

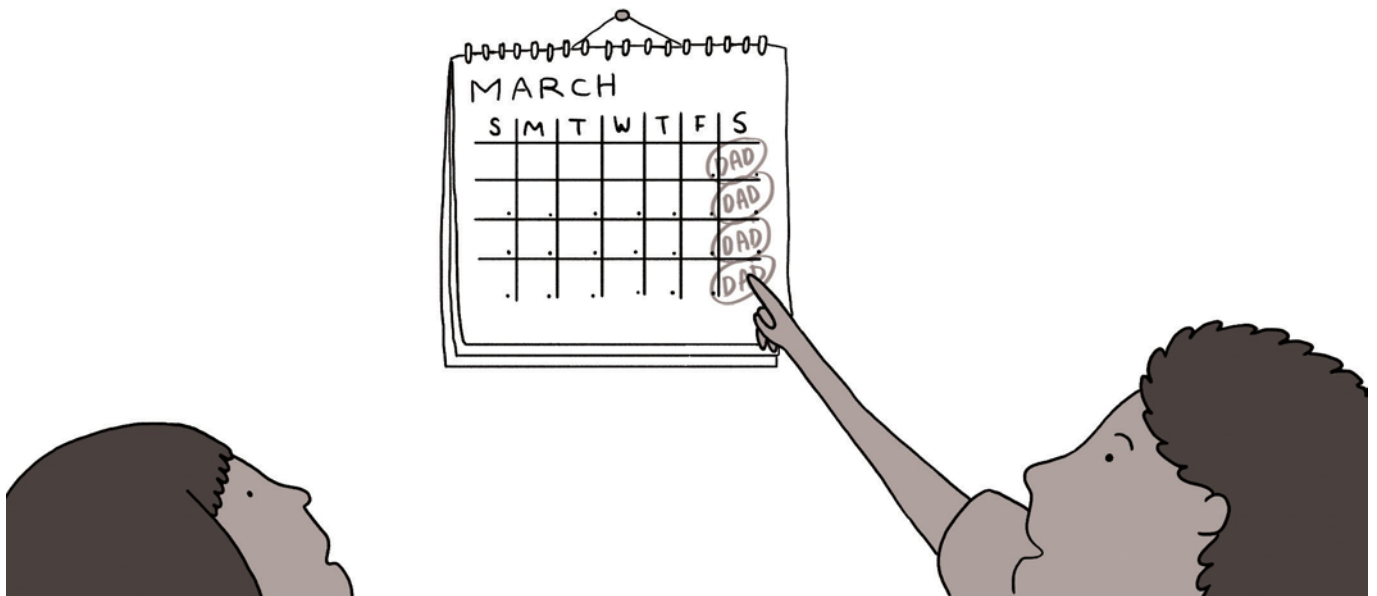
*This is Mia - she's 7 years old and loves animals and Lego. This is Zayne. He's 11 years old and loves Pokémon and playing basketball. They live with Mum, Dad and their dog Toto.*



