



# Supporting infants, children and families experiencing social inequality and other challenges during parental separation

## Key messages from Louise (clinician)

Family separation and entering the legal system brings many changes for children and families. Legal practitioners can support their wellbeing by identifying and responding to their unique needs.

The complexity of legal processes can amplify stress for parents and children. In this context, practitioners can create a supportive environment that champions the wellbeing of children and family resilience.

By using flexible, trauma-informed, parent-sensitive and child-aware approaches, practitioners can reduce stress, support healthy child development and help families move forward with greater confidence. What practitioners say and do matters, and can lead to better outcomes for children and families.

Sustaining this work also involves recognising the need for practitioners to care for themselves and seek support when needed.

## Key messages from Kirsty (lived experience)

Families navigating separation are often dealing with multiple adversities, such as homelessness and financial abuse, at the same time as caring for young children.

When the legal process doesn't recognise this reality, it can add pressure and make it harder for parents to keep their children emotionally safe and settled.

Small, practical supports and acknowledging what parents are already doing to protect their children can make a meaningful difference during crisis.

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## Key messages from Mona (lived experience)

Families going through difficult separation or domestic violence need a family law system that can keep them safe and treats them fairly.

In my experience, racism, cultural misunderstandings and bias can lead to unfair decisions, and harm the relationship between parents and their children.

Sometimes the legal system causes more harm, rather than reducing it. It would help if the system understood trauma and culture, and put children's needs first.

# Emerging Minds Resources

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The following free resources are for practitioners to use to enhance their practice with infants, children and parents experiencing social inequality and other challenges during parental separation. They can all be found by searching Emerging Minds' resource library: [www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/library](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/library)

## PERCS conversation guide

For practitioners unsure about how to talk with parents about their children, particularly when the family is facing adversity, the [PERCS conversation guide](#) can be helpful.

## Five ways to support your children's mental health

In addition, [Five ways to support your children's mental health](#) is designed for practitioners to use with parents to help support them to consider and provide practical support for their child/ren's wellbeing. Before sharing these resources, consider how you might introduce and explore them with a parent who is experiencing stress and/or adversity in ways that feel supportive, easy to understand and minimise additional mental load.

You may also want to expand your knowledge around infant, child and family mental health. Emerging Minds' suite of free online courses. You might start with [Understanding child mental health](#) or browse all courses at: [learning.emergingminds.com.au/all-courses](http://learning.emergingminds.com.au/all-courses)

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning and resources

Emerging Minds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused resources are co-created with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national consultancy group, reference group, lived experience advocates and consultants. Find them at: [www.emergingminds.com.au/resources-for-supporting-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children-and-families](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources-for-supporting-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children-and-families)

## Suggestions for supporting a family when a child is on a waiting list for support

You may find some useful guidance in [While you wait: Suggestions for service providers to support children and their families who are on waiting lists](#). Emerging Minds Practitioner's speak series of videos also explain how different practitioners can support child and family wellbeing: [www.emergingminds.com.au/families/practitioners-speak](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/families/practitioners-speak)

## Getting through tough times resources

The *Getting through tough times* collection was created with families who have been through tough times. They are designed to spark hope and new ideas for families who might be:

- isolated or excluded
- struggling with money
- surviving in poverty or homelessness
- experiencing discrimination, shame or stigma.

These resources include practitioner guides to support you in sharing the resources with the families you work with: [www.emergingminds.com.au/tough-times](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/tough-times)

## Kinship Books

Offering a collection of children's stories addressing divorce, separation and step-families, Kinship Books provides tools for parents and children during challenging family transitions: [kinshipbooks.com](http://kinshipbooks.com)