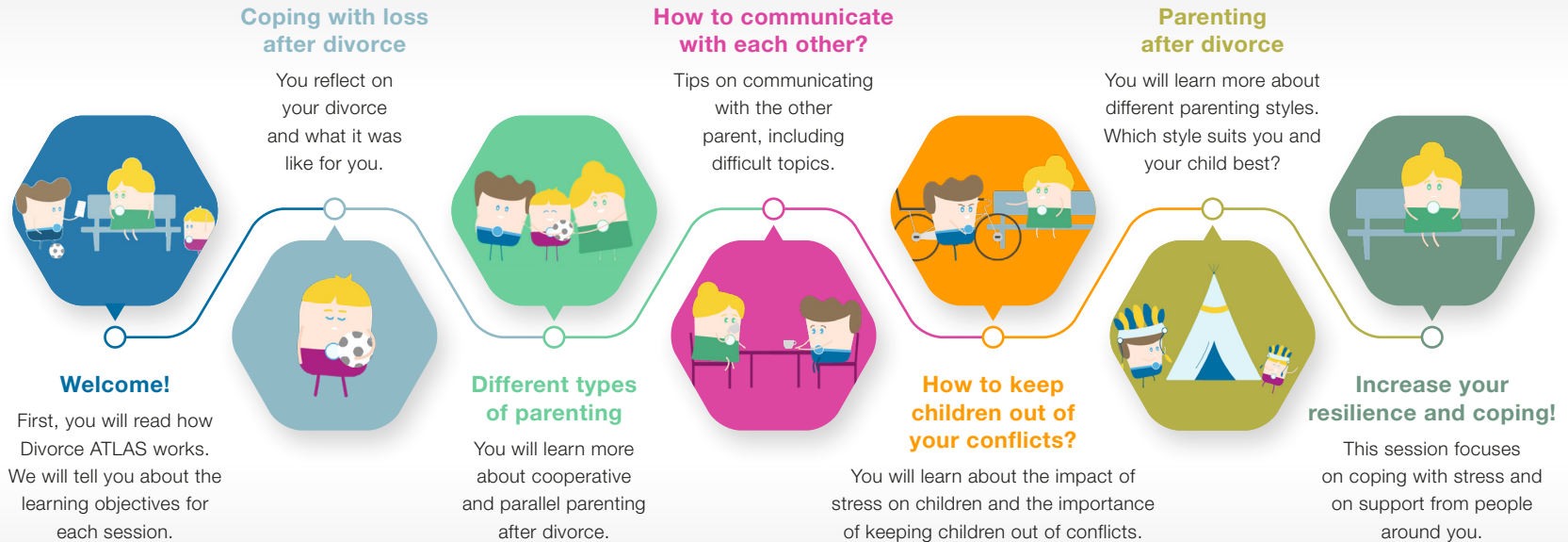




Divorce **ATLAS** >

Divorce ATLAS Online is a self-help training intended for parents who are divorced or about to divorce. The training consists of a Welcome session and 6 thematic interactive sessions on parenting after divorce.

The sessions of Divorce ATLAS:



Additional information

Divorce ATLAS is designed for parents who are divorced or about to get divorced. During the online training you will work at your own pace to increase knowledge and skills that will help you shape parenthood after your divorce. Important themes are the impact of the divorce on your child, working together as a parent, maintaining a dialogue with the other parent, positive parenting and taking good care of yourself. The training is interactive, with animations, role-plays and videos from experts and other divorced parents.



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in Divorce ATLAS?

Meet Robin and Ellen,
Wendy and Karlijn

Facts and figures about
divorce in The Netherlands

Personal goals and expect-
ations for Divorce ATLAS



*It takes about 20
minutes to complete
this session.*

Good thing that you took the step to start this training! In this session, you will read how Divorce ATLAS works. We will tell you about the learning objectives for each session. You will also meet some of the people you will see in the videos of this training. At the end of this session:

1. You know if Divorce ATLAS is meant for you >
2. You know how Divorce ATLAS works >
3. You know what topics are covered in Divorce ATLAS >
4. You have met Robin, Ellen, Wendy and Karlijn >
5. You know some facts and figures about divorce in the Netherlands >
6. You have considered what your personal goals and expectations are for this training >



If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page.



Find a quiet place to work.
If something or someone still disturbs you, make a note about where you left off, and pick up your work at a later time.



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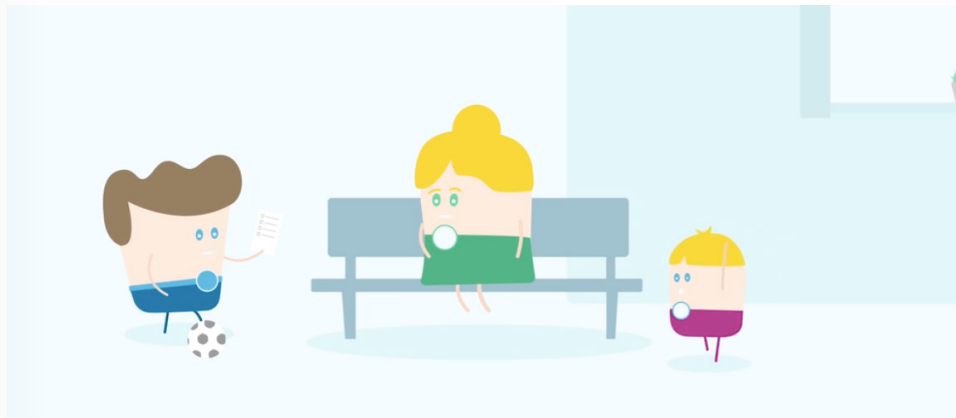
Personal goals and expect-
ations for Divorce ATLAS



*It takes about 20
minutes to complete
this session.*

Who is Divorce ATLAS for?

This training is designed for parents who are divorcing or are already divorced (Note that divorce refers to both separation after marriage and after cohabitation relationships). Divorce is one of the most impactful events people can experience. If you have children, they too are automatically involved. And as a parent, you face additional questions and challenges. How do you shape parenting after divorce? How to communicate with the other parent? How do you support your child during this period? What can you do to strengthen the parent-child relationship and contribute to your child's well-being? All of these topics – and more – are covered in Divorce ATLAS.



There may be several reasons why you have decided to get started with Divorce ATLAS. Perhaps the divorce or the following period is going well, and you are especially curious to hear about the experiences of others. You might also be uncertain about your situation. Or you and your ex-partner seem not to be on the same page. Whatever your reason: be welcome! It's a good thing you're following this training!



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minutes to complete
this session.*

How does Divorce ATLAS work?

Divorce ATLAS consists of 6 thematic online 'sessions' (or chapters). There is a strongly suggested order and structure to these. Topics that are covered in the first sessions can return in later sessions. In this introducing session, you can read what is covered in each of the following sessions.

Your own pace and time

You follow the Divorce ATLAS sessions in your own time and at your own pace. You can always take a break and continue where you left off. A session always consists of several fixed components:

- **Information:** In each session, you will find information on topics central to Divorce ATLAS. The information is provided either in text or videos. You can read more about the topics covered in this training in the [Handbook of Divorce ATLAS*](#) (in Dutch).
- **Exercises:** You will find exercises or questions accompanying much of the information. Here, you will work on one of the topics in Divorce ATLAS. You answer these questions for yourself. They are mainly meant to help you think further about the material that is offered in the sessions. How does this information apply to your situation? Or how can you use it in your situation? You can also choose to skip these exercises.
- **What is your take away?:** The answers you give to the question under Summary 'What do you take away?' you can retrieve in the final session, in which you can reflect on your Divorce ATLAS sessions. This will give you a nice overview of what you take away from the training. Is this in line with what you hoped to find in Divorce ATLAS?



* Klein Velderman e.a. (2020). *ScheidingsATLAS: Wegwijzer voor ouders*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Nieuwezijds. ISBN 9789057125447



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*It takes about 20
minutes to complete
this session.*

What topics are included in Divorce ATLAS?

Click on the different sessions
for more information.

**Session 1: Coping with
loss after divorce**

1



**Session 2: Different
types of parenting**

2



**Session 3: How to communicate
with each other?**

3



**Session 6: Increase your
resilience and coping!**

6



**Session 4: How to keep children
out of your conflict?**

4



**Session 5: Parenting
after divorce**

5





Divorce ATLAS

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What topics are included in Divorce ATLAS?

Click
for m

Session 2: Different
types of parenting

Close pop-up ✕

Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce

In Session 1, you read about coping with loss. You reflect on your divorce and what this was like for you. You will also read about the most common reactions of children after a divorce. You think about how you can stay in tune with your child's needs during this time. Each section is accompanied by an exercise in which you will explore your situation further.

After Session 1 you will know:

- What the Circle of Loss is
- How the Circle of Loss can help to better understand everyone involved in your divorce.

Session 3: How to communicate
with each other?

Session 4: How to keep children
out of your conflict?



Session 5: Parenting
after divorce

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minutes to complete
this session.



What topics are included in Divorce ATLAS?

Click
for m

Session 2: Different types of parenting

Close pop-up ✕

Session 2: Different types of parenting

In Session 2, you will read about cooperative and parallel parenting after divorce. What do these two forms entail? Which fits your situation best? You read about what is important for your children and what to look out for.

After Session 2 you will know:

- What cooperative and parallel parenting are;
- And in which situation which way of sharing your responsibilities as parents is most appropriate.

Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflict?

Session 5: Parenting after divorce

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What topics are included in Divorce ATLAS?

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for m

Session 2: Different
types of parenting

Close pop-up ✕

Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

This session is about positive communication. You will get tips on communicating with the other parent, also about difficult topics. And you will read why this is important.

After Session 3, you will know:

- What an I-message is;
- How to apply an I-message;
- And how positive communication can help to discuss difficult topics in a positive way.

Session 3: How to communicate
with each other?

Session 4: How to keep children
out of your conflict?



Session 5: Parenting
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Session 2: Different
types of parenting

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Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflict?

In Session 4, you will read about the impact stress can have on children. Not all divorces are without problems. Sometimes there is conflict between the ex-partners. You will read why it is important to keep your children out of this conflict. Also included in this session is information on dealing with conflict.

After Session 4, you will know:

- That the degree of conflict between parents is the main cause of stress and problems of children in divorce situations;
- And how you yourself can ensure that this impact is limited.

Session 3: How to communicate
with each other?

Session 4: How to keep children
out of your conflict?



Session 5: Parenting
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What topics are included in Divorce ATLAS?

Click
for m

Session 2: Different
types of parenting

Close pop-up X

Session 5: Parenting after divorce

This session looks at parenting after divorce and ways you can shape the parent-child relationship.

After Session 5, you will know:

- What an authoritative parenting style entails;
- And how important the balance between warmth, affection and direction is in parenting.

Session 3: How to communicate
with each other?

Session 4: How to keep children
out of your conflict?

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Session 5: Parenting
after divorce



What topics are included in Divorce ATLAS?

Click
for m

Session 2: Different
types of parenting

Close pop-up ✕

Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

This is the final session. It focuses on dealing with stress and on support from people around you. You read about resources and stressors and are invited to consider who are important to you. The session concludes with a short summary of the topics from the first five sessions.

After Session 6, you will know:

- How stressors and resources interplay;
- What the balance between stressors and resources looks like for you;
- And what you can do to increase your resilience and coping so that you feel powerful.

Session 3: How to communicate
with each other?

Session 4: How to keep children
out of your conflict?



Session 5: Parenting
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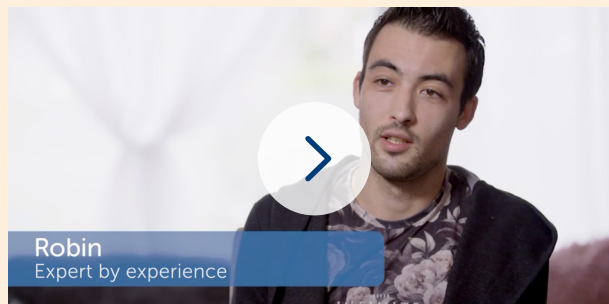


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minutes to complete
this session.*

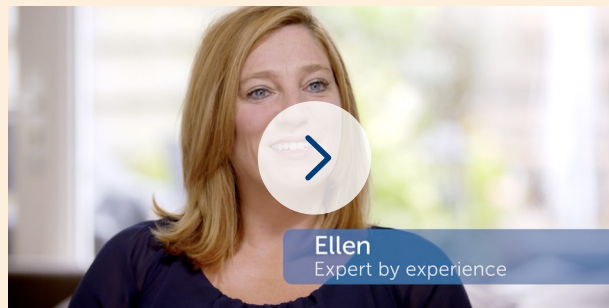
Meet Robin and Ellen, Wendy and Karlijn

Experiences of Robin and Ellen

In Divorce ATLAS, you will come across videos with Ellen and Robin. They are divorced themselves and had children living at home during the period of their divorce. In the videos, they share their stories.



Robin
Expert by experience



Ellen
Expert by experience

In these videos, Robin and Ellen
introduce themselves to you.

Tips from Wendy and Karlijn

In Divorce ATLAS, you will also come across videos with Wendy and Karlijn. They are social workers and experts on divorce. They give tips and explain things. They also share some experiences they hear from parents and children in their daily work.



Wendy van Vliet
Social worker



Karlijn Pieterse
Social worker

In these videos, Wendy and Karlijn
introduce themselves to you.



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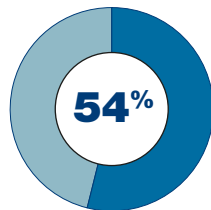


Personal goals and expectations for Divorce ATLAS



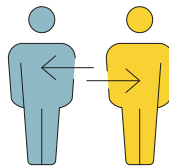
It takes about 20
minutes to complete
this session.

Facts and figures about divorce in The Netherlands



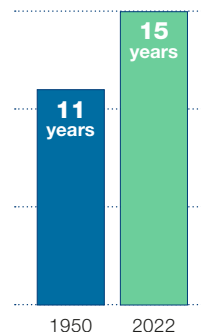
About **54%** of couples who have a child are married, 38% live together unmarried and over 7% have a registered partnership. Fewer and fewer parents are married when their child is born.

There are about **49,000** underaged children who face **divorce** every year.