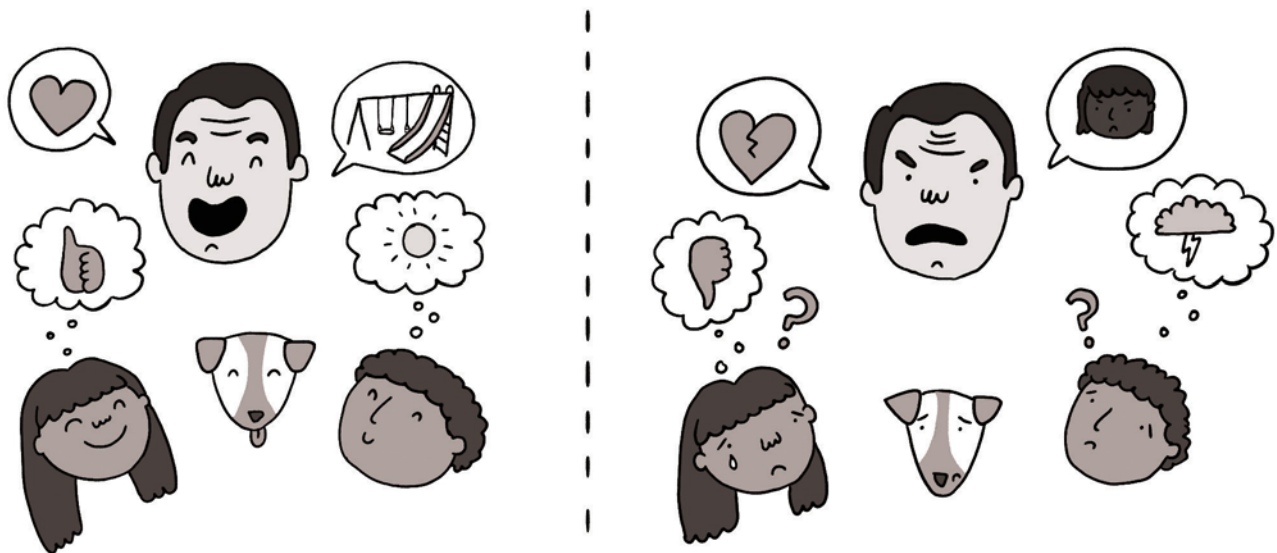
*Zayne and Mia grow up in a house where there is hurting in their home. Sometimes their Dad is really fun and plays with them in the back garden and makes them laugh. But sometimes he bullies everyone. He calls them names, doesn't let them play with Toto or see their friends, hits their Mum, and scares them by saying he will hurt them if they ever tell anyone.*



*After getting some help Mum and Zayne and Mia move out and go to live somewhere else. It all happens really quickly, and they have to leave Toto behind with Dad.*



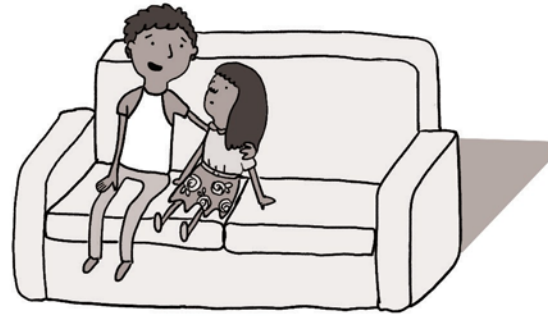
*Now Mia and Zayne live with Mum, and see Dad every Saturday during the daytime. They usually go to his house, so they get to see Toto too.*



Seeing Dad is sometimes really good -they go to the park or the cinema, and Zayne and Mia love playing in the garden with Toto. But sometimes it's really not fun at all. Dad asks them a lot of questions about Mum and they have to tell him who she talks to and where she goes. He says she's a bad Mum and that she doesn't really love them. He gets really angry if they don't do what he says. Zayne and Mia are frightened of him hurting them and their mum. They don't know if they should tell anyone or if that will make things worse...



One Saturday Mia is playing in the garden with Toto having lots of fun. Suddenly Dad starts yelling and tells Mia that he will kill Toto if she doesn't keep quiet. That night she tells mum about it because it made her really sad and scared. Mum asks Zayne how he feels about seeing Dad, and he tells her it was making him really upset and worried. He likes seeing Dad when he is fun, but sometimes he calls Zayne names. Zayne tells mum he is worried Dad might hurt them, or Mum again.

