

A HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEERS:

SUPPORTING CHILDREN GRIEVING THE DYING AND DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

June 2015

Compiled by Dana Bingley

THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH GRIEF NETWORK

This project was funded by the Region of Peel



This handbook is intended for volunteers who have received formalized training in the field of children's grief and bereavement support. This handbook is to be considered a supplementary resource and in no way replaces formalized training. The information and activities included are intended to build upon a volunteer supporter's existing toolkit and may not be applicable or appropriate in all situations. Volunteers using this handbook should receive ongoing supervision by professionals at a reputable organization specializing in the socio-emotional support of children and their families. The wellbeing of children is of utmost importance – considering the vulnerability of the population, we cannot stress enough the importance of training and professional supervision.

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info@childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com

We welcome you to send your successes and activities to be considered for future editions.

ABOUT THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH GRIEF NETWORK

The Children and Youth Grief Network was formed in 2014 when several organizations came together to address a gap in supportive services for grieving children experiencing the dying and death of a loved one. The Network currently consists of five charitable organizations and a professional consultant. In November 2014, the Network received funding from the Region of Peel to complete a needs assessment and develop a shared resource for volunteers who work with grieving children.



www.hearthousehospice.com

www.facebook.com/Hearthousehospice

www.twitter.com/HeartHouseHosp

Heart House Hospice cares for people with terminal illnesses and their families who reside in Brampton and Mississauga. Services include counselling, in-home visits, complementary therapies, spiritual care, bereavement support, community education and volunteer training.



www.bethellhospice.org

www.twitter.com/BethellHospice

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Bethell Hospice provides support to individuals in their final stage of life and their families. Services include the Bethell House Resident Care Program as well as a variety of community-based programs - care coordination, in-home visiting, bereavement support and community education.



www.dlhospice.org/

www.twitter.com/dlhospice

www.facebook.com/pages/The-Dorothy-Ley-Hospice/123474981148199

The Dorothy Ley Hospice offers both residential and community based supportive services. Programs include care coordination, in-home visiting, spiritual care, integrative wellness services, bereavement support, community education and volunteer training.



www.grievingchildrenlighthouse.org

[www.facebook.com/Lighthouseprogramforgriev](https://www.facebook.com/Lighthouseprogramforgrievingchildren)
[ngchildren](https://www.facebook.com/Lighthouseprogramforgrievingchildren)

The Lighthouse Program for Grieving Children provides peer support groups for grieving children, teens and their families in the Halton and Peel area. The Lighthouse also offers consultation services, educational presentations and community training.



Centre for Grief & Healing

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel

www.bereavedfamilies.ca

[www.facebook.com/BereavedFamiliesOntarioPe](https://www.facebook.com/BereavedFamiliesOntarioPeelHalton)
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Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel provides peer support programs for children, youth and adults who have experienced the death of a loved one. Other services include creative expressions workshops, memorial events, educational seminars and volunteer training.



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Thanks to Right To Play for partnering in the development and review of the resource. The activities in this handbook have been organized by applying Right To Play's experiential learning methodology known as Reflect-Connect-Apply. Any reference to this model, including the games format, is credited to Right To Play.

RIGHT TO PLAY

Right To Play is a global organization that uses the transformative power of play – playing sports, playing games – to educate and empower children and youth to overcome the effects of poverty, conflict, and disease in disadvantaged communities. Through sports and games, Right To Play helps children build essential life skills and better futures, while driving social change in their communities with lasting impact. Founded in 2000 by four-time Olympic gold medalist and social entrepreneur Johann Olav Koss, Right to Play's programs are facilitated by more than 16,400 local volunteer coaches and more than 600 international staff.

At the core of every activity is Right to Play's Reflect-Connect-Apply approach, which encourages children to examine their experiences, relate those experiences to what they already know and apply that learning to their daily lives. This strategy helps children adopt and maintain lifelong healthy behaviours and attitudes.

Thank you Lysa Toye, Ceilidh Eaton Russell, Marianne Gocker and Anna Baas-Anderson for submitting activities for use in the handbook and for lending their expertise to the project.

