

For additional information on family violence
and how to support families and their
children struggling with domestic violence:

Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-838-8238 (V/tty)
Free, confidential, 24 hours a day

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799 -SAFE (7233)
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

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For information on how to obtain additional copies of this
booklet send an e-mail request to
Loudoun Citizens for Social Justice, Inc.
laws@lcsj.org



www.lcsj.org

Visitation Through the Eyes of Children



*A safety planning
workbook for children
exposed to family violence*

Written and Illustrated by Lindy Swimm MAE, LCSW

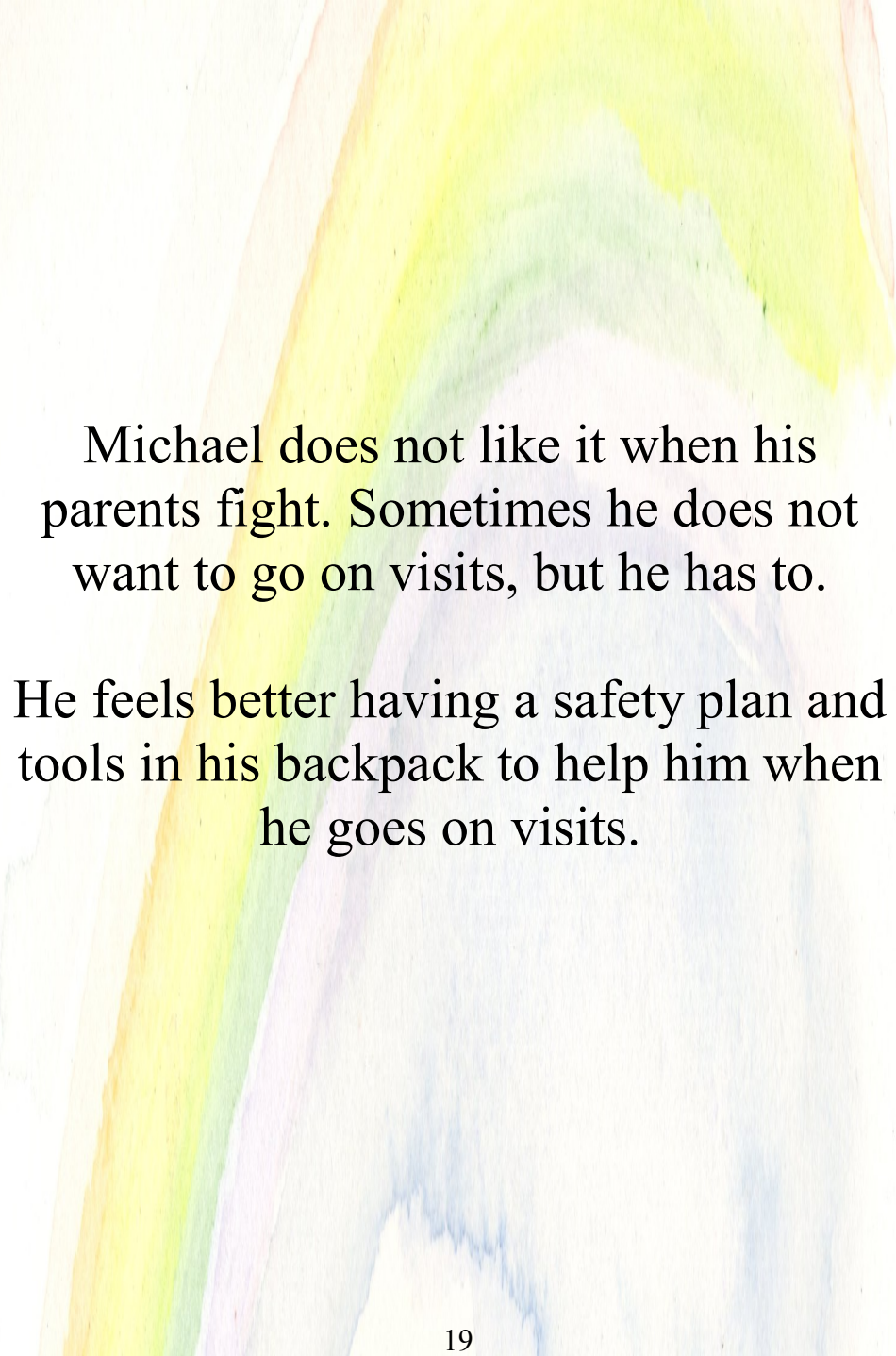
Author's Note

Assisting children who have been exposed to family violence is key to their healing and developmental growth.

