

Kids First Workshop Information

for Parents of 6th – 8th Graders

What happens at the workshop?

Your child and the other middle-school-age kids at the workshop:

- Identify feelings about the divorce and discuss their experiences with other kids;
- Have an opportunity to ask questions to get clarification of what to expect;
- Perform role plays to know what they can say or do in common divorce scenarios;
- Learn about kids' rights not to take sides, be the messenger, or listen to parents badmouth each other or fight;
- Identify ways to start conversations with parents about difficult topics.

They'll do a demonstration about bottling up feelings

We read about a girl named Gabby who keeps bottling up her feelings and then explodes at her brother. We go outside and watch a Coke and Mentos demonstration to remember that it's not healthy to bottle up our feelings! Kids are encouraged to talk to parents and other adults they trust about how they feel. They also identify activities they can do when upset, worried, or sad to feel better (going for a walk, listening to music, talking to friends, etc).

What should I ask my child?

- What bothers you most about the divorce? Is there anything good about it?
- Go over "Kids Rights" in the handbook. Which are most important to you?
- When do you feel stuck in the middle? What do you do when you feel that way?
- When you feel sad or angry, what makes you feel better?
- How can we make the divorce easier on you?
- If you could have 3 wishes about our family, what would they be?
- Who can you talk to besides me if you're feeling stressed?
- What would make it easier to talk about how you're feeling?
- On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how (stressed, sad, good, worried) are you feeling about things?
- What help do you need?

What should I listen or watch for?

Kids learn techniques for communicating important concerns to you. Watch for these and respond by letting your child know their thoughts and feelings are important to you.

- Your child might leave you a note saying they want to talk or a letter to start a written conversation.
- Your child might draw a picture to explain how aspects of the divorce feel.
- Your child might want to set up a code word with you to say "I need to talk."
- Your child might find it easier to talk in the car or while you're doing an activity together.
- Your child might express feelings through "I feel" statements: "I feel ____ when you ____ because ____." Listen for sentences that begin "I feel" to hear your child's concerns.

Make yourself available to your child to talk in the car by staying off your cell phone and setting aside time to check in at home. Keep asking them questions.

Who else can my child talk to?

Talk to your child's school counselor or doctor. Some schools form peer groups for children experiencing divorce. Individual counseling is often helpful for kids going through divorce. Many qualified child/adolescent counselors work in our community.

Are there any other resources for my child?

The last page of the workbook contains links to websites and books for middle school kids. Kids First has many of the listed books that you may preview; please call first (319.365.5437).

Will the teachers tell me what my 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* of your registered kids have attended, Kids First files a certificate of participation with the court.

Questions? Please call **Kids First** at **319.365.5437**.