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We are so very appreciative to have received permission from Liana Lowenstein, Eline Snel and The Dougy Centre to reproduce and/or adapt activities from their publications for use in the handbook.

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We have received permission to include two activities – Life and Death and Basketball: A Game About Life and Death – from her book, Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children (2006) in the handbook.

THE DOUGY CENTRE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

www.dougy.org

We have received permission from The Dougy Centre to adapt two activities – Step into the Circle (adapted as Crossing the Circle) and Emotions in My Body (adapted as Body Map) – as well as content regarding important group guidelines from the book, Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children and Teens (2012).

ELINE SNEL

www.elinesnel.com

Eline Snel established the International Academy for Mindful Teaching several years ago, to train professionals from education and (mental) healthcare on her 'Mindfulness Matters' method, a mindfulness method especially developed in schools, hospitals and mental health institutes for young children age 4 until the age of 19. She developed this method from practice. As a mindfulness trainer, she also gives the eight-week MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) course to groups of teachers in their own schools and to people with a personal interest or need in her Centre of Mindfulness in Holland. For children, adolescents and their parents she has written two books: *Sitting Still Like a Frog* (2012) and *Breathe Through This – Mindfulness for Parents and Teenagers* (2014). Currently, more than 200,000 copies of *Sitting Still Like a Frog* have been sold in 27 countries. Since 1980, Eline has been working as an independent therapist and trainer. From 1990, she has been developing meditation and awareness courses. As a Certified Mindfulness Trainer and Compassion Trainer, she has been training adults, children and adolescents for many years.

We have received permission from Eline Snel to reproduce the activity, My Personal Weather Report, from her book, Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) (2013).

The illustrations included in the handbook have been created by:

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ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to build your confidence as a volunteer supporting grieving children. As a supporter, you play a very important role in a child's life - the work you do will not only serve them in their grief, but will help them to cope with other challenges that they might face in their lives. The information and the tools provided in this handbook will expand your knowledge about children's grief and inform your approach. Grief is a highly individualized experience – and just as everyone's grief is unique, every child is unique in their level of understanding, emotional maturity, personal

preferences and self-expression. This handbook advocates for a child-centered approach through the inclusion of a variety of activities that can be adapted to meet the unique needs, interests, strengths and abilities of each child.

This handbook includes content that is intended to support you in your work with children **ages 6 – 12**. However, this is not to say that the information and activities cannot be readily applied to younger or older children. Use your discretion when introducing activities to children and make appropriate modifications where necessary.

THE HANDBOOK WAS DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR EFFORTS TO...

Offer psychoeducational support to caregivers about children's grief reactions and their unique needs. This can be done by providing educational materials or through gentle and non-threatening conversations. Considering that a child's grief occurs within a family system, support should be provided for the whole family.

Facilitate communication between caregivers and their children by supporting caregivers through difficult conversations and suggesting activities that the whole family can do together. This can help a child to feel connected with their family unit, which can reduce feelings of isolation.

Provide children with individual attention. Considering that caregivers are often unable to recognize or attend to their child's needs due to caretaking duties and the presence of their own grief, children can really benefit from the special attention that comes with one on one support.

Create and maintain a safe and non-judgmental space in which children have the opportunity to ask questions (sometimes over and over again), learn about illness and death, and express their emotions.

Provide socio-emotional support to grieving children through the unconditional validation and normalization of their feelings, thoughts and experiences.

Build emotional literacy by naming feelings and helping kids to find ways to self-soothe and cope with difficult emotions in a safe and productive manner.

Facilitate emotional expression (verbal and non-verbal) through the provision of creative outlets (arts and crafts, physical activity, interactive games, creative writing, etc.) that suit the child's unique personality, abilities and interests.

Provide opportunities for the child to be involved in care in a way that is meaningful and respects the child's choices (visiting with the person who is ill, making/creating something special, etc.).

Support children as they find ways to remain connected to the person who died.

