**Title:**
3rd grade changing families group: putting the puzzle pieces back together & taking lemons and making lemonade

**Topic:** Divorce/Family Changes

**Estimated time:** I spent approximately 6 months meeting with this group, weekly.

**Objective/Goals:**
The purpose of this group is for students to normalize the process of family changes and to have an outlet to process their family changes.

**Virginia Standard(s):**
Through processing & normalizing their family changes, students are better equipped to focus on academics, communicate, work independently and collaboratively with peers, demonstrate good character, seek support from adults and friends as needed, and learn coping strategies to empower students to rely on themselves. Specifically:

EA5. Demonstrate individual initiative and a positive interest in learning,
EA6. Use appropriate communication skills to ask for help when needed,
EA7. Work independently to achieve academic success,
EA8. Work cooperatively in small and large groups towards a common goal

EP1. Exhibit the principles of character, including honesty, trustworthiness, respect for the rights and property of others, respect for rules and laws, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, fairness, caring, and citizenship,
EP2. Understand how to make and keep friends and work cooperatively with others,
EP5. Demonstrate self-discipline and self-reliance,
EP6. Identify resource people in the school and community and understand how to seek their help

**Materials:** Book/Packet: *Getting Yourself Together When Your Family Comes Apart* by Janet Bender: National Center for Youth Issues. Also used: additional group activities, attached.

**Evaluation/Assessment:**
1. At the end of group students will write at least two things they have learned from group.
2. Students will develop relationships with peers during group and will collaboratively complete closing group activities.

**Name/School** Emily Goodman Scott, Liberty Elementary School. Loudoun County Public Schools
Group Counseling Activity

Title: The Memory Box

Topic: Divorce/Family Changes

Estimated time: 25-40 minutes, depending on conversation generated.

Objective/Goals:
1. For students to collect, reflect, and recount memories of family and life prior to the family change.
2. For students to feel comforted by having tangible reminders of their previous family structure and life.
3. For students to be able to grieve for and eventually find closure regarding the changes.
4. For students to identify strengths in past transitions and apply those strengths to current family transition.

Virginia Standard(s):
Through processing & normalizing their family changes, students are better equipped to focus on academics, communicate, work independently and collaboratively with peers, demonstrate good character, seek support from adults and friends as needed, and learn coping strategies to empower students to rely on themselves. Specifically:
EA5. Demonstrate individual initiative and a positive interest in learning,
EA6. Use appropriate communication skills to ask for help when needed,
EA7. Work independently to achieve academic success,
EA8. Work cooperatively in small and large groups towards a common goal
EP1. Exhibit the principles of character, including honesty, trustworthiness, respect for the rights and property of others, respect for rules and laws, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, fairness, caring, and citizenship,
EP2. Understand how to make and keep friends and work cooperatively with others,
EP5. Demonstrate self-discipline and self-reliance,
EP6. Identify resource people in the school and community and understand how to seek their help
Materials:
- Shoeboxes (1 per student)
- Colored construction paper
- Stickers
- Crayons, colored pencils and/or markers
- Tape or glue
- Scissors
- Memorable items the child collects from home
  - Pictures of cherished events, family celebrations, outings, their home, family members, pets, etc.
  - Notes/greeting cards
  - Small items (that would fit in a shoe box, such as a small piece of a memorable blanket, a small toy, a leaf from a family tree, etc.)