Providing basic information, safe options when fighting occurs, and support for all family members can be some of the most effective interventions to assist a family struggling with domestic violence issues.

The story of Michael is a compilation of true life stories about real children from homes where violence has occurred. The strategies presented in this booklet are drawn from the creative survival adaptations of actual children and families, as well as successful interventions used with children and families attempting to change violent interaction patterns in their homes.





Michael does not like it when his parents fight. Sometimes he does not want to go on visits, but he has to.

He feels better having a safety plan and tools in his backpack to help him when he goes on visits.

Visitation Through the Eyes of Children

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children exposed to family violence*

by LINDY SWIMM, MAE, LCSW

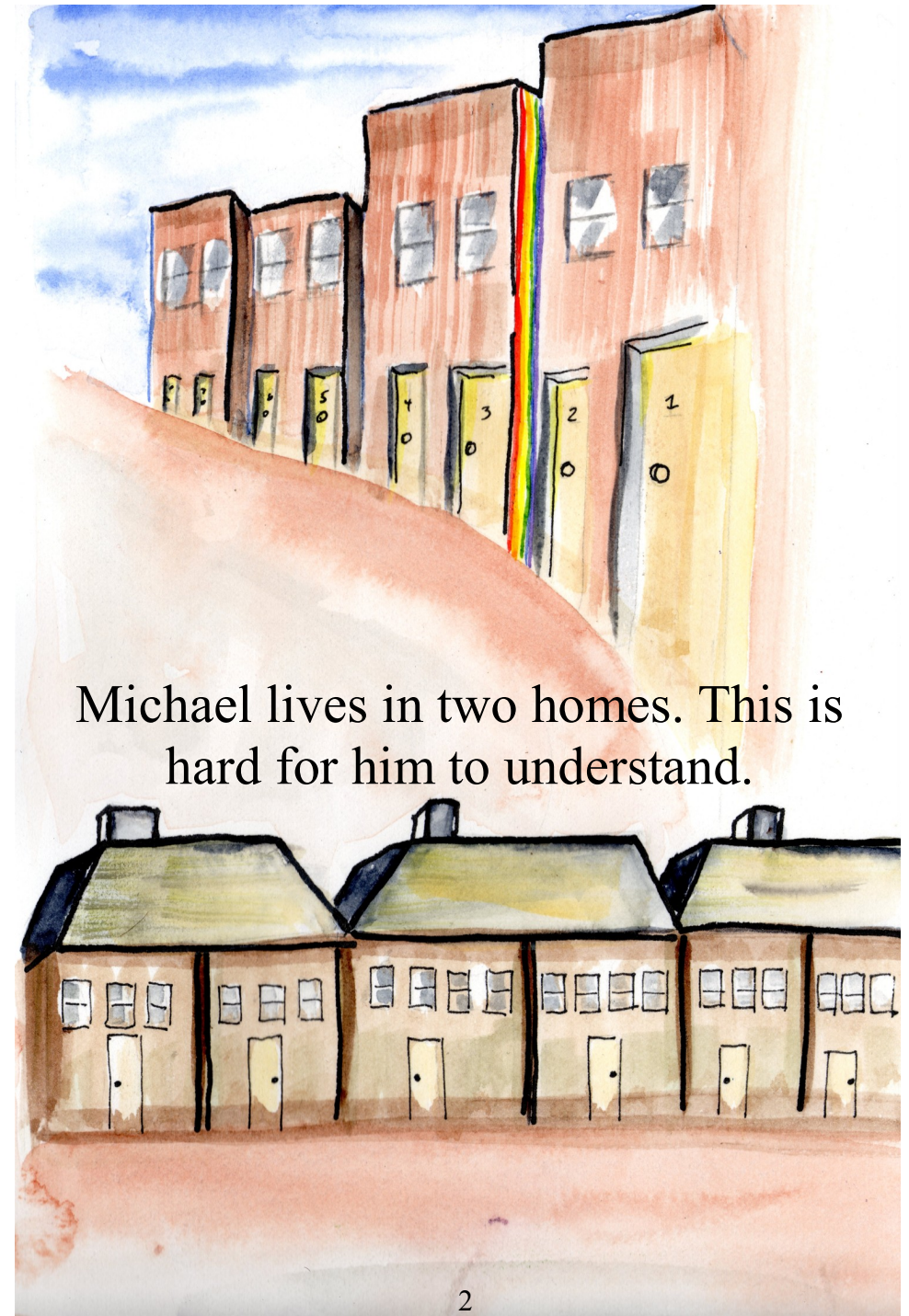
Michael is eight years old.
He loves to play with his dog and ride
his bike.