FOREWORD

Grief, our response to a death or an impending death, is one of the most painful and most authentic of human experiences. It is often an expression of our love for the person who is dying or has died. Yet, we live in a “quick fix” society that possesses little tolerance for prolonged emotional processes and this has contributed to a sense of alienation from this most natural and healing of experiences. Making space to care for our grief often requires guidance and support.

Living in a culture no longer familiar with the processes of dying and grief, despite their universal nature, presents even additional challenges when it comes to supporting the grief of our communities' youngest members. Although there is a strong body of literature encouraging an open, honest, and inclusive approach to supporting grieving children, parents are often exposed to well-intended but misguided advice on “what is best for the children.”

Supporting and caring for the grief of children requires us to rely on more than intuition. It calls on us to reframe our instinctual desire to protect children from the depths of their emotional pain – preparation and support ultimately being the best protection. It asks of us to bear witness to their heartbreak. And it amazes us when moments later they are running around, laughing and playing. Children possess a natural ability to balance deep sorrow and deep joy in a way that few adults can accomplish.

There are limitations to the common idiom “children are resilient”. While they possess the potential to be resilient, rarely is it actualized in a vacuum. They benefit from having caring, well-informed adults to help them understand dying, death and grief and to create safe places where they can express their thoughts and feelings. They also benefit from having their information needs met (“how did she die?”). When those needs can't be met (“does everything in life happen for a reason?”), they benefit from our honesty regarding the limitations of what we can know as human beings. Wondering with us about life's mysteries is an opportunity welcomed by most children.

The activities in this handbook have been carefully curated based on the suggestions of individuals with extensive experience in the field of grief and bereavement. Some focus on rapport-building, while others help facilitate understanding or foster emotional literacy. The importance of maintaining a connection to the person who died is not overlooked - some of the activities have roots in ancient rituals used to promote just this.

I am deeply grateful to Dana Bingley for the energy and expertise she put into compiling this resource and to everyone using this handbook for your commitment and dedication to providing grieving children with tools that can help them thrive in life. The death of a loved one is a heartbreaking event in the life of a child. Yet the story around the death has the potential to influence a child's life as much as the death itself. Through your willingness to bear witness, your wisdom and support, you are shaping these children's stories for the better.

With gratitude,

Andrea Warnick, RN, MA

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SECTION 1: SUPPORTING GRIEVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES

GRIEF GLOSSARY

Grief is the response to loss – the thoughts and emotions that a person experiences as a result of the loss of someone or something of value. Grief is a natural reaction and is unique for every person and for every loss. There is no timeline for grief, and there is no predictable 'order.' Grief affects many aspects of a person's life: social, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual and financial.

Mourning is the expression of grief. Whereas grief describes the internal response to loss, the term mourning is used to describe the act of outwardly experiencing and expressing one's grief - crying, praying, sharing memories, engaging in rituals, etc. Caregivers and trusted adults can help children mourn by providing them with opportunities to talk about and creatively express their feelings.

Bereavement is the state of having suffered the loss of a loved one by death.

Anticipatory Grief is a term used to describe the grieving process that occurs in the context of a life limiting illness *before* death has occurred. The term *anticipatory* grief is very misleading, as in its literal sense it suggests that the grief experience is centered on a loss (the death) that has not yet occurred. However, this is but one aspect of anticipatory grief. There are many losses that occur within the family unit (and beyond) when a loved one is dying (Ex: loss of former relationship with the person who is ill, loss of family structure, loss of previous lifestyle, loss of plans for the future, etc.). All grief is valid, whether it relates to losses that have occurred as a result of the illness or losses that are yet to come.

Disenfranchised Grief is a term coined by Kenneth Doka that refers to "a loss that is not socially sanctioned, openly acknowledged, or publicly mourned" (Doka, 2011). In his book, *Disenfranchised Grief: New Directions, Challenges and Strategies for Practice* (2002), Doka identified 5 contexts in which disenfranchisement may occur: the *griever* is not recognized (Ex: a young child; an individual with an intellectual disability), the *loss* is not recognized (Ex: miscarriage; elective abortion), the *relationship* is not recognized (Ex: death of a grandparent; death of a same sex partner), the death is *stigmatized* (Ex: overdose; suicide), the *style of grieving violates social norms* (Ex: demonstrative grief; rigid stoicism). Children's grief is largely disenfranchised – young children may not be recognized as grievers due to assumptions that they are unable to understand death and do not have the capacity to grieve. To avoid becoming *forgotten mourners*, children's grief must be recognized and their emotions validated.