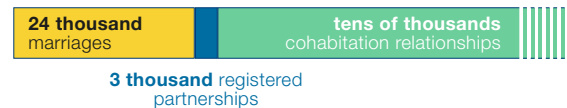


(both separation after marriage and after cohabitation relationships).

The **duration of a marriage** before divorce **increased** in recent years, from about 11 years in 1950 to about 15 years in 2022.

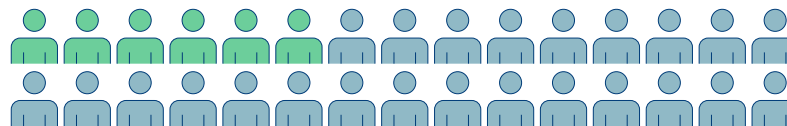


The number of divorces has declined in recent years. Every year, about **24 thousand** marriages end in divorce. Besides marriages, about **3 thousand** registered partnerships are ended every year. It is unknown how many cohabitation relationships end each year, but it is estimated to be in the **tens of thousands**.



Most children of divorced parents do well in the long run.

About 1 in 5 Dutch children have divorced parents.



So, this means that in a school class of 30 children, an average of 6 children have to deal with their parents' divorce.

On average, children of divorced parents are doing less well than children growing up in families living together.



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What is your takeaway?

You reached the end of the Welcome session. You learned how Divorce ATLAS works and got to know experts by experience Robin and Ellen, and social workers and experts on divorce Wendy and Karlijn. You have read about the content and learning objectives of the next six sessions. After the training, you will have tools to better handle difficult situations around divorce. You obtain these through exercises and information on:

1. How the Circle of Loss can contribute to greater understanding for people around you involved in your divorce >
2. Cooperative and parallel parenting and when these forms are most appropriate >
3. What an I-message is and how it can improve communication >
4. How to reduce the negative impact of conflict between parents >
5. How to optimally combine warmth and direction with an authoritative parenting style >
6. How to find your balance between your stressors and resources >

You have finished the Welcome session of Divorce ATLAS.
This was an introduction to the training. In the following sessions, you will really get started. Good luck!



Consider what your main reason is for taking this training. What do you wish to achieve by completing Divorce ATLAS?

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Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce >



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Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce >

Impactful life event

Attention to the children

How does your child feel?

Grief and loss after divorce

What is the Circle of Loss?

What do you take away from Session 1?



It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

How do you deal with loss after divorce?

In this session, you will reflect on the impact of the divorce on your child. At the end of this session:

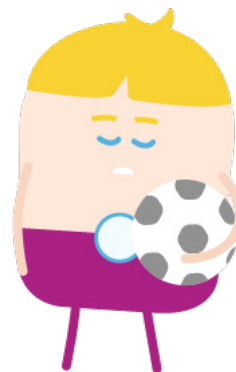
1. You will have reflected on your own situation >
2. You have read about how divorce can affect children >
3. You have learnt about the different emotional reactions your child can have >
4. You have insight into what grief and loss after divorce look like >
5. You know more about the Circle of Loss >



If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page.



Find a quiet place to work.
If something or someone still disturbs you, make a note about where you left off, and pick up your work at a later time.





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Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce

Impactful life event >

Attention to the children

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What do you take away from Session 1?



It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

Impactful life event

Divorce is often experienced as an impactful life event for all involved. How did the divorce go for you? And how do you feel about the situation? In the videos below, Ellen and Robin tell how they experienced their divorce and what helped them.

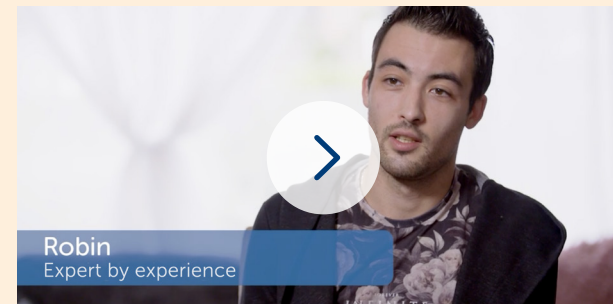


Ellen
Expert by experience

Ellen

At first, Ellen was busy with practical things and the children; she was in a survival mode. Only after six months she started to get more into her own grief and processing. Now, two years later, she's got most of it behind her, although there are still moments in which she experiences difficulties.

Tip: it is a good thing to allow different feelings and talk about them; with friends and other divorced parents.



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

It's important to take good care of yourself. If you do so, you can also take good care of your child. Tip: it can be of good help seeking support and understanding from family, friends and colleagues. Or from a counsellor.

Thinking questions

- Do you recognise yourself in Ellen and Robin's stories?
- How did you experience your divorce?
- Did you also seek support from people around you?





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Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce

Impactful life event

Attention to the children >

How does your child feel?

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It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

Attention for the children

Divorce is also an impactful life event for children. Above all, children want their parents to be happy with each other. But in the case of a divorce, they have no control over this. Their lives are turned upside down. They may have to move to another house, divide their time between two parents or even go to a new school. It is important during a period of divorce to consciously think about what your children need. How can you help them get through this period as well as possible? That is what you will work on in this training.

Children are resilient

Fortunately, children are resilient. They may be upset, angry or sad about the divorce and all the changes for a while. But with enough support from those around them, most children do well over time. They learn to cope with the new situation and find their own way. For some children, this takes longer than for other children. But research shows that most children involved in a divorce do well again in the long run.



Wendy van Vliet
Social worker

Watch the video in which Wendy talks about the way divorce can affect children.



In the [handbook](#) (in Dutch) you will read more about common reactions of children by age group.

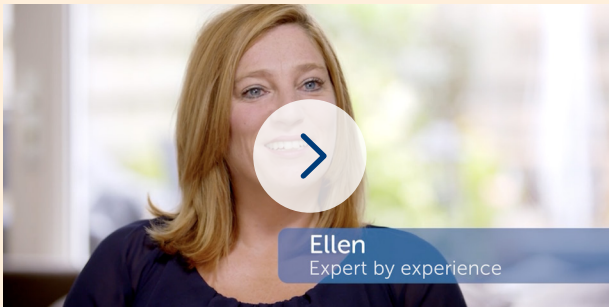
Robin and Ellen's experiences >



[Close pop-up](#) ✕

Ellen and Robin's experiences

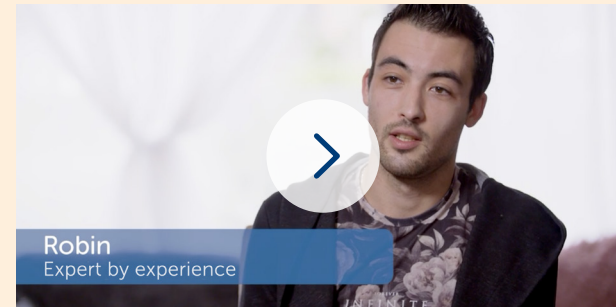
Watch the videos in which Ellen and Robin talk about how their children coped with the divorce.



Ellen
Expert by experience

Ellen

Every child will show a different reaction. Ellen's video illustrates how different children of different ages reacted to the divorce in different ways. And how this required different support from their parents. Read more about common reactions of children by age group in the [handbook](#) (in Dutch).



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

Robin's baby son especially struggles with the transition moments while going from one parent to the other.

Thinking question

→ Reflect on how your children cope with the divorce. What do you notice?



Robin and Ellen's experiences





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Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce

Impactful life event

Attention to the children

How does your child feel? >

Grief and loss after divorce

What is the Circle of Loss?

What do you take away from Session 1?



It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

How is your child feeling?

The first step of dealing with a difficult situation is to recognise and acknowledge your feelings. For children and adolescents, this is often difficult. For parents, too, it is sometimes difficult to understand what your child is feeling. By listening carefully and watching your child's behaviour, you can go a long way.



Watch Wendy's video in which she tells more about the feelings that play a role in divorce. She also gives tips on how to deal with them.

How is your child feeling?

You can categorise most emotions into one of the 4 basic emotions. Click on the emotion to read more about it.



Happy



Angry



Scared



Sad



Watch Wendy's video. She talks about how important it is for your child to be able to express his/her feelings and story.



How is your child feeling?

The first step of dealing with a difficult situation is to recognise and acknowledge your feelings. For children and adolescents,

How is your child feeling?

You can categorise most emotions into one of the 4 basic emotions. Click on the emotion to read more about it.

[Close pop-up](#)

Happy

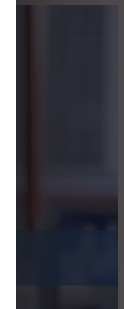
As a parent you'd rather see your child happy. When your child is happy, he or she feels good and is content with the situation. Children become happy when they possess something they like to have, when they have learnt something new or see something funny. They can also become happy when they feel loved and accepted by you as a parent. Even in scary, angry or sad times, you can experience happy moments together. It is important to pay attention to happy moments.

What do you see in your child?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laughing | <input type="checkbox"/> Smiling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheering | <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hands in the air | <input type="checkbox"/> Dancing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High five | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking enthusiastically or excitedly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hugging someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to sit still |



Sad



Important

it is for your child to be able to express his/her feelings and story.

Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce

Impactful life event

Attention to the children

How does your child feel?

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What do you take away from Session 1?



It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.



How is your child feeling?

The first step of dealing with a difficult situation is to recognise and acknowledge your feelings. For children and adolescents,

How is your child feeling?

You can categorise most emotions into one of the 4 basic emotions. Click on the emotion to read more about it.

[Close pop-up](#) 

Angry

Anger is a way for children and adults to show that they are not happy with the situation. They may then become annoyed or irritable, or they may throw a tantrum or become aggressive. Your child may become angry if someone hurts or insults him or her or another person, which is justified. This is also the case if someone oversteps his or her boundaries. Children can also be angry at everything and everyone because they are unhappy in a situation but cannot get rid of the anger or do not know who to blame. In that case, it often happens that children end up blaming themselves, getting angry at themselves.

Which of the following, angry behaviour, do you recognise in your child?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Silence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying | <input type="checkbox"/> Hitting, kicking, fighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Screaming | <input type="checkbox"/> Hurting his- or herself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slamming doors | <input type="checkbox"/> Throwing things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a red head | <input type="checkbox"/> Clenching jaws |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched fists | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting big eyes |



Sad



Important

it is for your child to be able to express his/her feelings and story.

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How is your child feeling?

The first step of dealing with a difficult situation is to recognise and acknowledge your feelings. For children and adolescents

How is your child feeling?

You can categorise most emotions into one of the 4 basic emotions. Click on the emotion to read more about it.

[Close pop-up](#) 

Scared

Being scared or anxious is a natural reaction of the body to a dangerous situation. Think of jumping away from a car coming at you. Even if your child is not in immediate physical danger, he may become anxious. For example, children are afraid that something bad will happen, that they will be abandoned, that the situation will never be good again or that they will not be loved.

What do you see in your child?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abdominal pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headache | <input type="checkbox"/> Fainting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid breathing | <input type="checkbox"/> Not paying attention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Crying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Running away from the situation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incapable of taking action | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trembling | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritation |



Sad



Important

it is for your child to be able to express his/her feelings and story.

Session 1: Coping with loss after divorce

Impactful life event

Attention to the children

How does your child feel?

Grief and loss after divorce

What is the Circle of Loss?

What do you take away from Session 1?



It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.



How is your child feeling?

The first step of dealing with a difficult situation is to recognise and acknowledge your feelings. For children and adolescents,

How is your child feeling?

You can categorise most emotions into one of the 4 basic emotions. Click on the emotion to read more about it.

[Close pop-up](#) 

Sad

Your child experiences sadness or grief when he or she is unhappy in a situation. He or she may become sad because of an unpleasant event, such as when someone hurts or leaves him or her. A child may be saddened by arguing parents, or by disappointment when someone does not behave pleasantly.

What behaviour do you recognise in your child?

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating too much or too little |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trembling lips | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to fall asleep | <input type="checkbox"/> No enthusiasm for things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waking up early | <input type="checkbox"/> Staying at home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue/lethargy | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal/keeping a distance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinginess | <input type="checkbox"/> Easily irritable |



Sad



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It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

Grief and loss after divorce

Everyone involved in a divorce, both adults and children, mourns this. You may think of grief mainly as losing a loved one through death, but grief belongs to different types of loss. For children, for example, divorce means the loss of an established home and familiar family situation. This can be a trigger for mourning for many children.

The tasks of grief

When grieving, there are several things that everyone has to do, to eventually be able to give a loss a place and pick up life again. We call these the grief tasks. The word 'grief tasks' may remind you a little of (home) work, and for a good reason. After all, grieving is really hard work. You have to actively pick up the various tasks and you can also get very tired of grieving.



Understanding the grieving process can help in understanding and supporting each other.



Wendy van Vliet
Social worker

Watch the video in which Wendy explains more about grief and loss. She also mentions the 'Circle' of Loss – this is a description of the different stages you or others involved in the divorce may be in.