Cut out the items and glue them on:



Pick some things for Michael to put in his backpack when he goes on visitation that might help the visits go better:

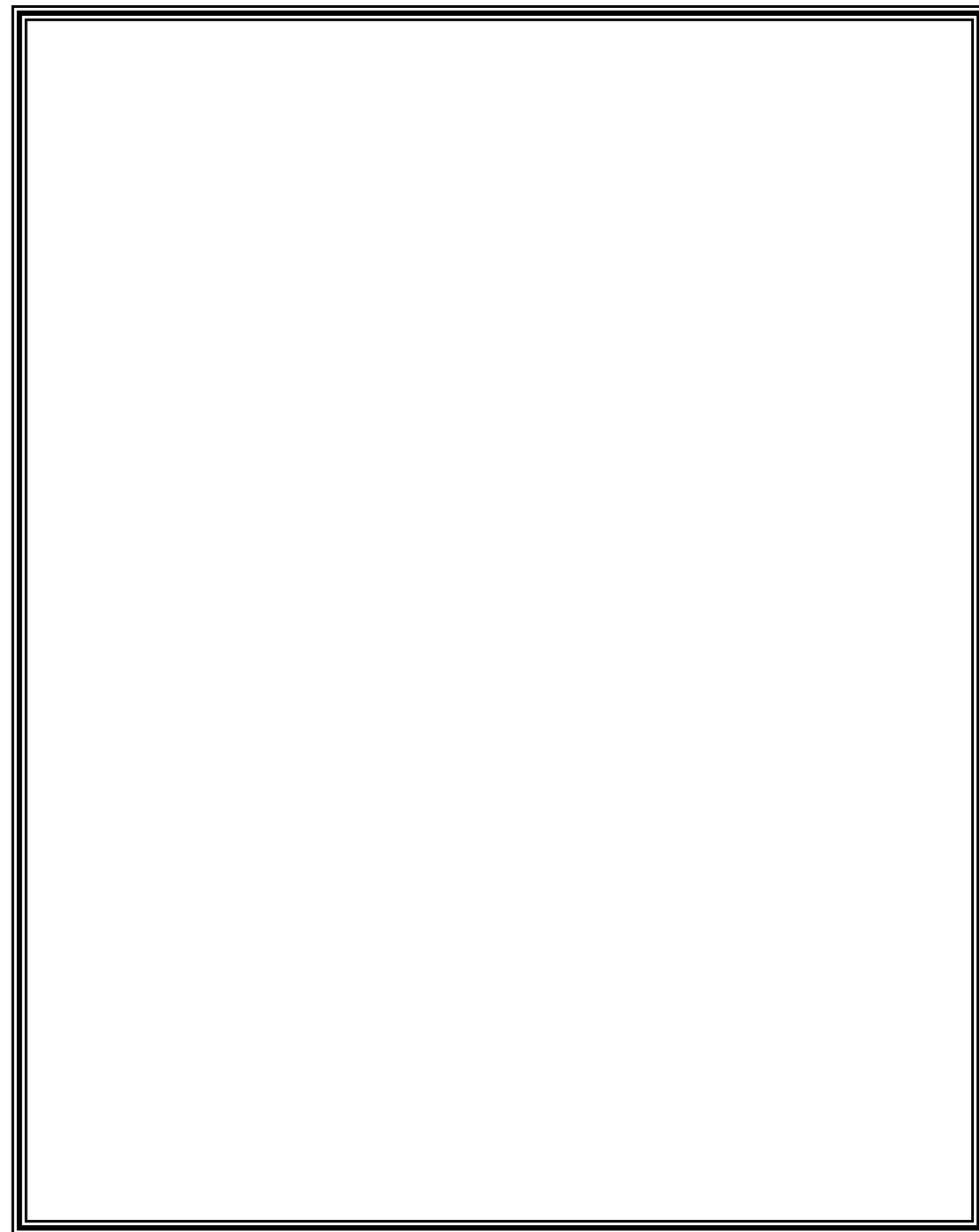


Michael lives in two homes. This is hard for him to understand.



His parents did not know how to be mad at each other in a safe way and they do not live together any more. Michael felt scared when his parents showed how mad they were by hitting, yelling and throwing things.

You have the right to feel safe.
Draw yourself feeling safe:



Michael needs a **safety plan** in case his parents fight or don't bring him to the other parent on time. It is best if both parents show their love by following the safety plan.

Michael's Safety Plan for Visitation:

- ◆ Know each parent's address
- ◆ Know how to call the police (9-1-1)
- ◆ Know to stay out of the fight
- ◆ Know which neighbors are safe to go to when the fight is bad
- ◆ Sing a song in your head when parents say bad things about each other
- ◆ Hug your favorite animal
- ◆ Picture yourself as your favorite strong, brave animal
- ◆ Have a spot in the house where you can go to get away from the fighting
- ◆ Tell a safe adult

Circle some words below that tell how Michael felt when his parents moved to two different houses:

CONFUSED	HAPPY	SILLY
WARM	PROUD	BAD
WORRIED	ANGRY	GOOD
SCARED	GLAD	MAD
GUILTY	LONELY	SAD
LOVED	SAFE	CALM

Michael feels confused that he lives with one parent most of the time...



...and goes to see his other parent on the weekend for visitation.

Check off the things that Michael can do when he misses one parent while visiting the other parent:

- ☐ Draw the fun things you will do when you get home
- ☐ Call the parent you are missing
- ☐ Call a friend
- ☐ Practice breathing in and out and tell yourself it will be okay
