat group between you both? They might help keep things calm and respectful.

C) Counsellor

If you are seeking emotional support from your child, it can put them under pressure to make you feel better. It's not their job to give you support.

Try instead: If your child sees you're upset, you can tell them how you are feeling. But let them know that you'll be OK, and they don't need to worry.

D) Mediator

It can be extremely upsetting for children to see their parents arguing with each other. They may feel the need to try and solve the problem, which is too much responsibility for children.

Try instead: Let them know these are problems for adults to solve. Reassure them that you both still love them, even though you're not together anymore.