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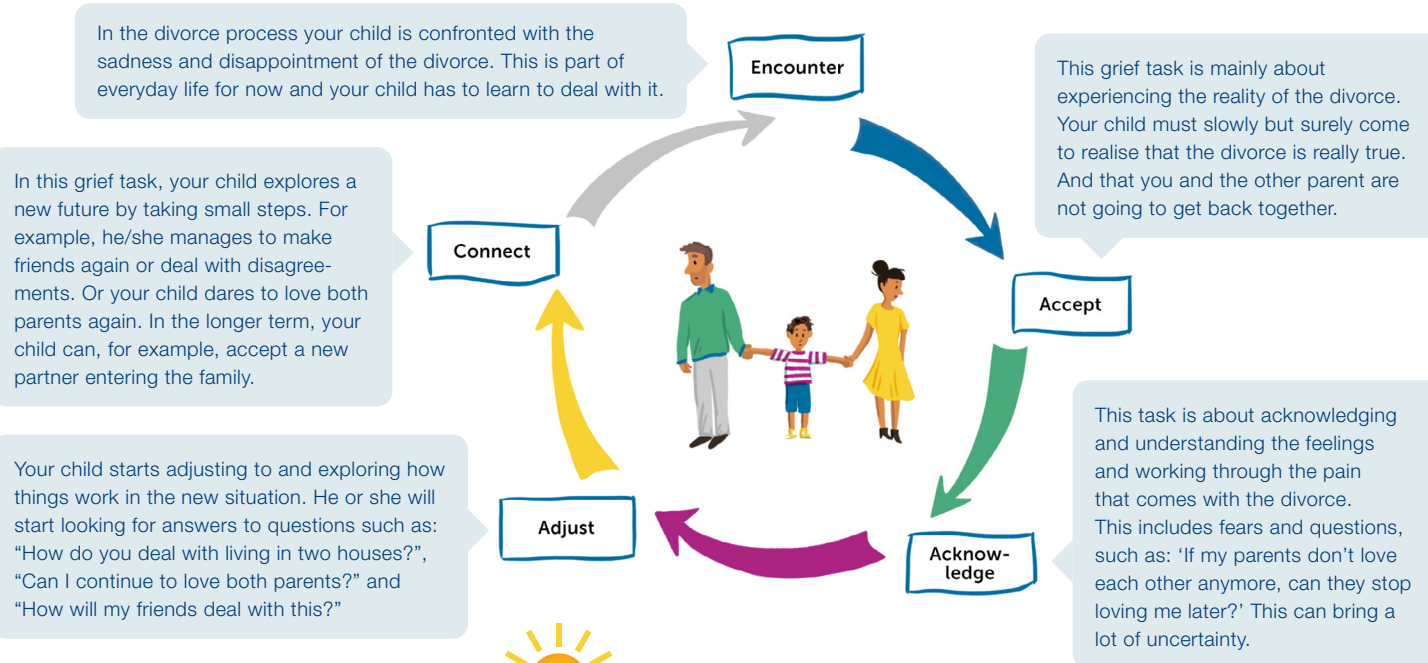
What do you take away from Session 1?



It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

What is the Circle of Loss?

The Circle of Loss shows the different steps involved in grief. These are also called grief tasks. The steps are worked out here from the child's point of view. But the same steps also apply to you and the other parent. It is not always a circle: sometimes the grief tasks criss-cross each other.



You will read more about the Circle of Loss in the [Divorce Atlas handbook](#). Here you can also indicate at what point you, your child and/or your ex-partner are in the process of coping with the divorce.



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It takes about 40 minutes to complete this session.

What do you take away from Session 1?

You are now at the end of Session 1. Review the summary first. Then reflect on what you thought of this session, and what you will take away from this session. In the final session, you can retrieve your answers to see what you took away from each session.

What did you learn?

- You have reflected on your own situation.
- You have read about how divorce can affect children.
- You have seen the different emotions that can occur and thought about how your children deal with the divorce. They may experience all kinds of feelings. For example, children may be angry, scared or sad after a divorce.
- You gained an understanding of how grief and loss can be related to divorce. Thus, various grief tasks are associated with it. The grief tasks are separating/meeting, acknowledging, recognising, exploring and connecting.
- You know more about the Circle of Loss. Understanding the grief process can help you understand and support each other. Everyone goes through the different tasks at their own pace and in their own way.

Write down for yourself:

- What did you think of this session?
- What will you take away from this session?
- What do you want to start practising with?
- What is still difficult right now?
- What could help you practice?



Session 2: Different types of parenting





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Session 2: Different types of parenting >

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Quiz: what would you do?

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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

How will you give shape to your parenting?

In this session, you will read about cooperative and parallel parenting after divorce. What do these two forms of sharing your responsibilities as parents in raising children entail? Which form suits your situation best? You will think about what is important for your children and what you can pay attention to. By the end of this session:

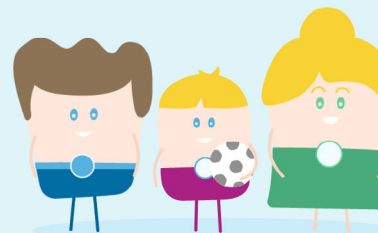


If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page.

1. You have read about the challenge of shaping parenting in a new situation >
2. You know what cooperative and parallel parenting are and when to choose which form >
3. You have thought about your form of parenting after divorce >
4. You will have gained insight into what your child needs from you as a parent in this new situation >
5. You have thought about what you can do in potentially difficult situations between you and the other parent >



Find a quiet place to work.
If something or someone still disturbs you, make a note about where you left off, and pick up your work at a later time.





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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Parenting

Parenting is something everyone does in his or her own way. There is no one correct way when it comes to parenting. Whether you are together or divorced, the most important thing is that your children grow up healthy and with a sense of security. And beyond that, as a parent you should do your best for your child in a way that suits you.

Your new parenting

When you get divorced, you have to reshape your parenting. Whereas you and your partner used to set the rules at home together, you are now the one who has to determine these rules yourself. What rules apply in your home? What do you tell your children about the divorce? And how do you arrange things around parenting with the other parent? These are difficult questions, and it is important to think about them carefully. Broadly speaking, there are two ways to share parenting responsibilities with the other parent after divorce: cooperative and parallel.



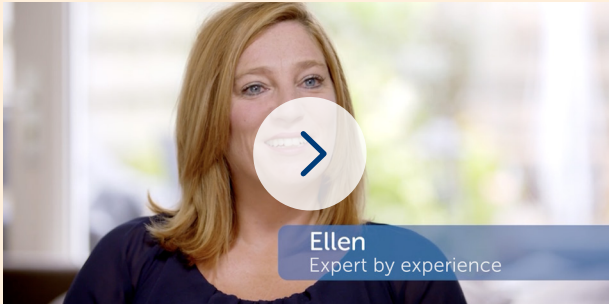
The parenting of **Robin** and **Ellen** >



[Close pop-up](#) ✕

The parenting of Ellen and Robin

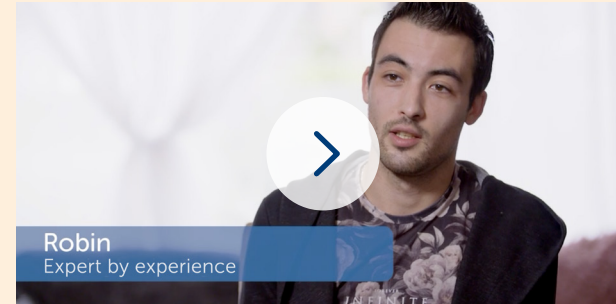
In these videos, Ellen and Robin explain how they have shaped parenting with the other parent.



Ellen
Expert by experience

Ellen

Ellen and the other parent also co-parent: week on week off. Ellen experiences this as pleasant. Under the guidance of a lawyer-mediator, a parenting plan was written that contains basic agreements on the care of the children. Every eight weeks, both parents evaluate the plan together. Tip: for young children, a week without the other parent can be quite long. It can help to schedule a phone call with the other parent halfway through the week.



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

Robin and the other parent have chosen to co-parent. After a court case, it was established that their son spends half the week with mother and half the week with father. Robin and the other parent have different views on parenting. Sometimes this causes conflict. The agreement is that both parents do it their own way.



It takes about
minutes to
this session



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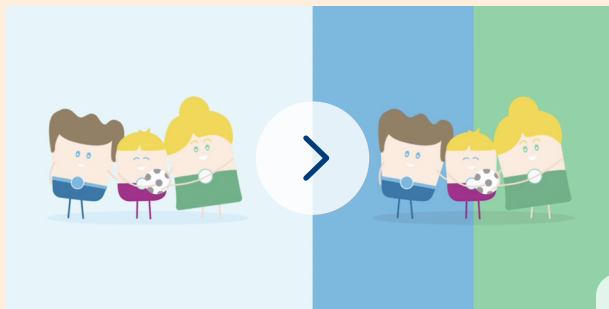
What do you take away from Session 2?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Parenting after divorce

After divorcing you are no longer in a romantic partnership, but you still remain the parents of your child. For some parents, this is not a problem. They divorced without disagreements and still get along very well. But there are also parents for whom it's less easy. They quarrel as soon as they see each other and cannot make agreements with each other. There's also a group who experience a combination. Here you can read about two ways to share parenting responsibilities with the other parent after divorce: the cooperative and parallel form.



Watch the animation explaining the different forms of parenting after divorce.

From cooperative to parallel parenting...

In cooperative parenting, parents have good contact and speak to each other regularly. There are no arguments, or only a few. They make agreements together and encourage the child to build a good relationship with the other parent. In more parallel parenting, parents do not communicate (directly) with each other. They keep the agreements they made earlier and do not interfere in each other's households.

... and everything in between

Fully cooperative and fully parallel parenting are both extreme forms of parenting. In most cases the situation is not just black or white. It is often difficult to find the right combination of forms with each other. Cooperative parenting is preferred. Often, people are in between the two forms and spend some time searching for the right balance. For example, there is mutual consultation, but very limited. Or parents try to see each other as little as possible but do have a call once every few months to keep each other informed.



Read more about these forms of parenting in the [Handbook of Divorce ATLAS](#) (in Dutch).



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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

How does it work in practice?

The different forms of parenting are a guideline for how to deal with raising your child after a divorce. When reshaping parenting after a divorce, the most important thing is that your child experiences as little conflict as possible and can feel safe with both parents.



Watch the video in which Karlijn elaborates on the different forms of parenting.

Cooperative parenting

Advantages

In successful cooperative parenting, the child does not witness conflict between the parents. This makes it easy for the child to build a good relationship with both parents. Take for example

the changeover moments, when the child moves from one home to another. With successful cooperative parenting, this does not cause any problems and parents can do this in a positive atmosphere.

Disadvantages

There are no disadvantages in this form of parenting. However, a good attempt at cooperative parenting might not quite work out after all. Parents do try to maintain good contact or have the changeover moments take place in a positive atmosphere but end up in conflict again and again in front of their child. If you have tried cooperative parenting but it (really) does not work, it is better to look at other options.

Communication

In cooperative parenting, parents talk to each other regularly, in real life or over the phone. They discuss important decisions related to their child together. If necessary, they work together to arrange something for their child. Parents do their best to ensure that the child can have good contact with both parents.

Agreements

Both parents stick as much as possible to the agreements that they made together. The agreements are reasonably flexible and can be adjusted by mutual agreement if needed.

Tips for successful cooperative parenting >



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Tips for successful cooperative parenting

Close pop-up X

- Keep working to build a positive relationship with the other parent and reduce conflict. First and foremost, try to keep conflict out of sight or reach of the children.
- Deal with the other parent as if they were a valued colleague. Assume cooperation, courtesy and mutual respect.
- Make agreements on regular contact; for example, call each other every week at a fixed time. Do this at a time when the children are not there, so they cannot listen in. As a preparation, make a list for yourself and stick to it. Keep the conversation short and make sure it is only about your child's needs, exchanging information, changes in the schedule, or plans for activities. Avoid personal topics.
- If a more in-depth conversation is needed and you believe you can have it in a positive way, meet in person. Do this in a neutral place at a relatively stress-free time when your child is not around. Agree in advance what your meeting will be about and stick to it.
- Be clear about plans, schedules, requests in your communication with the other parent.
- Always pay the alimony on time.
- Never use your child as a messenger.
- If communication gets strained, ask for time to cool off a bit, consider alternative solutions, and agree to come back to the subject later.

Source: Pedro-Carroll, J. (2010). *Putting children first: Proven parenting strategies for helping children thrive through divorce*. New York: Penguin Books.

conflict between the parents. This makes it easy for the child to build a good relationship with both parents. Take for example

Tips for successful cooperative parenting >



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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Parallel parenting

Advantages

When the divorce itself, or his/her character or the experienced stress of one of the parents makes it impossible to work together, conflict is more likely to arise. More parallel parenting can then help you to take up your responsibilities around parenting without too much room for disagreements and tensions between you and the other parent. This provides peace of mind for your child and ensures that he or she can be confident that, for example, a changeover moment will go peacefully.

Disadvantages

One disadvantage of parallel parenting is that your child may feel little room to build a good bond with the other parent. This occurs if you don't have a good relationship with the other parent yourself. Does your child dare to show his or her loyalty to the other parent? Does he or she dare to talk about experiences while with the other parent? Or does he or she dare to say that

they miss the other parent when they are with you? If your child does not feel room for this, it can lead to loyalty conflicts.

Communication

In parallel parenting, parents speak only on urgent matters. They do not talk to each other directly, but use e-mail, a so-called back-and-forth notebook or a neutral person for this purpose. By avoiding direct contact, the chances of an argument become very small.

Agreements

There are some basic agreements that are fixed in the parenting plan. These are not flexible and therefore cannot be changed just like that. In addition, each household has its own rules and agreements with the child and the other parent has no say in these either.

Tips for successful parallel parenting >

What does your parenting look like?

- Think for yourself what you like about your own parenting form and that of the other parent. What do you think works well in it and why?
- Think about the different forms of parenting: fully cooperative parenting on one side and fully parallel parenting on the other. Where are you and the other parent on this scale?

- ➔ What do you notice?
- ➔ Where would you like to go in parenting between you and the other parent?
- ➔ What can you do (right now or in the next month) to get there?





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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Parallel parenting

Advantages

When the divorce itself, or his/her character or the experienced

they miss the other parent when they are with you? If your child does not feel room for this, it can lead to loyalty conflicts.

Close pop-up ✕

Tips for successful parallel parenting

- Focus on yourself. Neither parent has influence over, or anything to say about, what the other parent undertakes with the child.
- Adopt a businesslike attitude and be polite.
- Only organise activities for the child during the time he or she is with you. It may be better for a child to miss out on something than to experience the struggle over it between his or her parents.
- Focus on 'here and now'.
- Keep the child's interests and needs in mind.
- Try to avoid conflict as much as possible.
- Make sure you have the agreements about your child clearly written down.
- If consultation is necessary, ask a neutral third party to help you.





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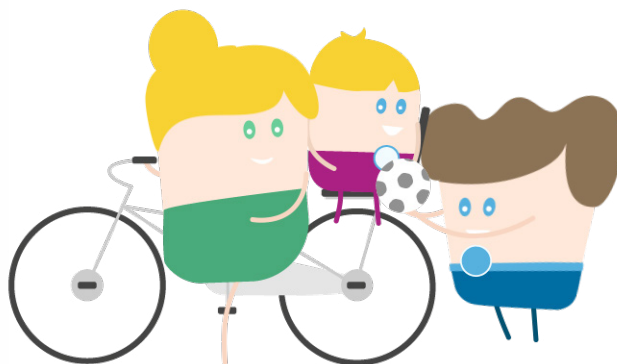
It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What does your child need in this situation?

