

Dear Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa etc.,

As you may already know, we are getting a divorce. This has been a very difficult time for both of us and the decision to separate was made after much effort was put into our marriage. We both appreciate the support and empathy we have received from so many of you and we hope that you will continue to be supportive of each of us.

We are both highly committed to our children and have invested much energy into creating a parenting plan that will provide plenty of quality of time with both of us. We recognize that there will be an adjustment period for all of us, but we are hoping that by doing certain things, the pain and disruption can be minimized. We have done a lot of reading about divorce and how it affects children and we have also attended the local mandatory class sponsored by the courts for divorcing parents. The research is very clear that children of divorce do much better in the long and short term if they continue to have the opportunity for a meaningful relationship with both of us. Therefore, we are determined to work hard at being active, involved co-parents. This will require each of us to make sacrifices and compromises that we have worked out in our parenting plan. We view each other as important and necessary resources in our children's lives and not as obstacles or someone to compete with.

The reason we are writing this letter is because we need some favors from you in order to make this work. First of all, we have learned that bad mouthing the other parent to the children is one of the worst things you can do to a child whose parents are divorcing or are divorced. Children view their parents as an extension of their own identity. They feel they are part of their mother and part of their father. When unkind things are said about either of their parents, it hurts them deeply. So if you are ever tempted to say something negative about either of us in the presence of the children, please pause and remember how it would feel for our children.

Secondly, parental conflict is very unsettling for any child. We have made a commitment to each other to put forth good faith and respect the other parent. We are getting a divorce to solve a situation that was not working and we don't want our children to be exposed to any more conflict. They are the victims in this unfortunate situation and we want to protect them from any more of our conflicts. In the past we have each made mistakes and the children saw us arguing. We have since apologized to them for this and have made a commitment that we would work out our differences peacefully, hiring another mediator if we need to.

Thirdly, we want to be good role models for our children. In this life we will all suffer losses, but our growth will come in how we handle these painful situations. We want to demonstrate to them that people can end relationships in one sense and shift the relationship to something different. Instead of being the intimate partners we once were, we are showing them that we can be cordial, kind and business-like when necessary. This will help them as they grow older and establish their own relationships.

We want to thank you for your love, concern, and willingness to accept our decisions. We know that you are also in pain watching our family change like this. We are sorry that our decision may disappoint you and hurt you. We care about you and your feelings too.

There is no need to take sides in this divorce because we are siding with each other as divorcing parents. In any relationship, there are always two sides to the story. We did not enter into our marriage with the expectation that we would end up divorced, but things happen. It is complicated and hard.

We hope that you can understand and respect our feelings and desires. This would mean a lot to us. Please do not be offended that this is a form letter sent to many of you. We put a great deal of thought into this and we carefully chose each word. Since the emotional challenge of divorce is so exhausting, we felt this letter would be the most efficient way of reaching many of you who are close to our hearts.

Thank you for your support and we love you.