Procedure
First week:
- State the following:
  - During our next group you are going to make a memory box.
  - Your homework assignment for this week is to go through your house and collect small items that remind you of the time before your family change happened. For example, you can bring in pictures of your family members, pets, even pictures of your bedroom or swing-set—whatever you want to remember from your life before the family change. You can also bring in a leaf off a tree in your yard, or a small piece of your favorite blanket, a card, or small toy that has a memory for you.
  - I am giving you this shoebox to take home (one shoebox per child).
  - Fill this shoebox with these pictures and things that remind you or your past family and neighborhood (if you moved), and bring the shoebox back next time, with your things and inside.
- Ok?
- You will also decorate this box in our next session.
- Any questions before we end?
Second week:
- Say:
  - It looks like you brought the shoebox back- thanks for remembering!
  - Did you fill it with pictures and items from your family before the family change?
  - Now its time to decorate your memory box.
    - *(All art supplies are on the table where group is sitting).*
  - Remember, this box is just for you and you can decorate it as you wish, with the art supplies here *(gesture to the art supplies).*
  - Any questions before you start?
- *(Students then spend time decorating their boxes and the counselor quietly watches)*
  - When every student is done, students & counselor sit in a circle. Students will speak one at a time about their memory box. They can share as much or as little as they want about their memory box & the contents inside.
- Questions for the group, after individual sharing:
  - How was it for you, to collect these things?
  - It looks like you have a lot of wonderful memories in your box, and a lot of wonderful times with your family, before the family change.
  - I wonder, when you first moved into your home with your family, or when you were first born, did you have all these happy memories? [likely response: no]
  - Well then, how did you get these happy memories?
  - When you move(d) into your next home, since your family has changed, what do you think you can do to create more happy memories, like these, in the future?
- Wrap up session, as appropriate…

Evaluation/Assessment:
1. At the end of group students will write at least two things they have learned from group.
2. Students will develop relationships with peers during group and will collaboratively complete closing group activities.

Name/School Emily Goodman Scott, Liberty Elementary School: Loudoun County Public Schools
**Group Counseling Activity**

**Title:** Family Changes: From Lemons to Lemonade

**Topic:** Divorce/Family Changes

**Estimated time:** Approximately ten minutes to twenty minutes, depending on the conversation generated.

**Objective/Goals:**
For students to identify and communicate three things using both oral communication and tangible manipulatives:

1. Challenging aspects of students’ family changes.
2. Coping strategies students can or has used to deal with the challenges of their family changes.
3. Positive aspects of the family changes.

**Virginia Standard(s):**
Through processing & normalizing their family changes, students are better equipped to focus on academics, communicate, work independently and collaboratively with peers, demonstrate good character, seek support from adults and friends as needed, and learn coping strategies to empower students to rely on themselves. Specifically:

- **EA5.** Demonstrate individual initiative and a positive interest in learning,
- **EA6.** Use appropriate communication skills to ask for help when needed,
- **EA7.** Work independently to achieve academic success,
- **EA8.** Work cooperatively in small and large groups towards a common goal,
- **EP1.** Exhibit the principles of character, including honesty, trustworthiness, respect for the rights and property of others, respect for rules and laws, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, fairness, caring, and citizenship,
- **EP2.** Understand how to make and keep friends and work cooperatively with others,
- **EP5.** Demonstrate self-discipline and self-reliance,
- **EP6.** Identify resource people in the school and community and understand how to seek their help
Materials:
- 3 small plastic cups for each student (e.g. disposable dixie cups)
- Lemon juice in a bottle
- Raw sugar (white sugar)
- A small bottle of water
- Plastic spoons (1 for each student)
- Napkins/wipes

Procedure:
Students and counselor are sitting at a table with all materials.

1. Alright students, here is a cup for each of you. Today we are going to do an experiment!
   - (Students pick up an empty plastic dixie cup, one for each student)
   - Please poor some lemon juice in your cup (pass lemon juice around).
   - Now taste the lemon juice. How does it taste?
     - [response: sour, bitter, gross, etc]
   - How is your family change like the taste of the lemon juice?
     - [discuss the challenging/sour/bitter or difficult parts of the family change: eg- missing their dad, etc]

2. Next we have some water. What do you think will happen when you pour the water in the cup with the lemon juice?
   - [response: it will make the lemon juice taste less strong… etc].
   - Lets see what will happen! Please poor some water in your cup and taste it.
   - How does it taste now?
   - Like you said earlier—you [miss your dad a lot], this family change is like the sour lemon juice that tastes sour. Pouring water into the lemon juice weakens the lemon juice, so it is not as sour, or doesn’t taste as bad.
Just as the water makes the lemon juice taste less sour, we can do things to feel better when we are sad. When you [miss your dad] and are sad about the family changes, what can you do to cope, or to make yourself feel better?