Loss describes the state of having lost or the process of losing someone or something meaningful.

Attachment refers to an emotional bond between people. People can also have emotional attachments to meaningful items (Ex: favourite toy, meaningful song, gift from their loved one).

Resilience is the ability to cope with stress, hardship and change. We can help to build resilience in grieving children by providing them with outlets for expression and the skills to safely cope with intense emotions for use throughout their grief journey as well as in other stressful situations that they may encounter in their lives.

**Adapted from *Group Facilitation Skills For Bereavement Support Volunteers* (2014)
by Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel.**

WHEN A LOVED ONE IS DYING: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN'S GRIEF

#1 THE CHILDREN ARE TOO YOUNG TO BE INVOLVED OR INFORMED.

Many parents avoid talking to children about the illness and impending death, often due to a desire to protect the child from the pain of grief and misconceptions about the child's ability to understand dying and death. Parents may also misinterpret a child's grief reactions and come to the conclusion that the child does not know what is going on. However, children do in fact pick up on what is happening around them. Without opportunities to ask questions, talk about death and share their feelings, children are left alone with their thoughts and fears which can leave them feeling helpless and isolated from the family.

Children can also benefit from their involvement in caretaking. Children can participate in '*caretaking by creating*,' which might include the child making something for or with the person who is dying (Eaton Russell, 2007). This type of involvement honours the child's desire to help out and provides them with opportunities to engage with the person who is dying in a meaningful way. When children create things with or for their loved one (Ex: memory box, photo album, video diary, etc.) it can provide them with something special that helps to facilitate an ongoing connection after the death occurs.

#2 THE KIDS ARE FINE, CHILDREN ARE RESILIENT.

Yes, some children are very resilient and safely cope with their grief with very little outside help; however, not every child has the innate ability to cope with difficult situations and naturally 'bounce back' from the loss. Even the most resilient children experience hardship and distress. Resilience is an important element of personal well-being, and is dependent on a number of characteristics: personal, familial and environmental (Barankin & Khanlou, 2007). Grieving children can benefit from trusting relationships, socio-emotional support as well as opportunities to build self-esteem and learn new skills that promote healthy coping and communication.

#3 SUPPORT SHOULD COME FROM THE CHILD'S PRIMARY CAREGIVERS, NOT OUTSIDE INTERVENTIONS.

A number of changes can occur when a family member is dying – changes in family structure, role assignments, and day-to-day life. Many children experience major disruption in their daily routine. Their regular eating and bed times might be affected, they may not receive the same level of assistance with their homework, they might be picked up from school and cared for by relatives or close family friends. During a time where a child needs additional support, the adults in their lives may be largely absent as they take on new roles, focus on caretaking responsibilities and cope with their own emotional distress (Saldinger et al. 1999; Karns 2002). Therese Rando very fittingly describes the challenges that parents face as a '*tug-of-war*', as they attempt to balance the demands of the illness and the needs of well family members (1995). Although parents are ideally the best source of support for their children, outside support may be necessary during such difficult times. Qualified volunteer supporters can provide a child with individual support and attention that is sensitive of and tailored to their unique needs.

#4 KNOWING SOMEONE IS GOING TO DIE PROVIDES AN ADVANTAGE (AS COMPARED TO A SUDDEN DEATH) BY GIVING FAMILIES A CHANCE TO ACCEPT THE REALITY OF DEATH AND SAY GOODBYE, TO FEEL HELPFUL BY CARING FOR THE DYING PERSON AND TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE.