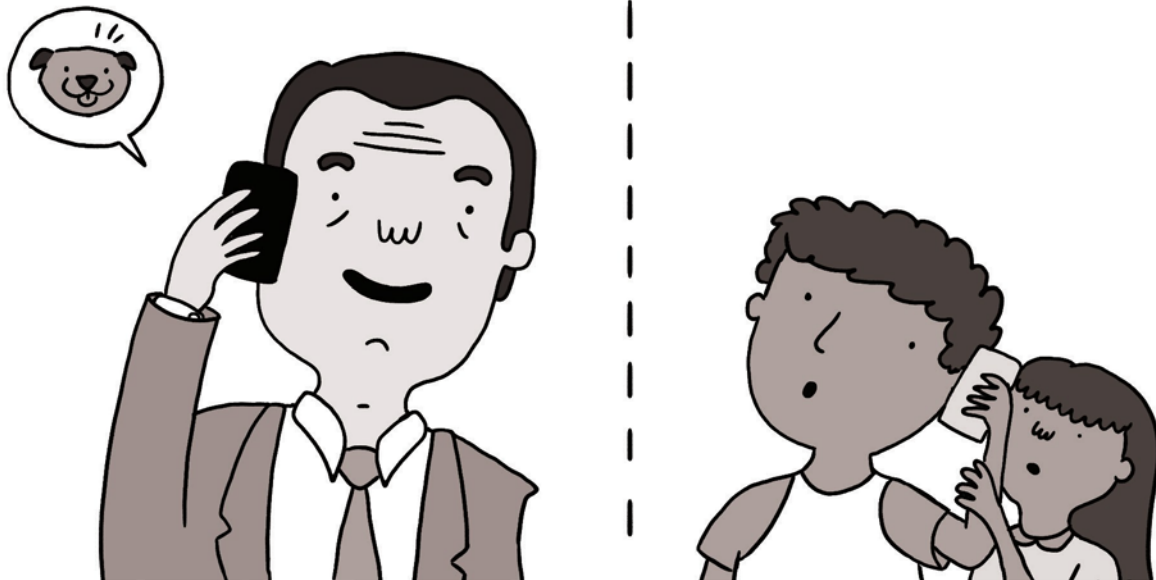


*Mum tells Zayne and Mia that she wants to keep them safe and that they don't have to see Dad anymore. She calls Dad to say they won't be coming over on Saturday. Mia and Zayne feel really relieved, but also a bit worried about how dad will feel and react. They are also worried about what will happen to Toto.*

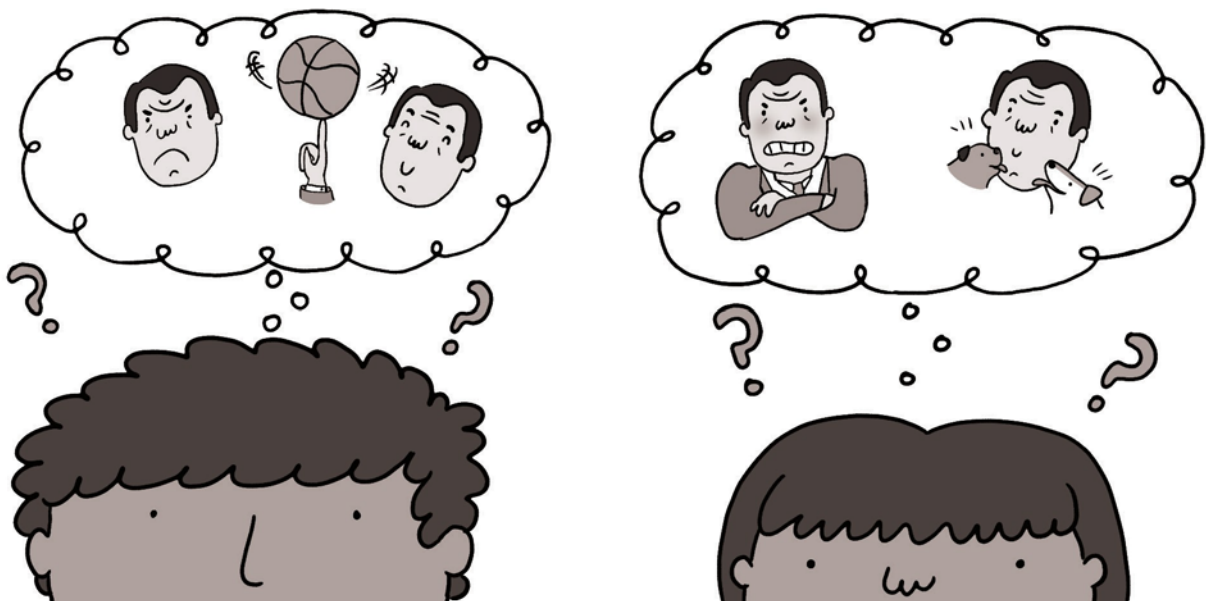


*Dad gets really angry with mum and says he is going to go to court to make sure he gets to see Zayne and Mia for the whole weekend.*





*Dad talks to Zayne and Mia on the phone. He says he is really sorry and it was all a misunderstanding. He tells them he really loves them and they are going to have great fun together. He asks them if they'd like to get a new puppy to keep Toto company during the week because he is lonely without them. Dad says if any grown-ups asked them questions they should say they want to see him and to tell them about the fun times they have together.*