Children need all kinds of things, of course. This varies from child to child and cannot be covered in one session. Research has shown that when children experience a divorce, it is very important as a parent to pay attention to these two things:

1. Let your child witness arguments and conflict as little as possible

Arguing between parents makes children feel unsafe at home. They cannot assess how bad the quarrel is and what consequences it will have. This has an impact on children's feelings, behaviour and development. It can cause feelings of guilt, sadness or anxiety. So, it is important to keep the child out of conflict or disagreements. That sounds easier than it is, because children notice a quarrel or disagreement between their parents very quickly.



Besides as little conflict as possible and a good bond with both parents, it is important to limit **the number of changes** for the child so that there is some peace and quiet to accommodate this big change.



2. Give your child a chance to bond with both parents

As a child, you want to have a good bond with both your parents. But children are also very loyal. Therefore, your child may feel that he or she is not allowed to build a good bond with the other parent, is not allowed to get too excited about the other or has to choose sides. This is very stressful for children. As a parent, you may still be very angry or feel that the other parent does not deserve to bond with your child. But always remember that it is better for your child to have good contact with both parents.

Thinking questions

- Think for yourself what the situation is like at your own place.
- Do you manage to encourage your child to have a good relationship with the other parent?





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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Quiz: what would you do?

Below is a quiz regarding co-parenting. How do you handle agreements or disagreements with the other parent? Read the situations and possible reactions below. Which reaction you think would be the best in the situation described?

Your child wants to go horse riding. You know that this will cost a lot of money and that the other parent will not agree. You, however, would like your child to have the opportunity. How do you approach the conversation?

- ☐ A. I raise the issue at the handover moment.
- ☐ B. I make an appointment to discuss it with my ex-partner after the children have gone to bed.
- ☐ C. I propose to discuss it with my ex-partner in a neutral place, such as a lunchroom, or when the children are at school.

[Explanatory note on responses >](#)

You have just had a heated discussion on the phone (outside your home) with the other parent. Your child is in the living room. What do you do?

- ☐ A. I take a short walk outside to blow off steam.
- ☐ B. I call a friend to tell my story.
- ☐ C. I carry on with what I am doing, there is a lot to do and I don't let arguments affect my life.

[Explanatory note on responses >](#)

The other parent does not want to pay for your eldest child's phone bill. This is because he/she did not agree to the eldest getting a phone. You think this is nonsense: everyone has a phone these days and because the other parent is "against it", you are now footing the bill. Do you discuss this with your child?

- ☐ A. Yes, my child should know about this unfair situation. And he/she should know I'm not sure what to do with this - I think the other parent should also contribute financially.
- ☐ B. Yes, I explain the situation - "I pay the bill, because he/she is against a phone and therefore doesn't want to contribute."
- ☐ C. No, this is something between me and the other parent, this has nothing to do with my child.

[Explanatory note on responses >](#)



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Close pop-up X

Situation:

Your child wants to go horse riding. You know that this will cost a lot of money and that the other parent will not agree. You, however, would like your child to have the opportunity. How do you approach the conversation?

What was your choice?

A. I raise the issue at the handover moment:

There is a chance that you will not immediately agree on this issue. If you don't agree on the place or time to discuss this, your child may be there if a disagreement arises between you. So it is not the best idea to discuss it during handover. Agree on a time or a place where the child is not present, such as when the child is at school. Or have your discussion somewhere outside the house.

B. I make an appointment to discuss it with my ex-partner after the children have gone to bed:

There is a chance that you will get into an argument on this subject. It is good to discuss the topic when the child is not there. If he or she is in the same house, he or she might still pick up signs about the conflict. So agree on a time or a place where your child is not present, for example when your child is at school. Or have your discussion somewhere outside the house.

C. I propose to discuss it with my ex-partner in a neutral place, such as a lunchroom, or when the children are at school:

Good choice. There is a chance that you will get into an argument on this subject. To keep the child out of the conflict, it is useful to agree to meet somewhere the child is not present, for example when your child is at school. Or have your discussion somewhere outside the house.



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Close pop-up



Situation:

You have just had a heated discussion on the phone (outside your home) with the other parent. Your child is in the living room. What do you do?

What was your choice?

A. I take a short walk outside to blow off steam:

It is good to cool off and retreat after an argument. By doing so, your child will experience as little as possible of the conflict. If you can't leave your child alone, let them watch TV for example while you do something else.

B. I call a friend to tell my story:

It can be good to have a chat with someone you trust after an argument. But make sure your child cannot listen in at that moment. You can make your call outside, for example.

C. I carry on with what I am doing, there is a lot to do, and I don't let arguments affect my life:

You are obviously very busy with all sorts of things. Still, it is important to cool down after an argument before going back to your child. Your child will otherwise sense your angry feelings anyway, which in turn will make him or her worry or feel sad, angry or unsafe. Retreat for a while. Take a short walk or, for example, let your child watch TV while you do something else for a while.

[Close pop-up](#) 

Situation:

The other parent does not want to pay for your eldest child's phone bill. This is because he/she did not agree to the eldest getting a phone. You think this is nonsense: everyone has a phone these days and because the other parent is "against it", you are now footing the bill. Do you discuss this with your child?

What was your choice?

- A. **Yes, my child should know about this unfair situation. And he/she should know I'm not sure what to do with this - I think the other parent should also contribute financially:**
Don't ask the child who they agree with or what they think about it. Your child is going to feel obliged to choose a side. He or she can't do much with this discussion: it's something for you and the other parent to resolve. Your child has nothing to do with it.
- B. **Yes, I explain the situation - "I pay the bill, because he/she is against a phone and therefore doesn't want to help pay":**
Explaining the situation to your child can be enlightening for your child, if, for example, they should start paying the bill themselves. But for this to be an outcome a discussion will have to take place between you and the other parent first. So, your child has nothing to do with it (yet), and it is better not to discuss it with your child.
- C. **No, this is something between me and the other parent, this has nothing to do with my child:**
It is good not to ask the child who they agree with or what they think. After all, this is mainly a discussion between you and the other parent. Your child has nothing to do with it (yet).

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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

The other parent wants to take your children to Egypt to go scuba diving. You do not have the ability to take the child on holiday this year. How do you respond?

- ☐ A. You fervently discuss this with your ex-partner: things should be shared equally, and you would also like to do something with them.
- ☐ B. You are happy that your children can still go on holiday this year. That you regret that it's not with you, is something you keep to yourself.
- ☐ C. You let your children go, but you are not happy about it - and you will let your ex-partner about that too.

Explanatory note on responses >



You might not wish your partner to have a fun time with your child, but try to turn that thought around. You probably do wish your child has a fun time with both parents.

Your child was very happy after returning from the other parent's place: they went out for dinner and visited the zoo. You usually have a cosy movie night when your child is with you the first day. Choose what applies most to you:

- ☐ A. It's nice that the kids went to the zoo! I ask them how it was, if they saw any interesting animals.
- ☐ B. It's nice that the kids went to the zoo. I'll take them out shopping next time. Or to one of those adventure amusement parks.
- ☐ C. I want them to have a good time with me too - I'll take them to the cinema that night.

Explanatory note on responses >

Close pop-up ✕

Situation:

The other parent wants to take your children to Egypt to go scuba diving. You do not have the ability to take the child on holiday this year. How do you respond?

What was your choice?

- A. You fervently discuss this with your ex-partner: things should be shared equally, and you would also like to do something with them:

You may not wish the other parent has a fun time with your child, but try turning that around.

You probably do wish your child to have a nice time with both parents. It is okay to express your discontent to the other parent if you want to change something about the arrangements. But if you want to vent anger, it may also help to do this with someone you trust. Make sure your child does not get involved. Try to keep a neutral, open attitude when talking to your child about your ex-partner. Keep your own opinions about your ex-partner to yourself and focus mainly on your child. Your child may form an opinion, which does not have to match yours.

- B. You are happy that your children can still go on holiday this year. You're sorry you will not be there with them, but you keep this to yourself:

This is not always easy, but it is good for your children to go on a holiday and be able to bond with both parents. Because they will sense their parents' opinions very clearly, it remains difficult to give the child freedom to form their own opinion. So, try to keep your feelings to yourself or talk about it with others.

- C. You let your children go, but you are not happy about it - and you will let your ex-partner about that too:

It is okay to express your discontent to the other parent if you want to change something about the arrangements. But if you want to vent anger, it can also help to do this with someone you trust. Make sure your child does not get involved. Try to keep a neutral, open attitude when talking to your child about your ex-partner. Keep your own opinions about your ex-partner to yourself and focus mainly on your child. Your child may form an opinion, which does not have to match yours.

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Session 2: Different types of parenting

Your new parenting

Parenting after divorce

How does that work in practice?

What does your child need in this situation?

Quiz: what would you do?

What do you take away from Session 2?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Close pop-up ✕

Situation:

Your child was very happy after returning from the other parent's place: they went out for dinner and visited the zoo. You usually have a cosy movie night when your child is with you the first day.

What was your choice?

A. It's nice that the kids went to the zoo! I ask them how it was, if they saw any interesting animals:

The most important thing is that your child has fun - and that is independent of whether that is with you, the other parent, or someone else. If you can let go of that, your child will also feel that it is okay to have fun wherever he or she is.

B. It's nice that the kids went to the zoo. I'll take them out shopping next time. Or take them to one of those adventure amusement parks:

It is fun to do things with your children, but don't turn it into a competition. If your child has done something fun with one parent, you don't have to do something even more exciting. Your child will benefit most from a stable and clear home situation.

C. I want them to have a good time with me too - I'll take them to the cinema that night:

It is fun to do things with your children, but don't turn it into a competition. If your child has done something fun with one parent, you don't have to do something even more exciting. Your child benefits most from a stable and clear home situation. Your child can have fun with you, and with the other parent, and love you both, regardless of how the situations are.

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Session 2: Different types of parenting

Your new parenting

Parenting after divorce

How does that work in practice?

What does your child need in this situation?

Quiz: what would you do?

What do you take away from Session 2?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



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To overview graphic



Session 2: Different types of parenting

Your new parenting

Parenting after divorce

How does that work in practice?

What does your child need in this situation?

Quiz: what would you do?

What do you take away from Session 2?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What does cooperative parenting look like?

Watch the videos on how to shape cooperative parenting, or how better not to do this.



Clip A



Clip B

Pay attention to the following things:

- What does the mother respond to in clip A?
- How does this affect the child?
- What is the atmosphere like in clip B?
- What is its effect on the child?
- What could the mother have done better in clip B?
- How does the mother communicate her criticism of the other parent in clip B?



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What do you take away from Session 2?

You are now at the end of Session 2. Review the summary first. Then reflect on what you thought of this session, and what you will take away from this session.

Session 2: Different types of parenting

Your new parenting

Parenting after divorce

How does that work in practice?

What does your child need in this situation?

Quiz: what would you do?

What do you take away from Session 2?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What did you learn?

- You have read about the challenge of reshaping parenting in a new situation.
- You know the differences between cooperative and parallel parenting as parenting forms after divorce.
- You've thought about your own parenting and what you can do in difficult situations between you and the other parent.
- You understand what your child needs to cope with the divorce in the best possible way - that the most important thing is that your children are kept out of conflict and that they have the opportunity (and feel the freedom) to bond with both parents.

Write down for yourself:

- What did you think of this session?
- What will you take away from this session?
- What do you want to start practising with?
- What is still difficult right now?
- What could help you practice?



Session 3: How to communicate with each other?





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Session 3: How to communicate with each other? >

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Practicing the 'I-message'

This session is about so-called 'positive communication'. You'll receive tips on how to communicate with the other parent, also about difficult topics. In the exercise you will work with the 'I-message'. At the end of this session:

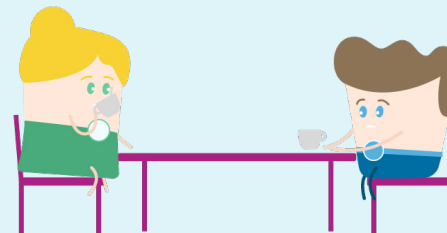
1. You have reflected on your communication with the other parent. You will know better how to stay in dialogue after your divorce >
2. You will know more about positive communication >
3. You will understand how the 'I message' works and how it can help you >
4. You will know how to use the 'I message' >
5. You will have explored several ways to improve the quality of the dialogue between you and the other parent >



If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page



Find a quiet place to work.
If something or someone still disturbs you, make a note about where you left off, and pick up your work at a later time.





Divorce ATLAS

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Staying in dialogue after divorce

As a divorced parent, it can be difficult to communicate with the other parent in a positive way. You may still be filled with angry or sad feelings about the divorce. Or you disagree with the other parent's approach to parenting. This can create a tense atmosphere in which it's easy to get frustrated.

How do you communicate with the other parent?

Before continuing with the topic of positive communication, it is good to take a moment to consider for yourself how you and the other parent currently communicate. You can keep this in mind as a starting point when you read more about communication with the other parent later on in this session.

Ask yourself:

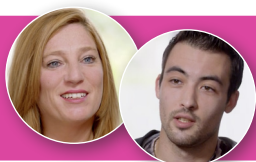
- How is the contact going?
- Do you succeed in making agreements?
- Do you ever run into problems or conflicts while communicating with the other parent:
 - Yes: What do you think are the consequences of the way you and the other parent communicate?
 - No: That's nice! Can you describe what is going well in your communication?



Karlijn Pieterse
Social worker

Watch the video in which Karlijn explains what makes it difficult to communicate with the other parent. Karlijn also gives a tip on how to deal with this.

Ellen and Robin and their communication with the other parent



There are a number of topics that often recur in conflicts between divorced parents. Which ones do you recognise?

- ☐ Raising your child
- ☐ A new partner
- ☐ Arrangements for pick-ups and drop-offs
- ☐ Financial matters
- ☐ Not understanding the other person
- ☐ The divorce
- ☐ The children's future



Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce



What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?



