

What Not To Do (And If You Have, It's Okay)

When you are going through separation, it is very easy to look back at your own behaviour and start questioning it. You might think about things you have said, decisions you have made, or moments where you reacted in a way that, in hindsight, you would handle differently. That reflection is natural — but it can quickly turn into self-judgement if you are not careful.

It is important to understand something early.

You are not expected to handle this perfectly.

This is a difficult and emotional period, and most men will have moments where they respond in ways that are not ideal. That does not define you, and it does not determine how this situation will unfold. What matters is what you do from here.

There are a few patterns that tend to make this stage harder than it needs to be. Being aware of them can help you avoid unnecessary damage as you move forward — and if you recognise yourself in any of them, that awareness is already the beginning of doing better.

One of the most common patterns is reacting too quickly.

When something feels unfair or upsetting, the instinct is often to respond immediately. But those reactions are usually driven by emotion rather than clarity. They can damage conversations, escalate situations, and lead to outcomes you would not have chosen if you had paused. The pause is not weakness. It is the thing that keeps small moments from becoming large problems.

Another pattern is allowing conversations to escalate.

Small disagreements can become larger than they need to be when both people are carrying emotion. Escalation rarely leads to resolution — it tends to create more tension and distance, and it makes the people around you, including your children, feel less safe. If a conversation is becoming heated, it is always acceptable to step back and return to it when things are calmer.

Speaking negatively about your partner — especially around your children — is another area that carries long-term weight.

Even when your frustration is understandable, children are not equipped to process adult conflict in a balanced way. They love both their parents. When they hear one parent speak poorly of the other, it places them in a position they should never be in. Protecting them from that — even when it is difficult — is one of the most important things you can do during this time.

It is also easy to neglect yourself in this period.

Sleep, eating, and movement often drop away when everything else feels urgent. But that has a direct impact on how you think and how you respond. When you are depleted, reactions become stronger and perspective becomes harder to hold. Looking after yourself is not something extra — it is what allows you to handle everything else properly.

There is also a tendency to try to control everything.

When things feel uncertain, the instinct is to tighten your grip. But not everything is within your control, and trying to force control over things that are not yours to control often creates more conflict. Focusing on what you can actually influence — your own behaviour, your parenting, your wellbeing — is far more effective and far less exhausting.

If you recognise yourself in any of these patterns, it does not mean you have done something wrong. It means you are human. It means you have been under significant pressure and you have not always responded the way you would have wanted to.

That is something you can change.

From here, you can steady things.

You can improve how you show up.

You can move forward in a way that you respect.

And that — above all else — is what matters most.