*Zayne and Mia feel really worried and confused. Zayne feels guilty that he had made Dad upset by talking to Mum about it all. Mia is confused and really likes the idea of getting a new puppy. That night she has a nightmare about Toto.*



*Dad raises a contact action in court, asking the Sheriff to make sure he gets to see Zayne and Mia every weekend. Mum gets a lawyer and asks the court to make sure Zayne and Mia are safe and protected from harm. Mum and her lawyer tell the Sheriff that Zayne and Mia are frightened of Dad and that the things their Dad says and does is harmful to them, and upsets them. Dad and his lawyer tell the Sheriff that Zayne and Mia's mum is lying because she hates him, and that he is a wonderful Dad.*



*The Sheriff wants more information so she can make her decision. She wants to know what the real story is and what the children think and feel about contact with their father. She asks a court reporter to gather more information from Zayne, Mia, Mum and Dad, and to tell her what he finds out. Zayne is also sent a form to ask his views. Mia is not sent one, as it's thought she is too young.*



*The court reporter comes out to their house to ask Mia and Zayne some questions before the court case. He wears a suit and asks questions that are difficult to understand. He asks them about their relationship with Dad, but Zayne and Mia are too frightened to answer so they don't say much.*



*Zayne is sent a form to fill out to ask his views about the court case. The form is difficult to understand. He isn't sure if his Dad will see what he writes and if it is ok to talk about the bad things that had happened. He decides to take the risk to say that although he loves his Dad he doesn't like it when he gets angry. Mia really wants to tell the Sheriff that she just wants her Dad to be nice and stop being scary, but she wasn't sent a form.*





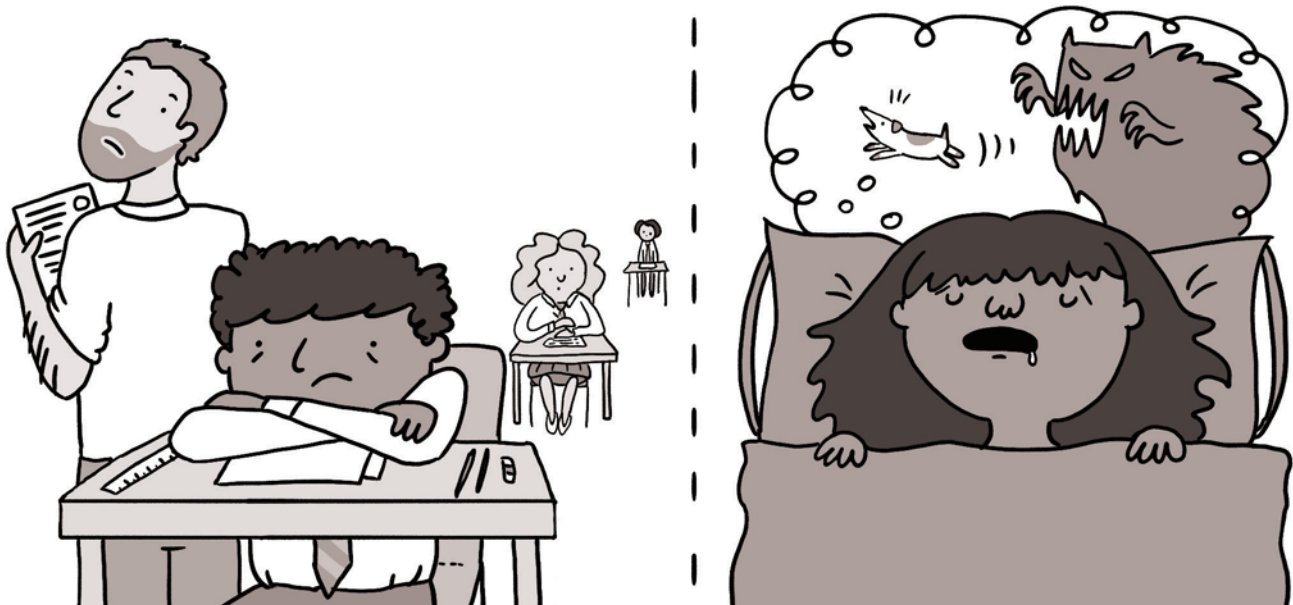
*The court reporter sends his report in to the Sheriff with all of the information he gathers. The report said that Mum and Dad are angry at each other, but that Dad is a loving father, and Zayne and Mia are too young to have a view. A copy of the report is sent to Mum and Dad and their lawyers, but not to Zayne and Mia. They don't know what the court reporter said to the court about the questions they were asked.*



