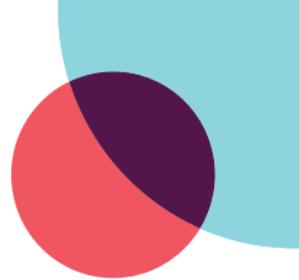




Families  
Come in All  
Shapes and Sizes

# Families come in all shapes and sizes

Moving into a new relationship is an exciting time. Bringing two families together can be complicated. If you or your new partner has children, or you both do, it can be an unsettling time for everyone. Whether you're the parent, step-parent, or children living in the home all or some of the time, you will need time to adjust to the changes in your family life.



## Here to support you

At The Spark we recommend accessing support early. All relationships have ups and downs, and we are here to help. The Spark offers relationship counselling, family counselling and support by phone, online or face-to-face. For support now, call our Relationship Helpline:

0808 802 2088



Our new family...  
Taking things one  
step at a time...

“I’m really torn. I want all the people I care about to get along but everything I do to bring them together seems to push them apart. Everyone I love is unhappy and it feels like it’s all my fault”.

Parent

“I know I sometimes seem impatient but it’s not easy. Sharing my partner’s affection is difficult, especially when their child seems to reject all my efforts to be nice to them. I need some time alone with you too”.

New partner

“I know you think I’m  
angry or sulky but  
actually, I’m just  
scared. I’ve lost a  
big part of my family  
and everything  
has changed”.





“I am  
not just  
visiting”

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## Part of the family

I feel like a visitor when I come to stay. Please don't treat me like that - if my mum or dad lives here, then this is my home too.

## A space to call my own

If I can't have my own room can we have some space that's just for me? I need my own bed or at least my own bedding, wardrobe space and my own drawer for clothes. A box for some of my special things.



This  
is my  
home

[thespark.org.uk](https://thespark.org.uk)

## Part of the family

Sometimes I feel left out when you come to stay. Everyone is fussing over you. It's like you're the only one that matters.

## A space to call my own

It's annoying that I have to share my room and my stuff when you come to stay over.



“I am not  
just visiting”

