

“What DIDN’T You Say?” - INTRO

A Parent's Guide to:

*'Earthquake in Zipland -
An Interactive Computer Quest
Designed to Help Kids Cope with Divorce'*

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How many times have you heard the following sentences from your kids?

“I’m fine. Stop bothering me.”

“Nothing is wrong. I told you already”.

“Leave me alone. I don’t want to talk about it”

You know your child is going through a difficult time with the divorce but is reluctant to talk about his or her feelings and experience.

You want to help, but feel helpless.

Divorce is NOT a game. Divorce is a difficult and painful process for both parents and their children.

Earthquake in Zipland is a computer quest game that aims to help children and parents deal with feelings resulting from the divorce process and gives them cognitive and emotional tools for more effective coping.

This book is written to assist and guide you, the parents, how to use the game to help your child go through and grow through this transition time in his/your lives.

Earthquake in Zipland can enable parents:

- To talk about painful issues, which the child is often reluctant to express
- To broaden their knowledge and understanding of the impact of separation on their child
- To play alongside their child and (nonverbally) address personal family issues
- To deal with the issues of separation and divorce in an indirect way
- To open the path to direct dialogue

INTRODUCTION:

Moose is living happily on a small paradise island with his parents, the King and Queen of Zipland. The island is held together by a large zipper. Suddenly the earth begins to shake, Moose is thrown to the ground, and before he knows what is going on, a severe earthquake rocks his small paradise and rips the island apart. Moose finds himself on a tiny raft floating in the ocean, full of sadness, guilt and questions: What's going to happen to him now? How will he be able to get through life like this? And will he ever be able to join the halves of his beloved island back together again?

Join Moose and your child on a quest full of adventure, intrigue and surprises. Together, raise questions that can be food for thought and reinforce an optimistic attitude that will help him or her deal with the many questions and emotions that may arise in the future.

In a chaotic situation such as divorce, it is particularly helpful for children to be able to express their creative ability as a way of mastering a situation which they experience as being beyond their control. "Earthquake in Zipland" enables children to use inborn creativity as a way of finding solutions to the challenges of the Quest and indirectly to the challenges in life. As children are generally quite resilient, playing "Earthquake in Zipland" with your child can help you tap into your child's natural strengths and resources, to better cope with the new demands and challenges of life. The use of games as a therapeutic tool encourages children to become more flexible in their thought processes thus becoming "unstuck" from ideas or thoughts that keep them focused on the past and prevent them from seeing the future.

Throughout the quest, the main character Moose keeps a Journal describing his experiences and feelings. One of the fastest and most effective ways to join your child in the game is to simply open the Quest Journal and read it with him, allowing him to answer the questions. Use the Journal as a way to elicit your child's feelings and facilitate communication.

You now know enough to begin playing the game with your child. However, should you want to use the game as a way of understanding your child's thoughts and feelings more directly, you can do the following:

1. Read the manual and select those topics that seem most relevant to your current life situation.
2. Spend one hour a week playing the game with your child and try to focus his attention on the topics and episodes you feel are most significant.

3. As the quest may be difficult for your child, it may be a good idea for you to go into our website and click on “Walkthrough” in order to reveal some of the clues of the game. This knowledge will enable you to better help your child through game.

Note:

We have chosen to use he/she interchangeably when referring to the “child”. We hope you won’t find it confusing.

As this game was also designed to be enjoyable for adults, you may note that some of the dialogues are satirical in nature and may be more appreciated by adults than by children. Nonetheless, much of the humor will be appreciated by the children as well. The game offers parents and children an opportunity to experience a wide range of emotions together, but places an emphasis on humor. Remember, humor is both therapeutic and healing.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Every family has its own comfort level with openness and emotional sharing. From the age of about nine, children generally have a more developed verbal ability and are better able to use language to cope with the loss experienced in divorce. However, as the pain is often too intense to face, children may deny, ignore or avoid it, something that continues into their adolescent years. At the time these defense mechanisms may be an effective way of protecting them from pain, however in the long run the consequences may be serious.