- If they need ideas- you could give suggestions, e.g. some kids like to read a book, play outside, journal, etc. Compare their answer to coping & pouring water in the lemon juice.

3. And lastly, we have sugar.

- How do you think sugar tastes? [response: sweet, good, etc]
- What do you think will happen if you pour this sugar into your cup?
  - [response: it will make the juice taste better, sweeter, etc].
- Just as there are parts of your family change that are hard/sad, like [missing your dad], there can be parts of family change that are positive or sweet, like the sugar.
- You can put as much or as little sugar in your cup as you wish (pass sugar around).
- Now, what part of your family change has been good or positive?
  - [Students responds]
- You have mixed lemon juice, water and sugar. When you mix all three together, what do you get? [response: lemonade!]

4. How have the changes in your family been like this lemonade?

- E.g. a mixture of sour/bad/sad, sweet/good and coping skills you use, like the water.
- You can drink as much of the lemonade as you want!
- I weave this theme of lemon juice into the entire group—along with the theme of puzzle pieces, from the workbook.

Evaluation/Assessment:

1. At the end of group students will write at least two things they have learned from group.
2. Students will develop relationships with peers during group and will collaboratively complete closing group activities.

Name/School Emily Goodman Scott, Liberty Elementary School: Loudoun County Public Schools
Group Counseling Activity

Title: Group Wrap-Up, session 1 of 3

Topic: Divorce/Family Changes

Estimated time: Approximately 20 minutes

Objective/Goals:
The purpose of this group is for students to normalize the process of family changes and to have an outlet to process their family changes.

Virginia Standard(s):
Through processing & normalizing their family changes, students are better equipped to focus on academics, communicate, work independently and collaboratively with peers, demonstrate good character, seek support from adults and friends as needed, and learn coping strategies to empower students to rely on themselves. Specifically:
EA5. Demonstrate individual initiative and a positive interest in learning,
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EA8. Work cooperatively in small and large groups towards a common goal
EP1. Exhibit the principles of character, including honesty, trustworthiness, respect for the rights and property of others, respect for rules and laws, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, fairness, caring, and citizenship,
EP2. Understand how to make and keep friends and work cooperatively with others,
EP5. Demonstrate self-discipline and self-reliance,
EP6. Identify resource people in the school and community and understand how to seek their help

Materials: 1 large piece of construction paper, crayons, and markers
Procedure:
- Counselor reminds students that after this session there are 2 more sessions left.
- Counselor then gives students the large piece of construction paper (one piece of paper for the group) and crayons and markers, and states: “As you know, we have spent a lot of time together this school year talking about family changes. As a group, draw something on the front of this paper that represents your group and what you have learned.”
- Give the group 15 minutes to complete the drawing.
- When group is done, ask them to present the drawing to you, counselor.
- Then explain to group that just as we have been talking about puzzle pieces throughout group sessions, this drawing will be turned into a puzzle.
- Specifically, you (the counselor) will cut this paper into puzzle pieces before the next group session, and then each group member will write what they learned from group on 2 puzzle pieces. Then there will be one puzzle piece where all group members will sign their name.
- For example, if there are 6 group members, the counselor will cut the picture into 13 pieces, 2 for each group member and 1 for everyone to sign. After group leaves, counselor cuts the drawing/picture & saves for the next group.

Evaluation/Assessment:
1. At the end of group students will write at least two things they have learned from group.
2. Students will develop relationships with peers during group and will collaboratively complete closing group activities

Name/School Emily Goodman Scott, Liberty Elementary School: Loudoun County Public Schools
Group Counseling Activity

**Title: Title:** Wrapping Up: Putting the Puzzle Pieces Back Together. Closure Session 2 of 3

**Topic:** Divorce/Family Changes

**Estimated time:** 25 minutes

**Objective/Goals:**
The purpose of this group is for students to normalize the process of family changes and to have an outlet to process their family changes.