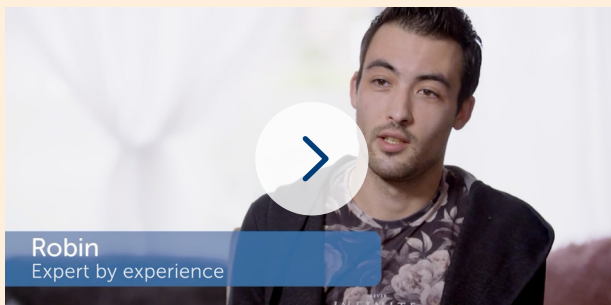
It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Close pop-up ✕

The parenting of Robin and Ellen

Watch the videos in which Robin and Ellen talk about communicating with the other parent. What helps them in doing this?



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

Robin mentions how he avoids conflict with his child's mother as much as possible. He can judge quite well what the difficult topics are and tries to avoid them as much as possible. WhatsApp is a pleasant medium for these two parents because it allows them to think for a while before reacting.



Ellen
Expert by experience

Ellen

For Ellen, it helps to make clear arrangements about the communication with the other parent, for example every week by means of a 'handover e-mail' about the children. She also mentions pausing before responding to a WhatsApp message, for example. Ellen and her children's father save difficult subjects for private communication through e-mail or by phone as much as possible.

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with the other parent

- ☐ The divorce
- ☐ The children's future



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Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What does positive communication mean?

Positive communication means listening to the other parent with respect. While communicating you try to discover what the other parent is thinking and feeling, and what he or she wants to tell you.

At the same time, you express yourself clearly about what you need. A good way to do so is using the 'I-message'. You will work on this later in this session.

Negative communication

Negative communication means criticising or insulting the other person. This doesn't work because the other parent will stop listening. You cannot force the other parent to do things a certain way. You cannot change him or her as a person.

If you **communicate positively**:

- There will be less conflict, allowing your child to grow up in a safe environment
- You will have better conversations, in which you and the other parent both feel heard
- The other parent will open up more, because you listen better to his or her needs
- You are more likely to find solutions together



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Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

How does the 'I-message' work?

The I-message is a 'tool' for positive communication. It is a way of making clear what you want without hurting or attacking the other person. You speak with your own needs as a starting point and will thus stay close to yourself. That often works best! The I-message consists of 3 steps:

Step 1: What do I see or hear? You define the specific thing that has happened that makes you feel a certain way.

Step 2: You ask yourself: How does that make me feel? Then you express how you feel, without judging.

Step 3: What do I need? You indicate what you need.

Step 1: What do I see or hear?

The first step of the 'I-message' is to observe the situation. You try to put it into words just as it is. You remain neutral, without giving an opinion or judgement. For example: 'Floris told you he got an ice cream', instead of: 'With you, Floris gets spoiled way too much!' Words like 'spoil' and 'too much' show that you are passing judgement: it is your opinion of the situation.



Giving judgment often comes naturally. Therefore, it can be difficult to let go of this and only express what you see or hear.

Step 2: How does this make me feel?

Step 2 of the 'I-message' is checking with yourself how you feel about the situation. For example, instead of 'you're attacking me again!' you could say 'if you say I'm not a good parent, I feel hurt.' By doing so, you open up the possibility for dialogue with the other parent.

A feeling is different from a judgement >



Make your request action oriented.
Say for example,
'I want you to tell the children that my way of parenting is different but also okay.' Instead of a vague request such as: *'I want you to support me.'*

Step 3: What do I need?

Step 3 of the 'I-message' is about reflecting on what you need. What would you like? What is

your need? We often hope that the other parent can sense what we need. But he or she cannot just guess this. If you express your need, you are more likely to have it met!

What is it you might need? >

[Close pop-up](#)

Feelings that are actually judgements

The feelings listed below are feelings that tell more about how you think about how another person is acting. Rather than a description of how you feel, for example **'I feel...'**:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> manipulated | <input type="checkbox"/> left alone | <input type="checkbox"/> used |
| <input type="checkbox"/> betrayed | <input type="checkbox"/> unheard | <input type="checkbox"/> deceived |
| <input type="checkbox"/> humiliated | <input type="checkbox"/> ignored | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> abandoned | <input type="checkbox"/> unsupported | |

Feelings that are really feelings

Words that could better express how you feel and have no judgement in them are, for example, **'I feel...'**:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> happy | <input type="checkbox"/> peaceful | <input type="checkbox"/> ashamed | <input type="checkbox"/> upset |
| <input type="checkbox"/> thrilled | <input type="checkbox"/> confident | <input type="checkbox"/> angry | <input type="checkbox"/> vengeful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> interested | <input type="checkbox"/> suspicious | <input type="checkbox"/> surprised | <input type="checkbox"/> tense |
| <input type="checkbox"/> calm | <input type="checkbox"/> frightened | <input type="checkbox"/> bored | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> familiar | <input type="checkbox"/> sad | <input type="checkbox"/> miserable | |

Based on Geweldloze communicatie, M.B. Rosenberg (2011) (in Dutch)



How does the 'I-message' work?

The I-message is a 'tool' for positive communication. It is a way of making clear what you want without hurting or attacking the other person. You speak with your own needs as a starting point and will thus stay close to yourself. That often works best!

Step 2: How does this make me feel?

Step 2 of the 'I-message' is checking with yourself how you feel about the situation. For example, instead of 'you're attacking me again!' you could say 'if you say I'm not a good parent, I feel

Session 3: How to cope with each other

Staying in dialogue during a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without the 'I-message'

What else can you do during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What is it you might need?

Below are some basic needs we all have:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> autonomy | <input type="checkbox"/> celebrate | <input type="checkbox"/> food | <input type="checkbox"/> order |
| <input type="checkbox"/> respect | <input type="checkbox"/> grief resolution | <input type="checkbox"/> shelter | <input type="checkbox"/> harmony |
| <input type="checkbox"/> support | <input type="checkbox"/> understanding | <input type="checkbox"/> rest | <input type="checkbox"/> touch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> appreciation | <input type="checkbox"/> acknowledgement | <input type="checkbox"/> sexual expression | <input type="checkbox"/> movement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> acceptance | <input type="checkbox"/> pleasure | |

Based on *Geweldloze communicatie*, M.B. Rosenberg (2011) (in Dutch)

'Floris told you he got an ice cream', instead of: 'With you, Floris gets spoiled way too much!' Words like 'spoil' and 'too much' show that you are passing judgement: it is your opinion of the situation.



Giving judgment often comes naturally. Therefore, it can be difficult to let go of this and only express what you see or hear.

vague request such as: 'I want you to support me.'

need, you are more likely to have it met!

What is it you might need? >

Close pop-up ✕



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message' >

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?

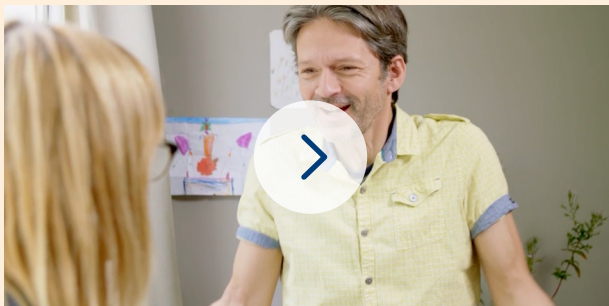


It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Examples without and with 'I-message'

An example without 'I-message'

The video shows an example of a situation in which divorced parents Marlies and Thijs are talking to each other.



Watch the video and indicate what strikes you about the way Marlies and Thijs communicate.

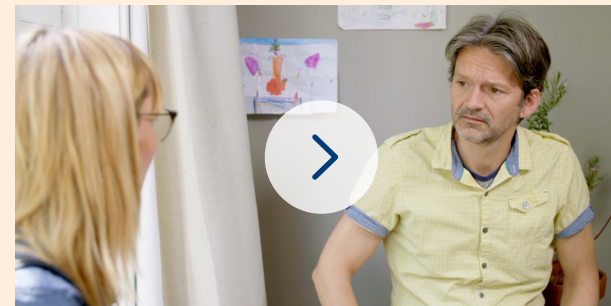
What others noticed in this clip:

- Marlies and Thijs only talk about 'you'
- They don't bother to sit down quietly
- They don't let each other finish talking

How would you use the 'I-message'? >

An example with an 'I-message'

In this video you see Thijs and Marlies having a conversation once more. This time, they use the 'I-message'.



Watch the video and indicate what you notice about the way Marlies and Thijs communicate.

What others noticed in this clip:

- Marlies states what she observed. There is no judgement in her words.
- There is less blaming in the words of Marlies
- Thijs doesn't get defensive. He seems to understand why Marlies wants to discuss this topic.
- The dialogue becomes practical: how do we solve this for the future?

Examples without and with 'I-message'

[Close pop-up](#)

How would you use the 'I-message'?

In this exercise, you will practice using the 'I-message'. You do this by retrieving a conversation between you and the other parent in which the communication did not go well. It could be about a problem you wanted to discuss, a disagreement or a message that was misunderstood.

- **What did you want to tell the other parent? What was your message?**

With what purpose did you start the conversation?

- **How did you deliver your message?**

Think about your tone of voice, facial expression or body posture.

- **What do you think went wrong in this conversation?**

Why did you misunderstand each other?

- **How could you have handled this conversation differently using the 'I-message'?**

Imagine if you conveyed your message like this. What effect would that have?



Evaluate your own part in the conversation.
How did the other parent react to your message?
Where do you think this reaction came from?

Try putting your message into words for yourself in the following way: 'I feel ... because I ... (need/find important).'

[How would you use the 'I-message'?](#)

- This doesn't get defensive. He seems to understand why Marlies wants to discuss this topic.
- The dialogue becomes practical: how do we solve this for the future?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation? >

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What else can you pay attention to during a dialogue?

You have read about what you can do in the dialogue with the other parent using the 'I-message' to understand each other better. There are a number of other tips you can use in a conversation with the other parent. There are quite a few, so click below on the tips that appeal to you. Also read about 'self-talk', for example, in the [Handbook of Divorce ATLAS](#) (in Dutch).



Karlijn Pieterse
Social worker

Watch the video in which Karlijn talks about what you can do to improve communication.

Pick a good time

Say things at the right time. Don't choose a moment when you are tired, when there are visitors at the door or when you are in a hurry. A good time is when you both feel calm and rested.

- *For example, don't start a discussion about child-rearing when you are about to go to bed or know that the other parent usually goes to bed.*

Choose a good place

Choose a space where you both feel safe and at ease. Also make sure you are not disturbed by the children or other people around you.

- *Turn off your phone and television and make sure you can go to another room if a time-out is needed.*

Ask questions

It is better to ask for something than to demand it. By asking, you show that you respect the other parent. This encourages the other parent to also speak out freely and cooperate with your request.

- *Do not say, 'Close the door for me' but ask, for example, 'Will you please close the door for me?'*



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation? >

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Summarise

Summarise what has been said. That way you can make sure you have understood each other. Also ask for an explanation if you don't understand something.

- For example, say: 'If I understand correctly, you don't like me eating out with Sanne three nights a week.'

Name the other person's behaviour

What exactly is he or she doing that makes you angry or sad? Be careful not to accuse the other person.

- Do not say, 'You never tell anything', but say, for example, 'I have the feeling that you do not tell what is going on inside you.'

State what you want

Don't state what you don't want, instead express what you do want. By being clear in this, the other parent will know better what you would like him or her to do. This way, you can discuss together whether this is possible or not.

- Say, for example, 'It bothers me that you interrupt me while I'm talking. I would like you to let me finish.'

Accept what you can't change

Don't start talking about topics you or the other parent cannot change. This can hurt the other person. It's better to accept the things that are impossible to change.

- Do not say: 'You cycle around with Thom on your bike through all kinds of weather', if the other parent does not have a car and therefore must rely on public transport, cycling or walking.

Reflect on the consequences

Express yourself clearly about the consequences of the other parent's behaviour for you. By doing so it will be clear to the other parent what you mean to say and what the effect of his or her behaviour is on you.

- Say, for example, 'It bothers me when you don't call to tell me you will be late because it makes me anxious.'

Don't bottle it up

Don't bottle up your feelings or frustrations. It is better to express your feelings directly. Otherwise, you might just be throwing everything out at once during an argument.

- During an argument, don't say, 'Last week you were so angry too!' Say this at the time it applies.

Stay on topic

Talk about how things are now and what is going on now. Don't bring in other topics that have nothing to do with the subject of the conversation.

- Don't say, 'You also didn't tell me at all your mother was ill the other day,' when your conversation is about child-rearing.



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To overview graphic



What do you take away from Session 3?

You are now at the end of Session 3. Review the summary first. Then reflect on what you thought of this session, and what you are taking away from this session. In the final session, you will look back at what you took away from each session.

Session 3: How to communicate with each other?

Staying in dialogue after a divorce

What does positive communication mean?

How does the 'I message' work?

Examples without and with the 'I-message'

What else can you pay attention to during a conversation?

What do you take away from Session 3?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What did you learn?

- You have reflected on your communication with the other parent.
- You learnt that positive communication with the other parent is important to stay in dialogue after a divorce.
- Positive communication means listening carefully to the other parent and articulating without judgement what is going on and what you think should happen.
- You can use the 'I-message' for positive communication.
- The 'I-message' is a way of making things clear in three steps without hurting or attacking the other parent:
 - Step 1: What do I see or hear?
 - Step 2: How do I feel about it?
 - Step 3: What do I need?
- You have learnt how to use the 'I-message' and how it can be helpful.
- You have learnt that besides the 'I-message', there are other ways to use positive communication to improve your conversations with the other parent.

Write down for yourself:

- What did you think of this session?
- What will you take away from this session?
- What do you want to start practising with?
- What is still difficult right now?
- What could help you practice?



Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflict?





Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Creating a safe environment for your child

In this session, you will read about the impact stress can have on children. Not all divorces are without problems. Sometimes there are conflicting situations between the ex-partners. You will read why it is important to keep your children out of your conflicts. You will also find information that can help you deal with conflict. At the end of this session:



If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page.

Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflicts? >

Conflicts cause stress

Children are more aware of conflicts than you might think

A few tips to keep your child out of your conflicts

Quiz: apply the tips

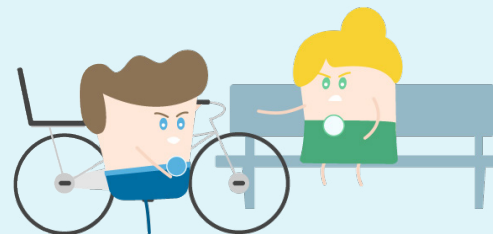
How do you keep your child out of conflicts?

