

## **Relate Cambridge offers advice to separating families in the wake of Brangelina split**

News of Hollywood A-listers, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's divorce has "saddened" Brad Pitt and many who looked to the couple as relationship role models. One thing that parents, Brad and Angelina are both clear on is that they intend to do what is best for their children during this challenging time.

But if you are going through divorce or separation, how do you ensure you put your children's need first? Relate Cambridge is highlighting ways that couples who have chosen to divorce or separate can cause the least pain possible for them and their children.

Relate counsellor, Elaine Taylor at Relate Cambridge, has worked with many couples in Cambridge going through separation and divorce. She said:

"We spend so much time planning our weddings but we often don't put much thought into managing our separations. A staggering 42% of marriages in the UK break down, and a significant proportion of cohabiting couples with children also separate. When there's so much at stake, emotions will be running high but there's a lot to be gained by keeping things amicable. After all, evidence shows that it's conflict rather than the divorce or separation itself which is the most damaging thing for children."

"Of course, talking to somebody objective, such as a counsellor, can help. There's a common misconception that Relate only helps couples to stay together but we also help our clients to separate in the least painful way possible, if that's what's right for them. The truth is that most children would prefer their parents to separate than to be unhappy and argue all of the time."

### **Putting the children first – Relate Cambridge's tips for separating parents**

**Talk to your partner:** This might be the last thing you want to do but talking calmly about how you want your separation to be can help to get things off to a positive start. You can also take this opportunity to agree together what you are going to tell friends, family and children about why you are breaking up as being on the same page can help.

**Get planning:** It might not be as fun as planning for your wedding, but planning for a divorce or separation is just as important. CAFCASS offers [a free parenting plan](#) which works out the practical issues of parenting after a couple separates.

**Open up:** Speak to trusted people in your support network. You may prefer to open up on an internet forum or to somebody objective such as a counsellor to get things off your chest.

**Break the news:** Letting the children know you are going your separate ways is going to be hard whatever, but you can make it less painful by telling them together if possible, explaining that

they are in no way to blame and letting them know that they can talk to you at any time. They don't need to know all the gory details about why you are breaking up, but be clear that this is what is happening.

**Avoid badmouthing:** During such a challenging time, it can be tempting to criticise your ex-partner in front of the children but this is not in their best interests or yours.

**Minimise disruption:** The news that mum and dad are breaking up is likely to turn your kid's worlds upside down for a while. Keeping their routines as similar as possible can help to keep a sense of normality.

**Consider counselling and mediation:** Counselling can provide you with space to think, feel and move on. Mediation can help you to reach agreement over finances and living arrangements if initial attempts fail.

**Don't underestimate the loss you'll feel too.** You didn't invest time, energy and love in your ex for nothing. Celebrate the good bits, learn from any of the bad ones and then move on with the rest of your life.

Relate Cambridge offers a range of relationship support services, including individual counselling, family counselling and mediation, which can help people to break up in the least painful way possible. Call us on 01223 357424 or visit [www.relatecambridge.org.uk](http://www.relatecambridge.org.uk) for more information.

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**Relate Cambridge – supporting relationships at every stage of your life**

**Notes to editors:**

- Relate is a registered charity number 207314
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships as the basis of a thriving society.
- Relationships are under increasing pressure – breakdown costs the UK an estimated £48bn each year.
- Relate provides impartial and non-judgmental support for people of all ages, at all stages of couple, family and social relationships.
- Over a million people every year access information, support and counselling from Relate but it is clear many more would benefit from Relate services.
- Relate's couple counselling work delivers an estimated £11.40 of benefits for every £1 spent.
- Relate's services extend beyond relationship counselling to family counselling, counselling for young people, sex therapy and informal courses and workshops and are offered through a network of around 1,700 counsellors across the country.
- Relate Cambridge celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2015.
- For more information and advice visit: [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk).