



Table of Contents

Rationale	7	CHAPTER FIVE How Can I Feel Better?	39
How to Use This Book	8	APPENDIX ONE Note to Parents	43
CHAPTER ONE Understanding the Custody Battle	11	APPENDIX TWO Note to Counselors or Other Professionals	45
CHAPTER TWO How Would You Feel?	15	APPENDIX THREE I Hate This Custody Battle! A Story for Children	47
CHAPTER THREE What Would You Do?	23	APPENDIX FOUR Structure for Small Group Counseling	55
CHAPTER FOUR What About Mom and Dad?	35		

Rationale

Each year there are over one million divorces in the United States*. One in seven involves court action to determine which parent will have physical custody of minor children*. The parents' attorneys are often intent on "winning" for their clients; children's emotional needs are ignored while attorneys "dig the dirt" on the other parent. Custody battles are among the most destructive and bitter of all civil court legal actions.

Children who are experiencing a custody battle need a safe way to explore and talk about their feelings. They also need to know they are not alone, and that the situation will resolve itself so that life goes on. This book offers a format to ease their way and is suitable for use in individual and small group counseling.

*Source: National Center for Missing and Abducted Children, 1997.





How to use this book:

Note to Helping Adults

You can use this workbook in several ways:

- A. Children can read through the chapters of the workbook on their own, circling their answers in Chapter Two and Three and/or writing in other answers. They could then share their answers with you if they would like. They could also read the children's story themselves.
- B. You can read the story aloud to children. Then share the chapters of the workbook with them, discussing their responses. See Page 60 for a suggested way of making a discussion game from Chapters Two and Three.
- C. You can use the structure of the book as a framework for group discussion with children who are going through custody litigation. Appendix Four provides a suggested group format.

- D. You can simply use the children's story independently and discuss it.
- E. You can use any chapter of the book independently.
- F. You can copy the "Note to Parents" section and give or send it to the parents.

This workbook has four aims:

1. To help children feel less alone with their situation.
2. To reframe any thinking that may lead to feelings of inappropriate guilt, control, and hopelessness.
3. To allow children to share and resolve their feelings.
4. To help guide children toward positive choices that will help them.

