

Kids First Workshop Information for Parents of 3rd–5th Graders

What will my child learn today?

- Divorce means that your parents won't be married anymore, but they will still be your parents. Your family is always your family.
- All of your feelings are normal and okay, even if you feel sad, angry, worried or relieved. There are no wrong feelings, but there are good and bad ways to express your feelings. We need to express feelings in ways that don't hurt others or ourselves.
- When you feel upset, find something to do that makes you feel better (draw, listen to music, read, play with pets, ride a bike).
- It's important to talk about your feelings with parents and other adults you trust. One good way to express your feelings is with an "I feel" statement: "I feel _____ when you _____ because _____."
- You did not cause the divorce. You also cannot fix it.
- Although some things change with divorce (like where parents live and how you celebrate holidays), many things stay the same (like your friends, school, relatives, and your parents' love for you). You will get used to the changes.

Your child will receive an activity book and calendar

- Activity book: We hope it will spark discussion between you and your child. Go through it together and ask questions. Help your child complete any blank pages.
- Calendar: A calendar can help kids keep track of their schedule and feel less anxious. Help your child fill out the calendar with one kind of sticker for one parent's days and the other for the other parent's days. Kids can color when stickers run out. If your child does not spend time with your spouse, use the calendar to talk about it and to let your child share his/her feelings.

Gabby's Story

Kids read a story about a girl named Gabby who keeps all her feelings bottled up. Gabby doesn't talk about her feelings and then "explodes" at her brother. We go outside and watch a Coke and Mentos demonstration to remember not to bottle up our feelings!

My Job/Not My Job

We play a game called "My Job/Not My Job" where kids learn:

- Their job: Follow the rules at each parent's home, ask questions if they are confused, say how they are feeling, and know it's ok to show love for both parents.
- NOT their job: Listen to parents fight or stop parents' fights, deliver messages between parents, act like a spy on parents, listen to a parent say bad things about the other parent, or choose sides.

Will the teachers tell us what our child said in the workshop?

To encourage kids to share openly, we promise not to share what they say with their parents.

How does the Court know my child attended the class?

Within a week after all your registered kids have attended, Kids First files a certificate of participation with the court.

What questions should I ask my child?

About the activity book:

- Tell me about the feelings you circled. What makes you feel that way?
- What changes with divorce? What stays the same?
- Go over “Kids Rights.” Which ones are most important to you?

Additional questions:

- Tell me about the *Dinosaurs Divorce* book. What part did you like the best?
- When you feel sad or angry, what makes you feel better?
- What bothers you most about the divorce?
- What would make the divorce easier?

Who else can my child talk to?

Talk to your child’s school counselor or pediatrician. Some schools form peer groups for children experiencing divorce. Individual counseling is often helpful for children going through divorce. Many good children’s counselors and play therapists work in our community.

What books does Kids First recommend for children this age?

It can normalize experiences for children to read books about other children going through divorce. Ask questions about the books and encourage your child to talk about feelings. Kids First has many of these books that you may preview; please call first (319.365.5437).

A Smart Girl’s Guide to Her Parents’ Divorce by Holyoke (part of the American Girl series)
Changing Families by Fassler, Lash & Ives (a guide for kids and grown-ups)
Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary (boy copes with divorce and being new kid at school)
DeDe Takes Charge! by Johanna Hurwize (5th grade girl is resilient in face of divorce)
Dinosaurs Divorce by Marc Brown (we read much of this illustrated book in class)
Divorce Happens to the Nicest Kids: A Self-Help Book for Kids by Michael Prokop
Divorce Is Not the End of the World: Zoe’s and Evan’s Coping Guide for Kids by Zoe & Evan Stern
(written by kids for kids ages 9-15)
Divorced But Still My Parents by Shirley Thomas & Dorothy Rankin (interactive workbook)
Don’t Make Me Smile by Barbara Park (boy whose parents are divorcing)
How It Feels When Parents Divorce by Jill Krementz (kids tell their own stories of divorce)
I Want Answers and a Parachute by P.J. Petersen (boys fly to visit father and his new wife)
My Family’s Changing by Pat Thomas (includes discussion questions)
Playing It Smart: What to Do When You’re on Your Own by Tova Navarra (home alone guide)
The Case of the Scary Divorce by Carl Pickhardt (boy helps detective; issues relate to divorce)
What Can I Do? by Danielle Lowry (girl tries everything to get parents back together)
What in the World Do You Do When Your Parents Divorce? by Winchester/Beyer (Q&A basics)
When Mom and Dad Separate by Marge Heegaard (workbook that kids illustrate)
Why Are We Getting a Divorce? by Peter Mayle (everything from why people marry and divorce to how to adjust to a parent’s new boy/girlfriend)
Will Dad Ever Move Back Home? by Paula Hogan (girl learns importance of expressing herself)

Questions? Please call **Kids First** at **319.365.5437** or visit **www.kidsfirstiowa.org**