

KEY ELEMENTS FOR DIVORCE STORY: The Transitional Gateway for Children

1. Use “I-statements.” Talk at age appropriate level for our children.
2. Start with how we met. Recount fun, loving experiences shared.
3. Recount how we were two separate people, with separate interests who came together out of love and respect. Share when we decided to join our lives and why.
4. Share what we liked/loved about each other and what we still appreciate about each other.
5. Explain why we asked people to help with the ceremony (if we had one) plans or plans to join our lives – the different tasks and needed specialists.
6. Share our excitement about having a baby – *our* child.
7. Talk about the love we had then as a family, and how we will always love each other for giving each other such wonderful children.
10. Dialogue about how family experiences were valuable to all of us, and how we will always remember them fondly.
11. (Make this specific to your family) Talk in a neutral, blame-free way about what things started to change between us (parents) that left us unhappy. Talk about our shared responsibility in this – e.g. thinking things without talking with each other, having difficulties and ignoring them, judging instead of understanding the other’s perspective, having different ideas about things and not knowing how to talk about these or bridge differences.
12. We tried to get help from professionals who teach people how to communicate better. Even with help we weren’t able to work things out in a way that worked for both of us. So, we decided to separate and live apart. This is called separating or getting a divorce.
13. We are not separating from or divorcing you!! We both *always* love you and we’ll always be your parents.
14. We have asked people to help us separate/divorce because there are so many things to do, just as when we joined our lives. We want to make sure experts help all of us to do this kindly and respectfully.
15. You may have hard feelings, and sometimes we will have difficult feelings too. Changes like this can be hard for all of us. Validate your child’s sense of loss or grief when it occurs. Minimizing or catastrophizing will leave your child feeling alone and possibly overwhelmed.
16. You will have a coach too, so you can talk about how you feel and what you think without worrying about us – that’s *not* your job. We will still be co-parenting together, and talking and sharing about your needs and worries.
17. You can ask us any questions at any time. We will let you know about changes that are happening as soon as we know.
18. Come up with a blame-free 2-3 sentence story that you can share with your kids, friends and family to keep your restructured family embedded in your extended community. Run it by your coach who will help you combine both your views.