

## Interviewing Children

GAL/AMC Training Program  
Quinnipiac University School  
Of Law  
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## What Did We Learn About Children?

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## They Are Different

- How are they different from adults?
- How are they different from each other?
- How are children in divorce processes different from other children?

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### They Are the Same

- What do they have in common with us (adults)?
- How are they just alike the kids we know?
- How are kids in divorce processes just like all other kids?

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### DIY Interviewing Children

- Attitude
- Setting
- Tools

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### Attitude is King

- Know Thyself
- Know Basic Background of Family and Situation
- Know the Limits

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## Setting

- Why don't kids work in offices?
- Where do kids work?
- What is kids' work?
- How do kids work?

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## Tools

- "A good workman never blames his tools"
- Why do we use standardized instruments?
- What else is at our disposal?

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## Basic Children's Interview Toolbox

- Paper (big is better)
- Pencils, Crayons, Markers
- Uno, Checkers or Chess?
- Make your own neurodevelopmental assessment
- Develop your own standardized database

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0-2

(horizontal line)



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2

(vertical line)



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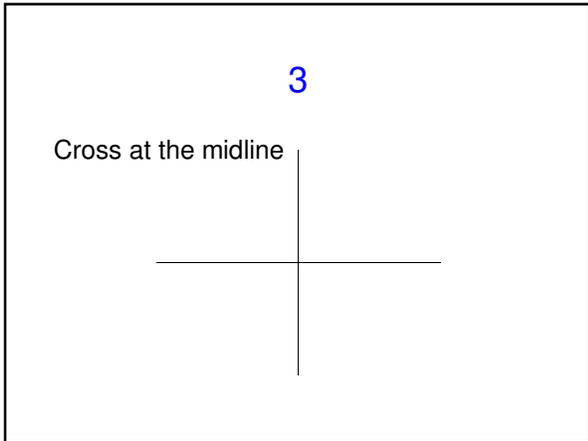
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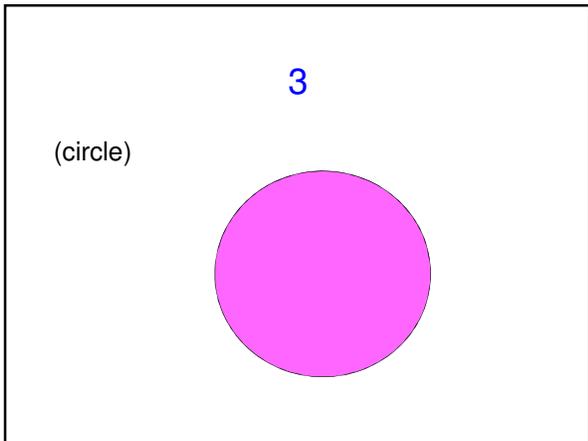
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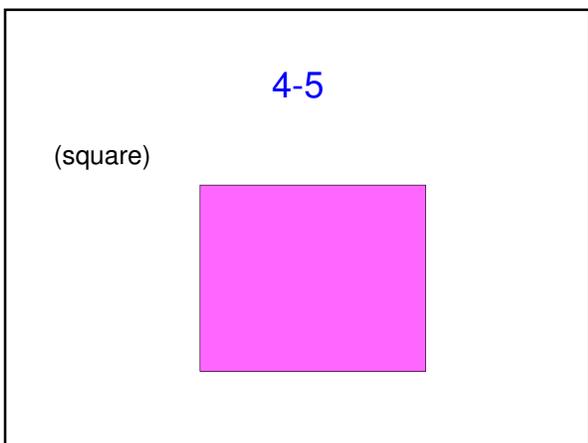
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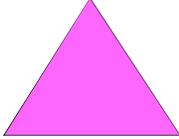
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6

(triangle)



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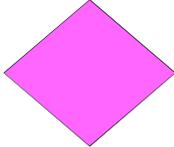
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7-

(diamond)



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Rapport is Queen

- Slow
- Repetitive
- Multi perspective
- Short is better than long
- Know what you know
- Know what you don't know

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## Be Prepared

- Parental Permission
- Children's Permission

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## Taking Notes - Listening



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## Take Notes?

- More than with adults, note-taking is a distraction to kids
- More than with adults, note-taking can be misunderstood by kids
- Explain what and why you are recording things if you choose to use audio or video recording

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### Keep Secrets?

- In order to understand keeping secrets, kids need to understand time and context
- Explain secret-keeping to different age children keeping their age in mind
- Don't make promises you can't keep

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### Ask Embarrassing Questions?

- Embarrassment too, is contextual
- Explain context in child-focused terms
- Acknowledge embarrassment (theirs and yours)

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### Take a Backseat

- Children are born followers
- Leadership in the interview process is important to relieve anxiety
- However; in understanding a child's life as they experience it, we take a backseat to their leadership, and encourage them to take us where we need to go. They often comply.

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**Personal Disclosure?**

- Disclosure has a purpose. This purpose is not to let the child know how cool we are. (Probably we're not that cool, especially in their eyes.)
- Disingenuity is much worse than not being cool (as long as they are going to think you're old and out-of-it, be genuinely old and out-of-it)

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**Types of Questions**

- Open-Ended (Best)
- General
- Focused
- Multiple choice
- Yes/No
- Leading (Worse)

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**Take them off the hook**

- Plausible deniability is not only the prerogative of politicians
- Own your conclusions. Let them own their statements
- Put their ideas in the larger context for them

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### Say Thank You

- Always be polite.
- Acknowledge how hard this is (for them)

Thank them for helping you in your attempts to do the best job you can

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### FINALLY ...

- In case you forgot
  - Do descriptions not diagnoses
  - Offer opinions not conclusions
  - Know what you don't know
    - Use experts when necessary
- Learn to ask good questions
- Know supports in the community

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