In theory, it is easy to assume that the forewarning of an anticipated death provides a family with the chance to prepare mentally, emotionally, and practically for what is to come, but in reality the stress of the illness and the dying process can leave a family without the time, resources and support to do these things (Saldinger et al. 2004). Children are especially at risk for negative outcomes due to their lack of resources, their developmentally unique understandings of death, and the tendency for parents to leave children uninformed and uninvolved (Saldinger et al. 1999). Anticipatory grief does not mitigate or minimize one's grief experiences after the death occurs (Karns, 2002). Supportive interventions that facilitate anticipatory grief can promote healthy mourning and increase an individual's capacity to cope with their grief when their loved one dies (Rando, 1995). The most effective interventions provide support during end of life and continue after the death has occurred (Kuhne et al., 2012).

#5 KIDS SHOULDN'T BE AT THE BEDSIDE OF THE DYING.

Excerpt from *Don't Use the 'D' Word: Exploring Myths About Children and Death* (2013) by Andrea Warnick. Published by the Canadian Virtual Hospice (www.virtualhospice.ca).

Historically, children have always been at the bedside of the dying, and in many parts of the world, they still are. Yet, in the West, children often are not involved in the final stages of a family member's life. One reason for this is the reluctance of many adults and health care professionals to expose children to the process of dying, often out of a concern for their well-being. Ironically, especially in recent years, we have condoned the increase in children's exposure, through various forms of media, to violent, sudden death.

Excluding children from the bedside of a dying friend or family member can have unintended effects. Children are deprived of the opportunity to share their loved one's final days and to say goodbye. Many children will imagine scenes that are much worse than the reality of seeing the dying friend or family member. By preparing them for what to expect, we give children the chance to witness the dying process first hand, in the presence of supportive adults. This experience can go a long way toward helping them understand what is happening and will support them in their grieving process for years to come.

CHILDREN'S GRIEF

Many scholars have used developmental stages theory as a means to organize information about children's grief reactions in an attempt to understand their needs. The issue with developmental stages theory is that generalized categories and descriptions of children's grief reactions and understanding of death create assumptions that chronological age and cognitive development align. It must be stressed that emotional maturity and cognitive ability varies from child to child and cannot be determined simply by their age. Children develop at different rates and are not expected to fit neatly into the age based stages of development. Instead of including descriptions or a table charting children's grief reactions and needs based on developmental stages, key themes have been identified on the following pages to guide you in your work.

CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH

There are many factors that influence a child's understanding of death – their previous experiences with and learnings about death, their individual cognitive ability as well as their sense of self (Wolfelt, 2014). While every child's understanding of death is different, a few general points may provide insight into some of the things you might encounter in your work with grieving children:

- The concept of 'forever' can be very difficult for young children. They may not understand the permanence of death and may see death as reversible or temporary.
- Young children often engage in magical thinking, where they may believe that they caused the illness or the death (perhaps due to something they said, thought or did) or that they can 'think' away the illness with positive thoughts.
- A young child's conception of death often evolves from a very literal grasp of death and dying (relating to the physical body) to a more abstract understanding (relating to spirituality). For this reason, young children may struggle with the concept of the soul or heaven. Older children often possess a better grasp of these abstract ideas and begin to explore the question, "*What happens to a person when they die?*" from a more spiritual perspective.
- As children develop intellectually and gain more life experience they move towards a more realistic understanding of death and are better able to grasp the idea that death is permanent and that all living things eventually die.
- Young children are often very egocentric. It can be hard for a child to think beyond their own feelings and how the events in their life affect others. With time, teachings and experience, children begin to develop a sense of empathy and the capacity to think of how the dying/death has and continues to affect the other people in their lives.
- Children may test reality by asking the same question about dying or death over and over again, often double and triple checking that the answer is still the same. By hearing the same clear and honest response again and again, it can help them to understand the permanence of death.

COMMON GRIEF REACTIONS

The word 'grief' is often equated with sadness or sorrow. While the dying or death of someone special can certainly make a child feel very sad, understand that grieving children may experience a wide range of emotions and behavioural reactions that are individual to them.