What do you take away from Session 4?

1. You will have learnt how conflicts cause stress >
2. You will know how children experience your conflict >
3. You will have been given tips on how to keep your child out of your conflict >
4. You will have practised applying these tips >
5. You've learnt what keeping your child out of conflict looks like in practice >
6. You will have reflected on how you keep your child out of your conflict >



Find a quiet place to work.
If something or someone still disturbs you, make a note about where you left off, and pick up your work at a later time.



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflicts?

Conflicts cause stress >

Children are more aware of conflicts than you might think

A few tips to keep your child out of your conflicts

Quiz: apply the tips

How do you keep your child out of conflicts?

What do you take away from Session 4?

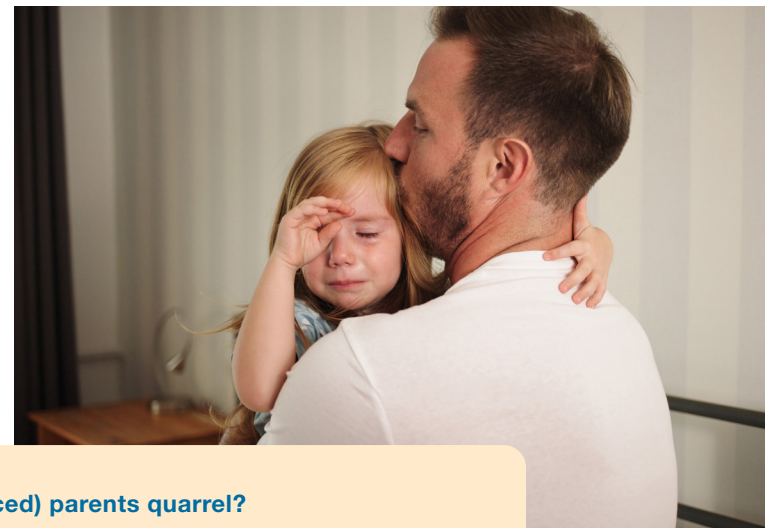


It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Conflict causes stress

Everyone disagrees about something from time to time. And we don't always manage to say so in a nice or positive way. Thus, conflict may arise. In such a case, it is important to keep your child out of this.

When children notice that mum is angry with dad or vice versa, it makes them insecure. They cannot oversee the situation, nor can they change it. They may feel they have to take sides. Or they feel that it is up to them to make sure mum and dad don't argue. Older children can also get very angry at their parents and at the situation.



What goes on in a child's mind when his or her (divorced) parents quarrel?

- If I am as calm as possible and make myself invisible, at least they are not bothered by me.
- Dad is so angry with mum, I am afraid he will do something to her.
- It's my fault they are fighting.
- If mum can get so angry with dad, maybe she will get angry with me too.
- I have to choose whose side I'm on.
- If I comfort dad, maybe mum won't love me anymore.
- I better not tell dad how it was with mum, because he'll probably get angry.



A divorce in itself is a stressful event. But stress is magnified when your child witnesses' arguments and disagreements.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Children are more aware of conflicts than you might think

If your situation involves conflict with the other parent, it is not easy to keep your child out of it. Your child is also likely to be there regularly when you see each other. Moreover, children often understand more than you think. In the video, Wendy talks about this.

Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflicts?

Conflicts cause stress

Children are more aware of conflicts than you might think >

A few tips to keep your child out of your conflicts

Quiz: apply the tips

How do you keep your child out of conflicts?

What do you take away from Session 4?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Wendy van Vliet
Social worker

As an example, suppose your son is sitting in his room doing homework and his parents are arguing downstairs. Then he may not hear literally what is being said, but he often hears by the tone of voice that it is not a nice chat. Often, the child will listen at the door to know exactly how the argument is going and whether everything is still okay. Or the child comes downstairs when his parents just had a heated argument over the phone. If a parent is still angry or sad about that, a child will pick up on it flawlessly.



For children, their existence depends on their parents: so, they are extremely sensitive to signals of danger. In the [handbook of Divorce ATLAS](#) (in Dutch), we reflect on the degree of conflict using the 'conflict thermometer'.

Look at that conflict thermometer: what scale of the thermometer applies to you and the other parent?



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Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflicts?

Conflicts cause stress

Children are more aware of conflicts than you might think

A few tips to keep your child out of your conflicts

Quiz: apply the tips

How do you keep your child out of conflicts?

What do you take away from Session 4?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

A few tips to keep your child out of your conflicts

How do you make sure your child gets as little as possible from the conflicts between you and the other parent? Here are a few tips. In any case: focus on your child and think from the child's point of view. What does he or she need at that moment?



In this video Karlijn gives tips to keep your child out of conflicts with the other parent.

Don't make your child into a weapon or shield

Children are sometimes (unwittingly) used as a weapon or shield in the conflict between their parents. For instance, children's opinions are deployed in the argument. For example, 'Samira told me just last week that she doesn't like it at all when ...'. Also, communicating via the children is used to make a point. For example: 'Marten, you tell mum what you think!' By doing this, you put the child in a very difficult position. You make the child take sides, without him or her wanting to do so.

Limit tensions

Try to create as little tension as possible if the children are around. Keep this in mind when you need to discuss something with the other parent that might cause conflict. For example, make a phone call when your child has left for school. Or meet up when the children are at the babysitters. Also give yourself some time to recover from difficult conversations. That gives you the opportunity to become calm before your children arrive.

Say nothing, rather than something negative

If you say something to your child about the other parent, make sure these are neutral or positive things. For example, you can say something briefly and then move on to another subject. It can also help to look at things with the child's point of view in mind. What is nice for him or her to know or hear about the other parent? The negative things are better discussed with the other parent themselves.

Sometimes you need to set aside the divorce for a while

At some moments in your life as a parent, a divorce is extra painful. These cases ask for rising above the painful situation you are in. Think, for instance, of the final musical in grade 8 or a graduation ceremony. These are important moments for a child where they would like both their parents to be present. In situations like these, try to remember that this is about your child and not about your divorce.



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Quiz: apply the tips

Below are some examples of parents getting into conflict with each other or disagreeing on something. How would they best handle the difficult situations?

Sander is angry with Mara for bringing their daughter Anne an hour late on Fridays. How could he best deal with this?

- ☐ A. Sander lets Anne walk in first and tells Mara he will call her later. He calls Mara at a time when Anne is not at home. He then says he doesn't appreciate that they came late.
- ☐ B. Sander lets Anne walk in first, before starting the conversation with Mara.
- ☐ C. Sander tells their daughter Anne: 'That's mean of mummy, isn't it? Now you have one hour less to be with daddy. She always does this kind of things.'

Explanatory responses >

Cahaya and Irfan need to start talking about the timetable. How can they best approach this?

- ☐ A. When Irfan comes to Cahaya to collect a forgotten school book (the children stay at Irfan's house), they say to each other, 'So let's talk about it now.' Irfan goes home frustrated.
- ☐ B. Cahaya and Irfan meet on a Thursday evening, when they can sit around the table together and their children are doing homework upstairs.
- ☐ C. Cahaya and Irfan meet on a Monday morning. The children are at school then and stay there for lunch.

Explanatory responses >

Close pop-up ✕

Situation:

Sander is angry with Mara for bringing their daughter Anne an hour late on Fridays.
How could he best deal with this?

What was your choice?

- A. Sander lets Anne walk in first and tells Mara he will call her later. He calls Mara at a time when Anne is not at home. He then says he doesn't appreciate that they came late:
It is good that Sander chooses a moment when Anne is not at home. He tries to resolve the problem over the phone. But another way might be better: by email or app, for example, so that both Sander and Mara can think about their answer. He could write, for example, 'Last Friday, you arrived an hour later than agreed. I felt disappointed because I had plans with Anne, and I really like to have that hour too. Will you bring her on time next time?'
- B. Sander lets Anne walk in first, before starting the conversation with Mara:
In situations like this, it is better to save the discussion for a later moment. In the moment itself, things can easily escalate, and Anne may still get some of it. Sander could tell Mara at a later time, 'Last Friday, you arrived an hour later than agreed. I felt disappointed because I had plans with Anne, and I really like to have that hour too. Will you bring her on time next time?'
- C. Sander says to their daughter Anne: 'That's mean of mummy, isn't it? Now you have one hour less to be with daddy. She always does this kind of things':
Speaking ill of the other parent causes the child to get into a loyalty conflict: children don't want to dislike one parent, and they also want to support the other parent. This puts Anne in an undesirable position. Best would be if Sander waits for another moment to bring it up with Mara if Anne is not home. Sander could tell Mara, 'Last Friday, you arrived an hour later than agreed. I felt disappointed because I had plans with Anne, and I really like to have that hour too. Will you bring her on time next time?'

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It takes about 6 minutes to complete this session.

Close pop-up ✕

Situation:

Cahaya and Irfan need to start talking about the timetable. How can they best approach this?

What was your choice?

- A. When Irfan comes to Cahaya to collect a forgotten schoolbook (the children stay at Irfan's house), they say to each other, 'So let's talk about it now.' Irfan goes home frustrated:
It is good that Irfan and Cahaya talk when the children are not there. But the children will still get something from it this way. Because Irfan goes home frustrated, they will pick up on the tension. Also, the parents go into the conversation unprepared. This increases the risk that emotions will run high.
- B. Cahaya and Irfan meet on a Thursday evening, when they can sit around the table together and their children are doing homework upstairs:
Cahaya and Irfan try to keep the children out of the discussion. If the conversation takes place in the same house, the children often still get something from it. So, Cahaya and Irfan would rather be meeting in a place where the children are not present, or for example when the children are at school.
- C. Cahaya and Irfan meet on a Monday morning. The children are at school then and stay there for lunch:
Because Cahaya and Irfan meet where the children are not present, the children cannot hear anything. Cahaya and Irfan will have to stop their discussion in time, so that, if necessary, there is still time to cool down before the children come home from school.

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Reinout and Francis have agreed that their son Benno should eat healthier and will therefore get no more chips. When Benno tells his mother that he ate chips and pancakes at his father's, Francis is surprised. What would be the best way to respond?

- ☐ A. Francis responds to Benno's positive feeling. In a neutral tone she says: 'You were lucky Benno. Shall we brush your teeth now?'
- ☐ B. Francis expresses her frustration. 'That father of yours can't keep promises. He can't be trusted. Does he want you to get fat or something?'
- ☐ C. Francis doesn't respond. She says 'oh' and continues to get Benno ready for bed.

Explanation of responses >

Olga is very happy because despite the problems at home she still got her high school diploma. Her parents are both very proud. They are divorced and have been arguing a lot lately. Olga has told them that she would really like her parents to attend the ceremony together. Peter has no desire to see Olga's mother, Linda, again. How can he best deal with this?

- ☐ A. Peter asks Olga what she would like most and explains to her that he would rather not sit near Linda. Olga arranges for him to sit next to her at the ceremony and her mother a bit further away. Linda and Olga will go for a drink together afterwards.
- ☐ B. Peter goes to the ceremony but does not shake Linda's hand: the fact that they are both there for Olga does not mean that he suddenly has to like Olga.
- ☐ C. Peter discusses with Linda what they are going to do for this special occasion. He does not really feel like it, but they decide to bury the hatchet for one day and be friendly with each other.

Explanation of responses >

Close pop-up ✕

Situation:

Reinout and Francis have agreed that their son Benno should eat healthier and will therefore get no more chips. When Benno tells his mother that he ate chips and pancakes at his father's, Francis is surprised. What would be the best way to respond?

What was your choice?

- A. Francis responds to Benno's positive feeling. In a neutral tone she says: 'You were lucky Benno. Shall we brush your teeth now?':
- By responding to Benno's feelings, Francis does not punish Benno for something he couldn't do anything about. Nor does she denigrate his father. She can express her opinion later, for example in an email to Reinout.
- B. Francis expresses her frustration. 'That father of yours can't keep promises. He can't be trusted. Does he want you to get fat or something?':
- When Francis goes into her own feelings, Benno may feel like he is standing between his parents. He doesn't like seeing his mother angry, but he also doesn't know what he can do to improve the situation. This can cause Benno having negative feelings. Francis better keep her opinion to herself and tell Reinout herself next time.
- C. Francis doesn't respond. She says 'oh' and continues to get Benno ready for bed:
- A neutral reaction is better than a negative reaction: Francis says nothing, so Benno does not have to react to a difficult situation. However, he will sense from the tone and facial expression that his mother is struggling with something. It would be better for Benno if Francis focuses on him, and not (unconsciously) on the conflict with his father. She can resolve their difference of opinion with Reinout later.

[Close pop-up](#)

Situation:

Olga is very happy because despite the problems at home she still got her high school diploma. Her parents are both very proud. They are divorced and have been arguing a lot lately. Olga has told them that she would really like her parents to attend the ceremony together. Peter has no desire to see Olga's mother, Linda, again. How can he best deal with this?

What was your choice?

- A. Peter asks Olga what she would like most and explains to her that he would rather not sit near Linda. Olga arranges for him to sit next to her at the ceremony and her mother a bit further away. Linda and Olga will go for a drink together afterwards:

Peter does not have to enter a conflict with Linda, but Olga is involved in the conflict. She feels responsible for finding a solution. If this happens more often, it can lead to problems for Olga: she will feel responsible for preventing conflict between the parents. It is better if Peter and Linda solve this themselves, and leave Olga out of it, so that she can be a child. In addition, Peter does not have to ask Olga what she wants: he can assume that Olga likes it when her parents just choose for her at such an important life event.

- B. Peter goes to the ceremony but does not shake Linda's hand: the fact that they are both there for Olga does not mean that he suddenly has to like Olga:

It is nice for Olga if both parents are at her graduation, but if they are unfriendly to each other, Olga feels uncomfortable. She doesn't want her parents to feel angry while attending her graduation. Should she do something about it? Why can't her parents treat each other normally? If these feelings occur, the relationship between the parents becomes central, instead of her achievement. Olga can feel sad because of this.

