



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Financial Strategies for Co-Parents

When you share custody of a child, ending a romantic relationship or marriage can be particularly difficult on your finances and affect your credit. One common result of divorce or separation is a sudden drop in household income. The information provided below may assist you to focus on your financial well-being and support your children through the transition.



Talking With Your Children:

Changes to your finances can mean changes to the lifestyle you and your children were used to before the separation. Children may feel these impacts in both households. These changes can cause tension and stress. Children depend on their parents for emotional security, so continue to allow children time to share their concerns and fears. Instead of only focusing on what might be difficult, talk to your children about the relationships and values you have about money. Recognize symptoms of stress that may affect your children. Positive attitudes and family communication are important in helping families deal with change.

As you navigate a new budget for your home, you can involve children in financial decision-making in age-appropriate ways. Focus on overall financial well-being (e.g., saving, the differences between wants and needs) rather than on your feelings of stress or worry.

**These simple prompts
are a great way
to start a conversation:**

What is the same for our family?

What has changed for our family?

What do we no longer do or have?

What you can do for yourself:

Check your credit:

Start by ordering a free report from www.annualcreditreport.com (this is the only truly free service for credit reports). Look for late payments, authorized users, accounts you may have opened with your former partner, and fraudulent activity.

Close joint accounts:

If possible, before a divorce is finalized, review all of your accounts (e.g., bank accounts, credit card) to remove your former partner as an authorized user and close any joint accounts.

Pay your bills on time if you can:

One of the most important things to do is pay your bills on time. Prioritize what is most important, such as your rent or mortgage. Contact your creditors directly if you need to lower payments or change your payment schedule. Do not ignore bills until your divorce and custody agreements are finalized; this will hurt your credit score.

Get help if you need it:

Divorce and separation can have a significant impact on finances. If you are left wondering how you are going to pay all of your bills and provide for your children, help is available. Visit <https://extension.wisc.edu/family/financial-education/> for more information.

UW–Madison Division of Extension offers co-parenting courses and support for families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. For more information about these courses, contact your county Extension educator or visit <https://extension.wisc.edu/family/>.