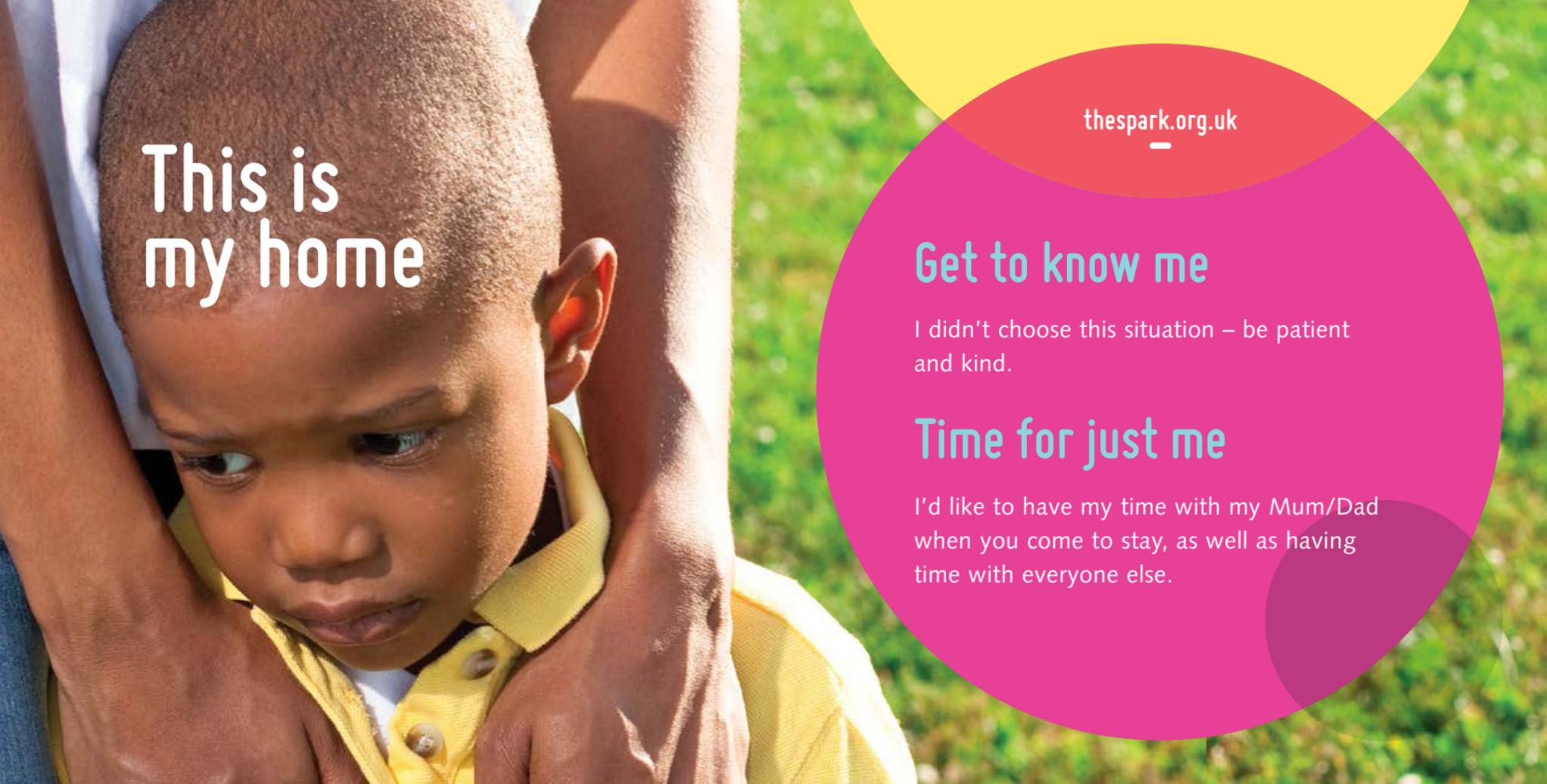
thespark.org.uk

## Get to know me

I didn't choose this situation – be patient and kind.

## Time for just me

This is the only time I get to see my Mum / Dad. Can we have some time when it's just the two of us?

A young child with a sad expression is being held by an adult. The child is wearing a yellow shirt and looking down. The adult's hands are visible, holding the child. The background is a blurred green field.

This is  
my home

[thespark.org.uk](http://thespark.org.uk)

## Get to know me

I didn't choose this situation – be patient and kind.

## Time for just me

I'd like to have my time with my Mum/Dad when you come to stay, as well as having time with everyone else.

## Top Tips

### Family rules

Where possible, let everyone have a say in setting out family rules. For example, be polite, respect one another's belongings, we all eat together etc. Keep it clear and keep it simple, then everyone knows what the rules are.

### Cheap-and-cheerful fun

You can't buy their love and you don't have to. Try planning fun time together. Challenge the kids to come up with 5 things to do at the weekend that will not break the bank. It could be as simple as baking muffins or playing their favourite video game – what's important is you're doing it together.



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## What's for dinner?

Don't stress over meals. Stick with plain, easy-to-make options you already know. It's hard to please all the people all the time. Perhaps everyone could take turns choosing what to eat for a 'favourites night'?

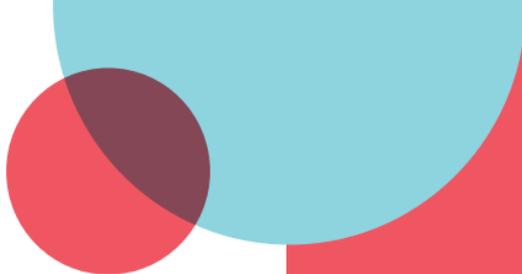
## Ensure hassle-free handovers

Agree to be punctual but remember, sometimes delays do happen. It's natural to feel frustrated if there's a hold-up but try to stay calm and good humoured – otherwise it could ruin your children's contact time.

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## Work as a team

If you and your partner /ex-partner have different parenting styles it can feel frustrating. Work out your differences in private, and then tackle the issues together. You both want the same thing – a happy child and a happy home.



## It's Complicated...

Getting to know each other can be difficult, especially when people are anxious, angry or frightened. Don't force the pace: be patient with one another and take things one step at a time. Make time for the important relationships: time when it's just you and your child, and just you and your partner.



Call the Relationship Helpline on:

0808 802 2088



Chat to us online:

[thespark.org.uk](https://thespark.org.uk)



Make a counselling enquiry:

0808 802 0050



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