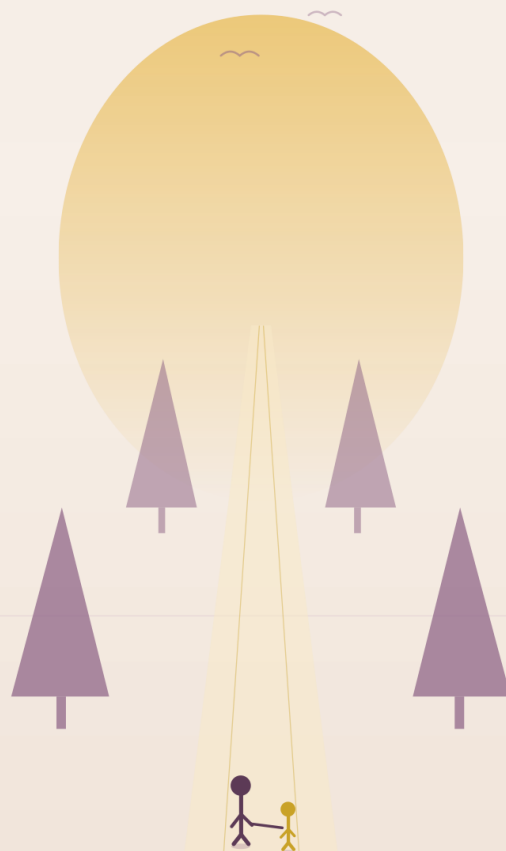


HOW TO TELL THE CHILDREN

A Short, Honest Guide



BILLY'S BOOKS

Break-up recovery, written by a man, for men.

William 'Billy' Brown

There's no version of this conversation that doesn't hurt. I won't pretend otherwise. But there's a real difference between doing it thoughtfully and doing it in a moment of panic, and that difference matters more to your children than almost anything else about how this whole process unfolds.

This isn't a script. Every family and every child is different. It's five things I wish I'd properly understood before I had this conversation myself, instead of learning them from getting parts of it wrong the first time.

1. Tell them together, if you possibly can

A united, calm conversation, even from two parents who are separating, says something important: this is still both of us, showing up for you. It's not always possible, but it's worth genuinely trying for.

2. Keep it simple and age-appropriate

Children don't need the full history of what went wrong. They need to know what's actually changing for them — where they'll live, whether school changes, that they're still loved by both of you. Save the rest for when they're older, if they ever ask.

3. Answer the question they're actually asking

Children often ask practical questions when they're really asking an emotional one. "Where will I sleep?" can really mean "am I still safe?" Answer the practical question honestly, and let the reassurance come through in how you answer it.

4. Don't make them choose a side

Even unintentionally, even through a look or a sigh at the wrong moment. Whatever you're feeling about the other parent, keep it away from your children as much as you possibly can. It's one of the harder disciplines of this whole process, and one of the most important.

5. Expect the reaction to come later, not immediately

Children often seem to take the news calmly at first, then process it in pieces over the following weeks — a hard day at school, a sudden question at bedtime. Stay available for that delayed reaction. It's usually still coming.

If any of this landed, the full story — the marriage, the diagnosis, the bottom, and everything that came after — is told in detail across three books: *The Space Between*, *Still Standing*, and *Loving on Purpose*, along with a companion workbook if you want somewhere to actually work through your own version of it.

You can also read the whole thing that started it, my autobiography, *Billy*, if you want the fuller story behind the story.

Whatever this conversation looks like for your family, I hope it goes as gently as it can. Keep going.

— ***William 'Billy' Brown***