- ☐ Picture your safe place in your head
- ☐ Draw a place you feel safe (make one up if you don't have one)
- ☐ Whisper to your favorite animal or doll how you feel
- ☐ Draw a picture or write a letter to the parent you are missing
- ☐ Think about all of the things you will tell the parent you miss that you did when you were apart from them

Help the animals say how they
feel when one parent talks
bad about the other:



Michael sometimes thinks it was his
fault that his parents fought. Now he
gets scared that his parents will get mad
at him or at each other, and that he
won't have any more visitations.



Sometimes, Michael hears one parent talk bad about the other parent. Michael's parents, the people who are supposed to show him how to behave and handle his big feelings, are hurting him terribly with their unkind words about each other.



What could he do to feel better?

Draw or write what Michael's stuffed animals should say to help them feel better when they go on visits:



Sometimes, Michael gets confused when his parents don't act like grown-ups. It seems like the rules change all the time.



Michael feels like he is the rope toy he uses to play with his dog. He feels pulled by one parent on one side and one on the other. He worries a lot that they will pull him right in half....



When Michael goes back and forth between his parents he feels like a yo-yo. He doesn't know how to show his big feelings without getting into trouble!



His parents need to have special time with him each time he goes back and forth.

Sometimes, Michael does not want to go for a visitation. He feels scared that his parents will fight over him. Michael's parents need to learn how to do their mad in a safe way. This will help him feel loved when he goes on visits.