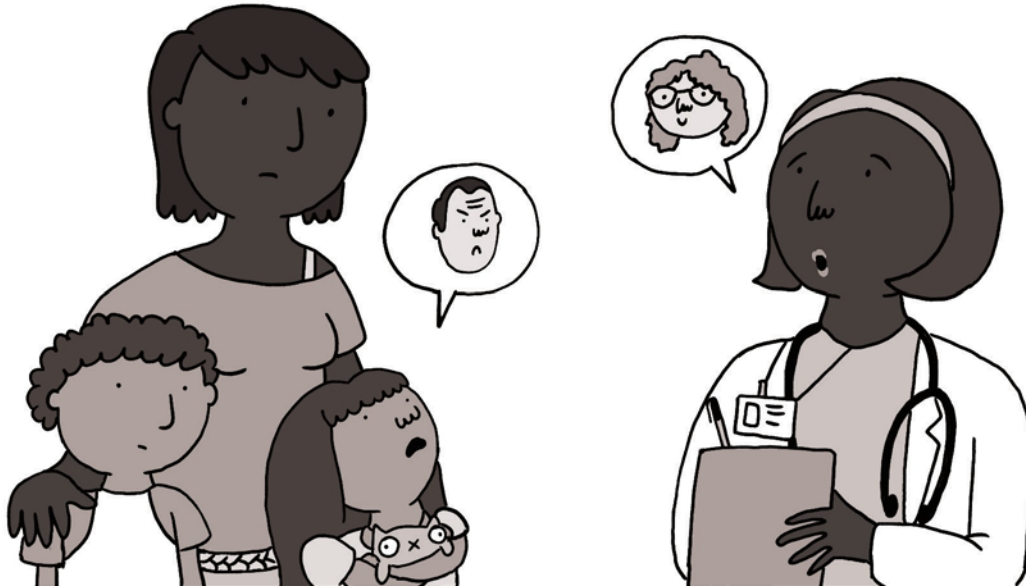
*On the day of the court case the Sheriff decides that Zayne and Mia will see their Dad every Saturday, and every second weekend they'll stay over until Sunday too. She explains that even though Mum's lawyer said Dad was dangerous, she could see no evidence of this, and that in her opinion Mum had told her children to lie about their Dad.*



*Mum has to tell the news to Zayne and Mia that they will still have to see their Dad. They don't understand why their mum and the Sheriff can't keep them safe. Zayne feels like they didn't believe what he wrote and really sad that they thought he lied. Mia feels like nobody even tried to listen to her.*



*Over the next few weeks, Zayne's teachers notice he is very quiet and not concentrating in class. He has stopped playing with his classmates, and gets very upset and worried by small things, especially on Mondays. The school calls mum to set up a meeting to discuss his wellbeing. Mia's nightmares start getting worse and she starts wetting the bed. Every Friday Mia has a sore tummy and has to miss school.*



*Mum takes Mia and Zayne to the doctor to talk about how they are feeling about everything that has happened, and about contact with their Dad. The doctor is worried about Zayne and Mia, and arranges for them to get support to talk about how they feel.*



*Mia and Zayne start meeting with a support worker, called Grace. They soon feel they can talk honestly about their feelings with Grace, and she helps them to understand that the things that have happened aren't their fault. Grace helps Zayne and Mia to talk to Mum about how they are feeling.*



*Mum is still worried about Zayne and Mia being safe and about the way contact with Dad is making them feel. She goes back to court to ask the Sheriff to change her decision. She wants to make sure that either the court finds a way to make sure any contact Dad has with Zayne and Mia is safe, or that it stops altogether. Mum's lawyer wants to give new information to the court from Zayne's school, Mia's doctor, and their support worker about the way contact is making Zayne and Mia feel.*



*This time with the help of their support worker Zayne and Mia write letters to the Sheriff about how they are really feeling.*



*How would you like the story to end?*