* Each section in the guidebook contains a brief description of a psychological issue raised by one of the scenes in the game as well as a referral to a screenshot of the relevant game episode. Following each description are different suggestions a parent may choose to ask or do with his child in order to enhance the effect of the game. These tips are categorized into four sections: "Questions Parents May Want to Ask their Children", "Information Parents May Want to Elicit", "Messages you May Want to Convey to your Child" and "Tips for Parents."

QUESTIONS PARENTS MAY WANT TO ASK THEIR CHILDREN

Is a list of questions relating to the characters in the game and can enable the child to express his feeling indirectly through his identification with the characters.

INFORMATION PARENTS MAY WANT TO ELICIT

Is a list of questions that focuses more directly on what your child is feeling and thinking. Use these questions when you think that your child is ready to share his feelings.

MESSAGES YOU MAY WANT TO CONVEY TO YOUR CHILD

Is a list of general ideas that you may want to share with your child.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Is a list of other suggestions you may want to try in order to help your child.

ASKING CHILDREN QUESTIONS – COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN:

Use of this game relies on the basic sensitivity and understanding that we believe every parent has for their child. Nonetheless, because divorce is a new and stressful situation, many parents may find it helpful to get a list of “do's” and “don'ts” for how to discuss that matter with their children:

“Do's”:

Trust your intuition.
Give your child space and time to begin playing by himself.
Timing is very important. Be sensitive to the child's pace.
Try to coordinate questions to what is going on in the game.
Try to understand what's going on in your child's mind.
Go with the information that your child gives.

Use open-ended questions such as:

“How do you think Moose is feeling?” “What else might Moose do? What might be worrying the moose?”

Talk about yourself.

Respect the parts that your child is not YET ready to talk about.

Use words such as “yet”, “also” and “at this time” in your sentences. Say things like: “So you do not want to talk about that subject YET...” or “I see you want to play by yourself AT THIS TIME”... “You say you ALSO feel angry.. What ELSE have you felt?”... “What did you like the Most, the Least?”

Check what help your child wants before offering him answers.

“Don'ts”:

Avoid closed-end questions such as those that have “yes” or “no” answers. Questions of this type stop dialogue from developing. “Did you get that?” “Are you enjoying the game?”

Don't give your child the answers. There are often no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers.

Don't argue with the child. Present new ideas, but **don't argue**.

Don't rush things, the child needs time to think and develop ideas.

Don't interrupt his thoughts - give time to think.

Don't get upset if your child wants to stop. Say: “It seems you've had enough FOR TODAY.”

Don't be too academic. Don't act like you are doing homework with your child.

KEEPING A JOURNAL:

Journal writing is a therapeutic activity. Very often children who are unable to speak directly about how they feel *are* able to express themselves through writing. Writing can be an experience that helps children release tensions that are bottled-up inside them and sometimes just the act of writing is helpful even if no one knows what the child had written. By writing about one's experiences, one is able to gain some distance or perspective, which in turn may lead to a fresher and healthier perspective on things. Writing helps the child move some of his concerns outside of himself in a way that doesn't erase the thoughts and feelings but allows him to continue to function in a way that is less emotionally charged.

HOW TO BEST USE THE GAME JOURNALS WITH YOUR CHILD

Together with your child, read what the moose wrote, encourage your child to write about *his* thoughts and feelings or to write instead of the moose. The parent can also write in the journal as a way of showing the child how to do so; this is a good way of teaching how to express feelings. Make use of the words that appear in the upper portion of the journal screen to enrich your child's emotional vocabulary. By doing so it will become easier to express himself in words and less necessary for him to express himself in actions.

THE PERSONAL JOURNAL

The personal journal is the child's private journal to which only he can enter by use of his personal password. In the personal journal the child may write things about what she is thinking and feeling and need not share these thoughts with anyone until she is ready to do so.

THE QUEST JOURNAL

The Quest Journal, by contrast, is an important part of the game in which the child is encouraged to express his thoughts and feelings in response to the thoughts and feelings of the main character or even the child's experience of the game and what it arouses in him. The child is rewarded for writing in the journal by getting valuable objects and hints about the game that help him to continue his quest (Hints may be accessible after 9 words are written in the journal as well as pressing the 'I Need Help' button) .



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www.ziplandinteractive.com