

## Supporting Families Going Through Separation

Belinda (39) and Brian (40), who live in the rural town of Bendigo in Victoria, were married for 15 years and have 3 children; Jessica (14), Andrew (11) and Tom (7). Belinda is a stay-at-home mum who has not participated in the workplace since she was married. Brian is a carpenter who works for a large company and receives very good wages that support the family.

Six months ago, Brian told Belinda he wanted to separate as he was seeing someone that he met at his golf club (Jill). Brian has continued to cover all of the family expenses since the separation.

After a lot of arguing, Belinda and Brian agreed that the children would remain with her in the family home and see Brian for a full weekend once a month, each alternate Sunday and one weeknight for a dinner. Brian has been pushing to have the children on a 50/50 basis but Belinda is refusing to discuss the issue.

Belinda feels Brian's accommodation, a small unit with only two bedrooms that is all he can afford while he supports two residences, is not suitable for the children as they are used to having their own rooms. Belinda is also concerned that the golfing commitments he has had for the last 6 years and his regular long working days will have a negative effect on the children's usual routine, including time they spend with their grandparents.

Brian and Belinda have not seen a lawyer as they feel this would be too expensive and a waste of money, however they are constantly arguing when trying to discuss child access arrangements.

Since the separation, the children have stayed with Belinda's parents on alternate weekends. The children have a very close relationship with their grandparents and enjoy their company. The time the children spend with their grandparents also allows Belinda to have some time to herself.

Belinda plays netball on one weeknight evening and her parents come to the family home to look after the children. Belinda has a good circle of friends through her netball activities, however she has not been attending their regular functions since her separation with Brian. Belinda's girlfriends have been offering help since her separation however Belinda still remains withdrawn.

**Mental Health  
Professionals' Network**

Emirates House  
Level 8  
257 Collins Street  
Melbourne  
VIC 3000

**postal**  
PO Box 203  
Flinders Lane  
VIC 8009

**email**  
contactus@mhpn.org.au

**telephone**  
1800 209 031

**www.mhpn.org.au**

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Supporting Families  
Going Through  
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Since the birth of her third child Tom, Belinda has often experienced low moods, which also coincided with the time that Brian took up his golf. Belinda had also struggled to lose her post-birth weight and is generally not looking after herself or her appearance. Belinda's mother suffered from low moods and depression in her younger days and whenever Belinda's mother tries to suggest to Belinda that she needs to look into her own low moods, they end up arguing because Belinda does not like the idea of being like her mother. Brian is contemplating moving in with Jill. Jill is 43 and has two teenage girls who are quite unruly. Belinda has noticed that the week following weekend visits with her father Jessica is quite rude to her and not her usual helpful self. Belinda's parents have also raised concerns that when Jessica is at their place she is really bossy over Tom and constantly fighting with Andrew.

Brian has approached Belinda to tell her that he is starting his own business, so he is only going to be able to pay the mortgage and can no longer contribute to the household expenses. Belinda is quite concerned about the new financial arrangements and the child access that Brian has requested and doesn't know what to do. Consequently her low mood has increased and she is finding herself constantly crying and not sleeping well, regularly waking up early in the mornings and not being able to return to sleep.

Belinda has started drinking at night to try and help her get to sleep, however this has further affected her energy levels and resulted in her not attending her weekly netball games.

Belinda received a phone call from Tom's teacher expressing concern that she has noticed a change in Tom's behaviour immediately after he stays at his fathers on the weekends. Tom is often sleepy on the Monday mornings, is generally withdrawn and has started bullying behaviour in the playground. Up until Tom was 4 he wet the bed and this behaviour has also recommenced.

Belinda feels very run down, at the end of her tether and has had a persistent cold for three weeks, so she decided to attend her GP.

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