- C. Peter discusses with Linda what they are going to do for this special occasion. He does not really feel like it, but they decide to bury the hatchet for one day and be friendly with each other:

This might be difficult for both parents, but Olga will be happy about it. She peeps into the room and sees both parents looking at her proudly. Today is her day and it is not about the divorce, but about her achievement.

Session 4: How to keep children out of your conflicts

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Quiz: apply the tips

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What do you take away from Session 4?



It takes about 6 minutes to complete this session.



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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What does this look like?

The videos show two ways to deal with a problem.



Video A



Video B

In your opinion, which video shows the best way to deal with the problem?

- How do the parents deal with the conflict in video A?
- What is the role of the child in video A?
- How do the parents deal with the conflict in video B?
- What is the role of the child in video B?

Which tips (see previous sessions) are used in video B?

- ☐ No conflict in the presence of the child
- ☐ Self-talk
- ☐ The 'I-message'
- ☐ Expressing a need and telling why something is important to you
- ☐ Cooperative parenting





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How do you keep your child out of the conflict?

First watch the videos. You will see Ellen and Robin talk about how they keep their children out of conflicts.

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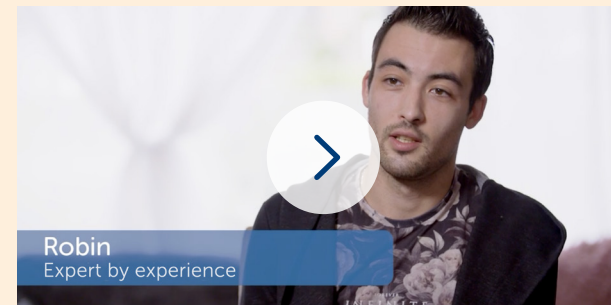
It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Ellen
Expert by experience

Ellen

Ellen tries not to say bad things about their father in front of the children. She can express such emotions in conversations with her friends. She also asks other people involved not to say bad things about the other parent. Furthermore, Ellen shows concern for the children, but she does not try to subject them to a 'cross-examination' after returning from their father's place to find out exactly what they have been doing together.



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

For Robin and the mother of his child, text messages via the phone are a good way to discuss things. Robin keeps conversations at the door (during transfer) as short as possible.

Thinking questions

- Think about whether your child ever witnesses an argument or conflict between you and the other parent.
- Can you name things that you consciously or unconsciously do to keep your child out of conflict?
- Are there other things that you think you could do keep your child out of conflicts?





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What will you take away from Session 4?

In this session, you learned how conflicts cause stress, you learned how children experience conflicts and you got some tips on how to keep your child out of your conflicts. You also practiced applying these tips and discovered what it looks like in practice to keep your child out of your conflicts. Lastly, you reflected on how you keep your child out of the conflict.

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Reread the tips from this session (including tips from the quiz)

- If you know you will have to discuss something that is likely to cause an argument, meet somewhere the child is not present or nearby (nor in the same house for instance). Or choose to use WhatsApp or email.
- Make sure that you cool down after an argument before you go back to your children. Withdraw for a while. Take a short walk or let the child watch TV while you do something else.
- Try to adopt a neutral, open attitude when you talk to your child about your ex-partner. Keep your own opinion about the other parent to yourself and focus mainly on your child. Your child may form an opinion that does not necessarily match yours.
- Perhaps deep inside you do not want your ex-partner to have a good time with your child. Try to turn that emotion around. You probably do want your child to have a good time with both parents.
- Have confidence about the fact your child will continue to love you just as much, even if he or she also loves the other parent.

Write down for yourself:

- What did you think of this session?
- What will you take away from this session?
- What do you want to start practising with?
- What is still difficult right now?
- What could help you practice?



Session 5: Parenting after divorce





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Session 5: Parenting after divorce



Parenting styles

Authoritative parenting:
how to do it?

How to solve problems
together?

Rhythm and regularity

Let your child be a child

What do you take away
from Session 5?



*It takes about 60
minutes to complete
this session.*

How can you best support your child?

In this session, you will look at different parenting styles. Which style suits you and your child best? Structure and safety are important for you and your child, especially during a turbulent period of divorce. At the end of this session:

1. You will have learned about different parenting styles >
2. You will know what authoritative parenting entails and how you can apply this style >
3. You will have practiced solving problems in four steps >
4. You will have thought about rhythm and regularity in your parenting >
5. You will have learnt that it is important for children to be able to just be a child >



If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page.



Find a quiet place to work.
If something of someone still
disturbs you, make a note about
where you left off and pick up your
work at a later time.



Session 5: Parenting after divorce

Parenting styles >

Authoritative parenting:
how to do it?

How to solve problems
together?

Rhythm and regularity

Let your child be a child

What do you take away
from Session 5?

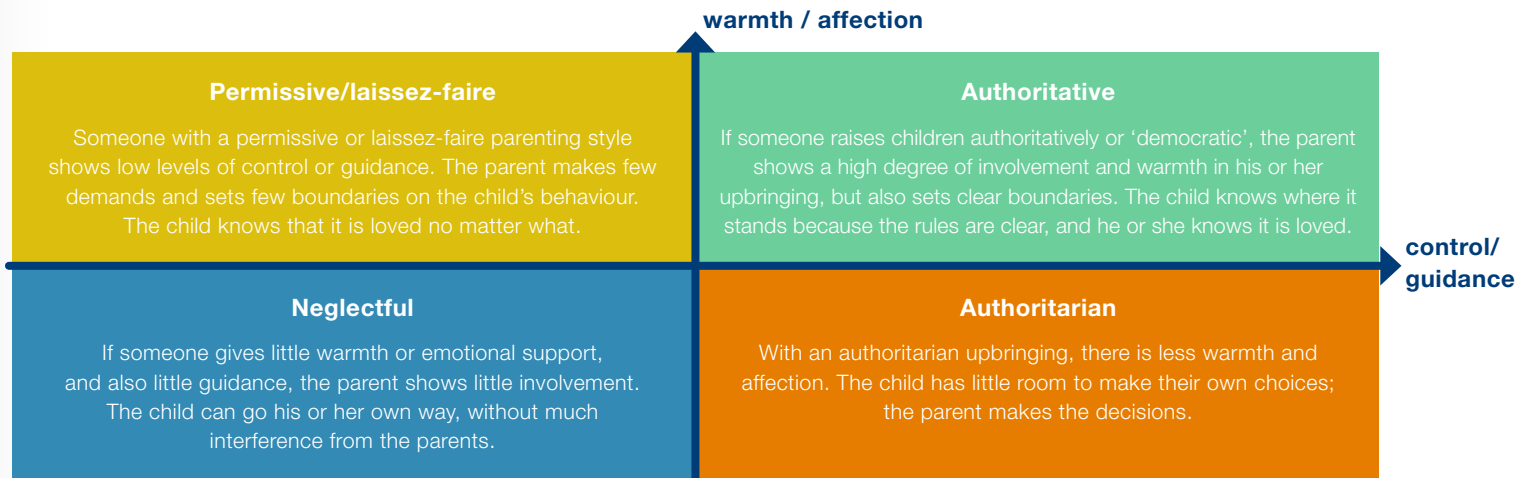


*It takes about 60
minutes to complete
this session.*

Parenting styles

Everyone has their own way of parenting children. The way you raise your children is called your 'parenting style'. There are different ways to classify parenting styles. An often-used classification distinguishes four parenting styles of which the differences are determined on the basis of two pillars. These pillars are:

1. The amount of involvement, **warmth** and **affection** you show
2. The extend to which you **guide**, monitor or set boundaries



What is your parenting style?

Reflect on your own parenting style. Where would you place yourself on the scale of the pillars of parenting? Amount of warmth/ affection? Amount of guidance/setting boundaries? The above styles are extremes of a spectrum. Your style is probably somewhere in between these extremes. Each person differs in the amount of warmth and guidance in different situations and at different times. And that is okay!



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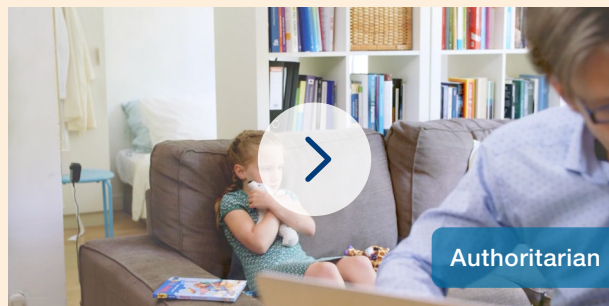
What do you take away
from Session 5?



It takes about 60
minutes to complete
this session.

What do the parenting styles look like?

Watch the videos that show different ways of tackling the same situation, based on different parenting styles.



In which style do you recognize yourself the most?

- ☐ What do you notice about the **authoritarian** style? What effect of the authoritarian style you observe in the child?
- ☐ What do you notice about the **permissive** style? What effect of the permissive style you observe in the child?
- ☐ What do you notice about the **authoritative** style? What effect of the authoritative style you observe in the child?

There is no video of a **neglectful** style. What effect would you expect if the parent wouldn't give the child warmth or guidance in this situation?



The parenting styles
of **Ellen** and **Robin** >



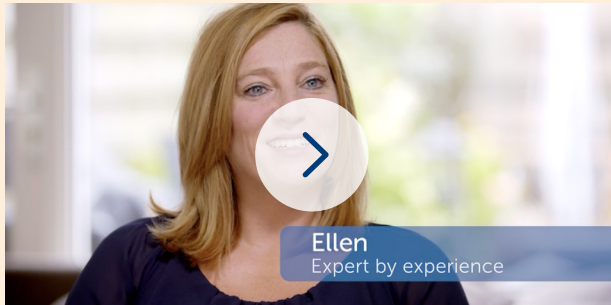
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2

Close pop-up ✕

The parenting styles of Ellen and Robin

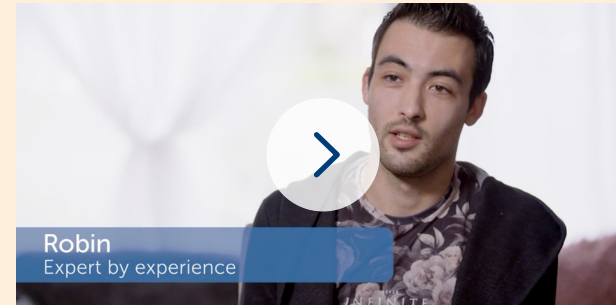
Watch the videos of Ellen and Robin in which they reflect on their parenting style.



Ellen
Expert by experience

Ellen

Ellen describes an authoritative parenting style for herself with involvement and pleasant interaction with her children (she is a 'cool' mom with whom much is possible in consultation). But in the meantime, there are clear rules that the children must adhere to.



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

Robin has a very young son that he still likes to spoil a bit. There are no very strict rules yet (i.e. a more permissive parenting style). But Robin realizes that his son is starting to need more and more guidance and that a balance between warmth and structure is good for children (he has experienced this in his own childhood). In the future he is likely to adopt a more authoritative parenting style.

of Ellen and Robin



Session 5: Parenting after divorce

Parenting styles

Authoritative parenting: how to do it?

How to solve problems together?

Rhythm and regularity

Let your child be a child

What do you take away from Session 5?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Authoritative parenting: how to do it?

Children benefit most from an authoritative parenting style, also known as a 'democratic' parenting style. In this style, you are involved with the child, you offer a warm, safe environment, and you accept the child as it is. In addition, you set clear boundaries. In this way, the child develops self-confidence and independence.



In this video Karlijn explains the authoritative parenting style.

Tips for an authoritative parenting style

As a parent, you want to raise your child as consciously and constructively as possible. This can be more difficult during or after a divorce. For example, because you are having a hard time yourself or because you feel guilty about splitting up. By adopting the tips from this session, you will work towards an authoritative parenting style.

Learn to accept

All your child's feelings are okay. It is important to encourage your child to express his or her feelings (in an appropriate manner).

- *If children can express their feelings, for example by saying that they are angry or sad, they will show fewer outbursts of crying or anger.*

Reassure your child

Hug your child and make sure your child knows that you love him or her, that you will always be there for him or her and that your child has done nothing wrong that caused the divorce.

- *Let your child know that both parents love him or her, even though you are divorced. Try to do this when you are feeling calm. If you are feeling emotional, try to express your feelings to another adult first. By doing so you will avoid your child being worried about the difficult situation.*



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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Work on your relationship together

Spend regular one-on-one time together, giving your full attention to your child.

- *For example, make it a habit to go for a walk together, read a book, draw together, play sports or do something else fun. It doesn't have to take up a lot of time each day.*

Listen carefully

Listen carefully to what your child says and watch what he or she does. Remember that children often communicate things indirectly.

- *For example, if you are sad and your child says, 'I'm not meeting my friend today', this could mean 'I'm worried about you, can you handle the situation?'*



Wendy van Vliet
Social worker

In this video Wendy gives some tips, mainly focusing on the pillar 'warmth', on how to give room to your child's feelings and help him or her to feel better. Wendy also talks about being genuinely interested in your child.



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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

How do you solve problems together?

The pillar 'warmth' is not just about 'being nice to your child'. It is also about your child feeling supported and guided. One way to achieve this is by solving problems together. In this way, you can think of ways to make difficult situations more pleasant for your child*.

Step 1. What is the problem, how do I feel about it?

Do this exercise for yourself or together with your child. Think of a problem or challenge that is not too big, such as failing a school test or, for a young child, wanting to play outside while it is raining. It could be something that happened recently or that is happening now. Figure out together what exactly is the problem. And very importantly: How do I feel about it? Reassure your child that all feelings he or she has about the situation are good; they can all be there.

Step 2. What are possible solutions?

Before you find the best solution, it is good to first consider all the possibilities. If you combine your strength, you can come up with several possible solutions together. This step is not about reviewing if solutions are suitable or not; it is about thinking with an open mind about all the things you could do to solve the problem.



Start with 'small problems' (such as failing the school test). After practicing you can also use the learnt strategy to solve bigger issues related to the divorce in the same way (such as your child having a hard time accepting your new partner).

What could I do?

In the example of the failed school test, the child could practice together with others, find an online exercise, get tutoring, do practice tests, ask the teacher for help, accept the failed test, et cetera.

Step 3. What happens if I do that?

Now look at the solutions again and think together about what would happen if you were to implement this or that solution.

What could happen then?

