



"Banana Splits"

WHAT IS "BANANA SPLITS"?

"Banana Splits" is a group of students, at our schools, whose parents is divorced or are getting a divorce and all of the stages in between! We meet once a week, for approx. 6 weeks, with others who are going through, or who have gone through, this same experience. There is usually a "fall" and "spring" session but this can vary depending on the needs of the children.

Knowing other kids who are part of a "split" can be very helpful and will give your child someone to talk to if they ever need a friend who knows exactly what they are feeling!

WHAT DO WE DO?

In our club, we talk, play games, work on art projects and take part in different group activities. All of these specific, tailored, techniques have proven very successful in establishing group cohesion, and ultimately, a comfortable, and therapeutic environment for the children to express their true feelings and concerns. All the children are given the opportunity to speak with me privately, after the group, if they need to express something or share any pressing issues that is not appropriate for the group or that is more than they want to share with everyone. Allowing, even these few minutes, for the child to have an opportunity to speak with only one set of "listening ears", gives the child one more layer of comfort.

INITIAL SCREENING

Each divorce situation is different and each child is so very unique. Because of this, when forming the group, I will talk with each student to first, assess if the child will benefit from a group atmosphere at this time, and secondly, this talk will give me an idea of what issues are most urgent to this child. I will also need to get an idea, from a parent, of where in the divorce process you and your family are at. This gives me a broader picture. Each stage from the initial split up, to dealing with a "changing family", brings its own set of struggles. The consultation will help me plan specific strategies to work on in the group.

WHAT IF MY CHILD ISN'T READY FOR A GROUP?

If the child is not ready for group counseling, then I will discuss my best recommendation with the parent. Sometimes individual counseling is more suitable for a particular situation.

ATTENDANCE

Attending the group is not mandatory. However, obviously the children will benefit more, for various reasons, if they attend every session. I try to create an environment that is comfortable, inviting, relaxing yet fun. Since it is a "no-stress" zone, I let the kids know, all the time, that it is open and is optional. After 2 absences (out of 6 sessions), I will talk with the student to see if I can help. The students are given a "banana-gram" reminder card in their teacher's box the morning of their group. Most all of them are eager to come to the group! I let them know that academics come first so if they aren't there, we know they have a good reason, illness, a test or assignment, special engagement, etc... I will use the opportunity to emphasize that the student must be handling their academic responsibilities, are home taking care of their physical selves, or they are creating happy moments by attending a class party, school engagement, etc... which is a good thing! No pressure. I want an environment where they WANT to come and most do 😊

NOT SURE YET?

Many children have benefited from the group during times of crisis and have "moved on". Some students have enrolled in each session, over the course of several years. They have found support in the group and have created real bonds of support and very close friendships. They have used those bonds to get through the various events stemming from a divorce. Each student is unique and every situation different. All are welcomed now or when they are ready. 😊

CONTACT

If you have any specific questions or are interested in having your child join our Banana Splits group, please e-mail me at labawr@stjohns.k12.fl.us

-Ms. Labaw
Guidance Counselor