**Virginia Standard(s):**
Through processing & normalizing their family changes, students are better equipped to focus on academics, communicate, work independently and collaboratively with peers, demonstrate good character, seek support from adults and friends as needed, and learn coping strategies to empower students to rely on themselves. Specifically:
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- EP1. Exhibit the principles of character, including honesty, trustworthiness, respect for the rights and property of others, respect for rules and laws, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, fairness, caring, and citizenship,
- EP2. Understand how to make and keep friends and work cooperatively with others,
- EP5. Demonstrate self-discipline and self-reliance,
- EP6. Identify resource people in the school and community and understand how to seek their help

**Materials:** Puzzle Pieces from previous group and pencils
Procedure:
- Counselor will remind students of previous group and will give instructions: that each group member will be given 2 puzzle pieces and on the back of each (the blank side) students will write what they learned in group.
- Counselor will ask for student examples from group before starting activity
  - E.g.
    - I learned I’m not the only one with family changes,
    - I learned that I feel better when I talk about it, etc
- Students are asked to go somewhere in the counseling room where they can sit quietly and think about what they learned, then write on their 2 puzzle pieces.
- Once the student has finished, they bring their 2 puzzle pieces to counselor & quietly share what they learned (individually with the counselor).
- Counselor collects all puzzle pieces, then group sits in a circle.
- Counselor reads all the puzzle pieces out loud to the group, and does not specify which puzzle piece came from which child (and their names are not on their pieces).
- After reading and discussing the puzzle pieces, the counselor gives all the puzzle pieces to the group & the students put the puzzle back together, with the drawing face-up.
- Once students are done putting the puzzle together, the counselor asks the group how this puzzle is like their family changes.
  - Examples:
    - Our family fell apart, and we are putting the pieces back together;
    - Our family changed, and we have gotten use to the change, but there are still cracks where our family isn’t like it was before (just like there are cracks between puzzle pieces, the picture isn’t exactly like it was before cutting it, etc.)

Then, remind students that next group is the last group.

Evaluation/Assessment:
1. At the end of group students will write at least two things they have learned from group.
2. Students will develop relationships with peers during group and will collaboratively complete closing group activities.

Name/School Emily Goodman Scott, Liberty Elementary School: Loudoun County Public Schools
Group Counseling Activity


Topic: Divorce/Family Changes

Estimated time: 30-45 minutes.

Objective/Goals:
The purpose of this group is for students to normalize the process of family changes and to have an outlet to process their family changes.

Virginia Standard(s):
Through processing & normalizing their family changes, students are better equipped to focus on academics, communicate, work independently and collaboratively with peers, demonstrate good character, seek support from adults and friends as needed, and learn coping strategies to empower students to rely on themselves. Specifically:
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EP5. Demonstrate self-discipline and self-reliance,
EP6. Identify resource people in the school and community and understand how to seek their help

Materials: Lemonade, cups, 1 blank spiral notebook for each student (with yellow cover), stickers, pictures of lemonade and puzzle pieces (document attached), scissors, glue, markers & pencils.
Procedure:
- Counselor reminds students that today is the last group & our celebration!
- Counselor gives 1 notebook to each student & describes:
  - “This is your journal, for you to write your thoughts/reaction to family changes; even though we don’t have group any longer, the journal can help you process your feelings.”
- Students take journal & add stickers to cover & write their name on cover.
- On the inside of journal, on the first couple pages, students glue pictures of lemonade & puzzle pieces and write reminders to themselves, about what they learned and how family changes are like lemonade & puzzle pieces.
- After students have completed this, the group sits in a circle and turns to the back of the notebook.
- On the last page of the notebook/journal, the students write their name on top of the last page.
- Then each student passes their notebook one space to the right, and each student writes an encouraging note in their group-mate’s journal, then they pass it to the right again & write in the next group-mate’s journal, etc. This continues until each group member has written in each other group member’s journal.
- Then counselor & students come back to the table, drink lemonade, and play for about 10 minutes, for the final celebration.

Evaluation/Assessment:
1. At the end of group students will write at least two things they have learned from group.
2. Students will develop relationships with peers during group and will collaboratively complete closing group activities

Name/School  Emily Goodman Scott, Liberty Elementary School: Loudoun County Public Schools
Pictures for collage in journal
Pictures for collage in journal