If you take extra lessons, there may be less time to do sports or play. Maybe things will already go better with a few practice tests. The teacher may know best what to do. Accepting a failing grade may be fine if it is an exception and has no further consequences for progress at school.

Step 4. Choose the best solution and try it out!

Finally, decide with your child which solution seems best. Choose that solution together and make a plan to implement it. What are you going to do? Make it as concrete as possible.

Evaluate to see if the chosen solution really worked out the way you two had thought beforehand.



* Based on *Courageous Dinosaurs*; Klein Velderman et al., 2016; see also the [Handbook of Divorce ATLAS](#) (in Dutch).



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It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Rhythm and regularity

Rhythm and regularity are part of 'guidance'. the second pillar in authoritative parenting. The more changes children experience during a divorce, the more stress and problems this causes for them. Some changes you cannot prevent as a parent (think of moving to another house or living with less money). However, you can strive for as much structure and predictability as possible in daily routines. Children benefit from routine. Clear agreements make children feel safe. They will know that you will maintain the overview and will keep in control, also if they fail to do so.

Keep a weekly schedule for your household with time for hobbies, eating, homework and household chores. Hang it on the refrigerator or in another clearly visible place.



Thinking about rhythm and regularity

Do you think you are able to ensure rhythm and regularity at home? What do you find difficult in this? What are your pitfalls? Would you like to do something about this?



Thinking question

→ **What other possibilities do you see for more rhythm and regularity in your household?**

Is there anything that can provide more structure, rhythm and regularity for you at home?

☐ Maintaining a fixed bedtime ritual

What could be a fixed bedtime ritual? Such as: 'bathroom, brush teeth, put on pyjamas, pick out a book, snuggle up in bed'? Or going through what you were grateful for that day together, and talk about the things you are looking forward to the next day. Fixed rituals can also be helpful to older children.

☐ Introducing a fixed meal habit

What could be a fixed meal habit? For example, cooking or setting the table together. And rules such as no TV during or after eating. Or only making exceptions 'for sports/hobbies', or when a child eats at someone else's house.

☐ Making a weekly schedule for the family

What would you include in a weekly schedule? For example, hobbies, mealtimes, time for homework, sports and household chores. Or think about fixed standards: 'what do we eat on which day?'.

☐ Applying clearer rules about what is/isn't allowed

Which rules could be clearer? For example, about the amount of screen time, whether or not to have TV or a computer in the child's room, the amount of physical exercise, whether or not to eat sweets, et cetera.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 5: Parenting after divorce

Parenting styles

Authoritative parenting:
how to do it?

How to solve problems
together?

Rhythm and regularity

Let your child be a child ➤

What do you take away
from Session 5?



*It takes about 60
minutes to complete
this session.*

Let your child be a child

Introducing clear rules and structure also involves giving your child responsibility. But keep the roles clearly separated: you as a parent, he or she as a child. In a difficult situation, your child may feel that he or she has to help solve practical matters. Or feels responsible for taking care of you, brothers or sisters, or the household.

How do you let your child be a child?

Don't do!

- ☐ Discuss financial affairs with your child
- ☐ Discuss legal matters with your child
- ☐ Give tasks and responsibilities that are not appropriate for your child's age
- ☐ Cry it out in the presence of your child
- ☐ Let your child pass messages to the other parent



Do!

- ☐ Encourage your child to join a club or to focus on a hobby
- ☐ Encourage your child to do activities at school
- ☐ Give your child time and space to play and develop their own skills
- ☐ Give room to your own intense emotions when you are together with other adults, or when you have some time for yourself
- ☐ Pass messages or requests to the other parent directly, or via a third party, email, app or telephone



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



What do you take away from Session 5?

You have now reached the end of Session 5. First, read the summary. Then think about what you thought of this session, and what you take away from it.

Session 5: Parenting after divorce

Parenting styles

Authoritative parenting:
how to do it?

How to solve problems
together?

Rhythm and regularity

Let your child be a child

What do you take away
from Session 5?



*It takes about 60
minutes to complete
this session.*

What did you learn?

- You have learned about different parenting styles. There are four different parenting styles: laissez-faire, authoritarian, neglectful and authoritative. These styles differ on the one hand in the degree of guidance, rules and on the other hand the warmth and involvement that you provide to your child.
- You know what authoritative parenting entails and how you can apply this style more. Authoritative parenting is the most supportive parenting style for children. In this, you are warm, involved and accepting towards your child, while maintaining clear and unambiguous rules.
- You have practiced solving problems with your child. By following the four steps: What is the problem and how do I feel about it? What can I do? What can happen then? What is the best solution and try it out!
- You have thought about rhythm and regularity in raising your child.
- It is important for children, especially in a difficult situation such as a divorce, to use predictable, clear and distinct rules and provide a clear structure. Even if you feel guilty or would like to spoil them some extra.
- You have learned that it is important to give your child time and space to be a child and do things that belong to being a child, without bearing too many (adult) responsibilities.

Write down for yourself:

- What did you think of this session?
- What will you take away from this session?
- What do you want to start practising with?
- What is still difficult right now?
- What could help you practice?



Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!





Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping! >

Having gone through a divorce

The balance between stressors and resources

How do you increase your resources?

What do you take away from Session 6?

Review of the training



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

How do you keep taking good care of yourself?

This is the last session of the DivorceATLAS training. In this session you will investigate how you can continue to take good care of yourself as a parent after a divorce. At the end of this session:

1. You will have received information about 'stressors and resources' >
2. You will know what the balance is between your stressors and resources >
3. You will have investigated how you can increase your resources >
4. You will have reflected on this training >



If a specific subject is less interesting to you, feel free to skip the exercises. Or go straight to the next page.



Find a quiet place to work.
If something or someone still disturbs you, make a note about where you left off, and pick up your work at a later time.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

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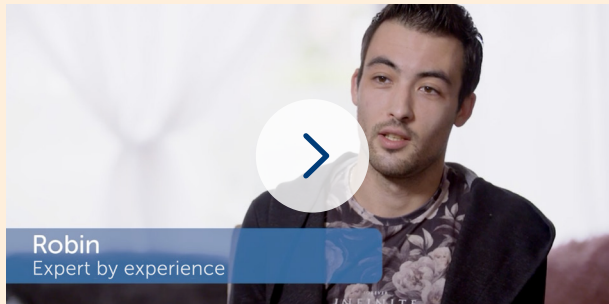
Review of the training



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Having gone through a divorce

A divorce is a major event. A lot has happened, and it takes time and energy to reshape your life. As a parent, you are likely to pay a lot of attention to the new situation for your child. This sometimes makes it difficult to find enough time to take good care of yourself. And to pay attention to what is important to you.



In this video Robin tells how he found it difficult to take good care of himself after the divorce. Do you recognize this?

Why is taking good care of yourself important?

Even if it might be difficult to do, it is important to keep taking good care of yourself. This prevents you from becoming overloaded and the responsibility for taking care of the children becoming too much of a burden.

Stressors and resources

In this session, you will investigate how to take good care of yourself. As a first step, you will investigate both your stressors and resources. Stressors and resources are two concepts that give insight into everything that costs energy (stressors) and everything that gives energy (resources) in your daily life.

What are **stressors** and **resources**? >



Robin's video clearly shows how difficult it can be to keep all the balls in the air: to be a good employee, a good parent, and do things that you enjoy and that give you energy.



Divorce ATLAS



Having gone through a divorce

A divorce is a major event. A lot has happened, and it takes time and energy to reshape your life. As a parent, you are likely

Why is taking good care of yourself important?

Even if it might be difficult to do, it is important to keep taking care of yourself from becoming overwhelmed with the care of the children.

Close pop-up ✕

What are stressors and resources?

What are stressors?

Stressors are the problems, unpleasant events and obligations you have to deal with in your life. They cost you energy. The more energy these cost, the heavier your bearing load. Everyone experiences stressors. But a major event such as a divorce increases your stress? Problems with the other parent also increase your stress.

What are resources?

Your resources determine the extent to which you can deal with difficult situations in your daily life. The greater your resources, the more you can handle. Resources can be your strong qualities or resilience, physical health, social support and regular activities or daily activities that provide you with energy or support.

to take good care of
ate both your stressors
are two concepts that
energy (stressors) and
in your daily life.



be to keep all the balls in the air: to be a good employee, a good parent, and do things that you enjoy and that give you energy.



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

Having gone through a divorce

The balance between stressors and resources

How do you increase your resources?

What do you take away from Session 6?

Review of the training



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

What are your stressors?

Think about your stressors. Which things or events that you are experiencing at the moment are stressful for you?

- ☐ Caring for the children
- ☐ The (consequences of) divorce
- ☐ Problems or responsibilities at work
- ☐ Moving to a new place
- ☐ Physical problems (for example headaches, fatigue or an illness)
- ☐ Mental problems (for example stress, loneliness, sadness, anxiety)
- ☐ Problems in the family or in relationships
- ☐ Worries about my financial situation
- ☐ Something else increases my stress

What stressors do other divorced parents experience

- The worries about my two daughters cause an enormous burden
- I have suffered a lot from stress and fatigue since the divorce
- I worry about my financial situation
- I do not get much support from other people.
- I feel like I have to do it alone

What are your resources?

Think carefully about your resources. Which things or events are resources you have at this moment?

- ☐ Support from people around me
- ☐ A nice house
- ☐ A pleasant job
- ☐ A sport or hobby (for example a team sport, yoga, walking or photography)
- ☐ Daily activities (for example cooking, raising children, gardening, doing chores)
- ☐ Doing fun things with the children
- ☐ My positive character traits (for example persevering, caring, organized)
- ☐ Something else increases my resilience

What resources do other divorced parents experience?

- Laughing with friends increases my resilience
- I get positive energy from reading a book with my son in the evening
- I have a positive attitude, that strengthens my resilience



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



The balance between stressors and resources

Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

Having gone through a divorce

The balance between stressors and resources

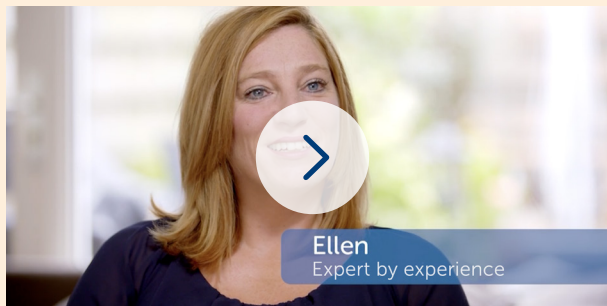
How do you increase your resources?

What do you take away from Session 6?

Review of the training



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Ellen
Expert by experience

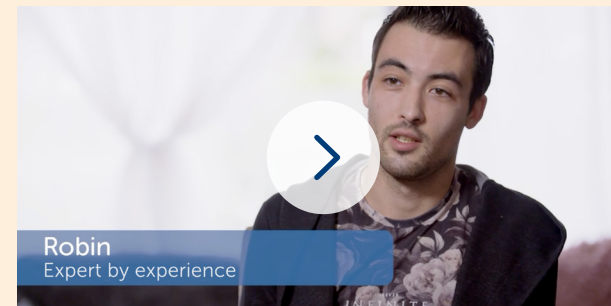
Ellen

Ellen finds the week she has the children quite difficult because of the responsibility she bears alone. The weeks alone and the contact with friends allow Ellen to recharge her battery and maintain the balance between her stressors and resources, even when the children are with her.

How is your balance?

In this exercise, you think about your own balance between stressors and resources. Look back at the exercises on the previous page about stressors and resources. And think about what this means for you

- How is your balance between your stressors and resources?
- Do you think you have enough resources to handle the stressors in your life?
- Are there certain factors that weigh more heavily than others?



Robin
Expert by experience

Robin

Robin's stress level? was very high. There were all kinds of circumstances besides the divorce that contributed to this. On the other hand, Robin is increasingly gaining resources. For example, he gets positive energy by spending time with his son who is learning more and more. As a result, Robin's stressors

and resources cap are increasingly in balance. Although this balance is not yet very constant.





Divorce **ATLAS**

To overview graphic



How do you increase your stressors?



Karlijn Pieterse
Social worker

In this video Karlijn explains how you can increase your resources as a parent.



Your resources

Which tip from the video appeals to you and could (further) increase your resources?

- ☐ Take good care of myself
- ☐ Ask for support and help from others
- ☐ I want to get started with both tips



Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

Having gone through a divorce

The balance between stressors and resources

How do you increase your resources?

What do you take away from Session 6?

Review of the training



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



What do you take away from Session 6?

You have now reached the end of Session 6. First, read the summary. Then reflect on what you thought of this session, and what you take away from it.

Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

Having gone through a divorce

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How do you increase your resources?

What do you take away from Session 6?



Review of the training

What did you learn?

- You have read that the balance between stressors and resources indicates to what extent you experience sufficient strength and positivity in your life to be able to cope with difficult situations.
- You have investigated how you can (further) increase your own resources by undertaking more energy enhancing activities, for example by exercising, doing relaxation exercises and mindfulness and/or by asking for help and support from your family and friends.
- You have heard that it is ok to ask for help in difficult times. In the Netherlands, there are also various programs and courses that offer extra support to parents and children after a divorce. Do you need individual help or guidance? You could reach out to your GP.

Write down for yourself:

- What did you think of this session?
- What will you take away from this session?
- What do you want to start practising with?
- What is still difficult right now?
- What could help you practice?



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.



Divorce ATLAS

To overview graphic



Session 6: Increase your resilience and coping!

Having gone through a divorce

The balance between stressors and resources

How do you increase your resources?

What do you take away from Session 6?

Review of the training



It takes about 60 minutes to complete this session.

Review of the training

This was the last session of Divorce ATLAS. In this training you have received information for divorced parents. You have also practiced with skills that are important.

Hopefully the training will help you to shape your parenting in a way that suits you and that you feel good about it!

An overview of what you take away

During the training you reflected on the information, exercises or tips that you found useful at the end of each session. Reread what you have noted down per session to take away from the training.



Remember that everything you take away from the training can help you to further shape parenting after divorce and to take good care of yourself. You can also read the information in the [handbook of Divorce ATLAS](#) (in Dutch).



Try to trust yourself and what you have learned here during difficult moments. You can be proud of what you have already achieved!

Good luck in the future!

Colophon

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