DISCUSSING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE WITH CHILDREN

1. **Choose the Right Time and Place**: Find a quiet and comfortable setting where you can have an open and honest conversation with your child without interruptions. It is best to tell your children as a family, provided that both you and your ex-partner can be civil and not bring heated emotions into the talk.
2. **Use Age-Appropriate Language**: Tailor your language and explanations to your child's age and level of understanding. Keep it simple and avoid using complex legal or emotional terms. Children generally need to know the practical issues: Where will they live? Where will the other parent live? When will they spend time with each parent?
3. **Be Honest and Direct**: Avoid sugarcoating the situation but provide factual information in a way that is appropriate for your child's age. Assure them that they are not to blame for the separation and that both parents still love them.
4. **Focus on Reassurance**: Reassure your child that while things may be changing, they will still be taken care of and loved by both parents. Emphasize that the separation is not their fault and that both parents will continue to be involved in their lives. Children also need to know what will change and what will stay the same.
5. **Encourage Questions and Emotions**: Let your child know that it's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused about the separation. Encourage them to ask questions and express their feelings, and provide comfort and support as needed.
6. **Maintain a Neutral Tone**: Avoid speaking negatively about your ex-partner in front of your child. Refrain from blaming or denigrating the other parent, as this can cause confusion and distress for the child which may last for a long time.
7. **Keep Changes to a Minimum**: Try to maintain stability and consistency in your child's routine as much as possible. Minimize major changes during the initial period of adjustment and provide predictability to help your child feel secure. If you are moving house, reduce change by ensuring your child has all their own things in the new home.
8. **Listen and Validate**: Take the time to listen to your child's thoughts and feelings about the separation without judgment. Validate their emotions and let them know that their feelings are normal and understandable.
9. **Seek Support for Yourself**: It's important to take care of yourself emotionally during this challenging time. Seek support from friends, family, or a therapist to help you cope with your own feelings and maintain your well-being.
10. **Consider Professional Help if Needed**: If you're struggling to communicate with your child about the separation or if your child is having difficulty coping, consider seeking the help of a family therapist or counsellor who specializes in working with children and families dealing with divorce.

Remember that every child is different, and the way they react to and cope with separation will vary. Be patient and understanding and continue to provide love and support to help your child navigate this transition.