Fear & Anxiety	Anxious when separated from caregiver(s)/sibling(s); Worry that they/other loved ones will become ill and die too; Attempt to control the people and/or events in their life; Worry about the family's financial situation, etc.
Anger	Angry at the person for being sick; Angry with healthy parent(s) for being too busy to spend time with them; Angry that they have to help with caregiving or take on a new role in the family; Angry with doctors for not trying hard enough; Angry at the person for dying; General sense of anger at the world, etc.
Guilt	Feel bad for things they said/did; Blame themselves for causing the illness/death; Feel guilty for being angry at or jealous of the person who is ill; Feel guilty when having fun, etc.
Jealousy	Jealous of other kids who still have a mom/dad/sibling/etc.; Jealous of all the attention the dying person is getting, etc.
Shame	Embarrassed for being different than their peers; Embarrassed to be seen with the person who is ill, etc.
Shock	Feel numb/frozen; Quiet and disconnected; Play as if nothing happened, etc.
Denial	Tell themselves that it cannot be true; Block out the situation by continuing as normal, etc.
Avoidance	Avoid talking or hearing about the person who is dying/has died; Avoid doing activities or going to certain places because they are a painful reminder, etc.
Withdrawal	Noticeably quieter and keep to themselves; Doesn't want to go to school, be with peers or play as usual; Spend more time alone in their room, etc.
Hyperactivity	Unable to control their energy; More energetic than usual, etc.
Concentration	Difficulty concentrating, which could result in decline in academic performance; Appear to be day dreaming ('off in their own little world'), etc.
Personal Care	Changes in eating and sleeping habits; Difficulty falling and staying asleep; More nightmares; Changes in appearance and personal hygiene, etc.
Regression	Sleep with caregiver(s) or with a light on; Thumb sucking, bed wetting, baby talk, etc.
Physical Symptoms	May complain of physical symptoms that mirror those of the person who is dying/has died; Experience more headaches and stomach-aches; Chronic conditions may be aggravated due to stress, etc.

COMMON WORRIES

The dying and death of a loved one can cause a child to worry about a lot of different things. Julie Stokes identified three questions that children may concern themselves with, "Did I cause it?", "Can I catch it?" and "Who will look after me?" (1994). While research by Thompson and Payne (2000) confirms children's concerns with the cause of an illness and whether it can be contracted or not, it also reveals questions and concerns surrounding curability and treatment.

Cause: As mentioned, children (especially younger children), engage in magical thinking – often linking unrelated events to the illness or death. For example, a child might think that their sibling died because they wished that they were dead in a fit of anger or that their parent got cancer as punishment for the child's bad behaviour. Gently reassure the child that they did not cause the illness or the death.

Catch: Reassure the child that they cannot catch the illness (granted that it is not contagious). You can do this by talking about what may have caused the illness, and if the cause is unknown, explaining that sometimes we don't know what causes a disease and doctors are doing their best to figure these things out.

Care: Particularly when a primary caregiver is ill or has died a child might wonder, "Who will take care of me?" Children who have experienced dying and death should never be told that their surviving parent or other loved ones will *always* be there for them. Instead, the child should be reassured that there are adults in their lives who will be there to care for them no matter what happens.

Cure: When there is a shift from curative treatments to comfort care, help children to understand the difference between treatments aimed at curing or managing the disease and medication that is used to manage pain and other symptoms of the disease. Explain that medicine used to manage the symptoms of the disease will not help their loved one to get better, but will make sure that their loved one feels comfortable and is not in any pain.

DOSES OF GRIEF

Unlike adults, children have a difficult time sitting with intense emotions for long periods of time. To protect themselves, children dose themselves with grief, separating moments of grief with play time. Children are able to jump from grief to enjoyment, quickly transitioning from one emotional extreme to the next. Adults might perceive this behaviour as disrespectful or problematic; however, the truth of the matter is that this type of behaviour is completely normal and healthy.

Helen Mackinnon (2014) suggests that this behaviour can be viewed as an illustration of the Dual Process Model. The Dual Process Model, developed by Stroebe and Schut in 1999, describes how individuals oscillate between confronting and distancing themselves from their grief as a means to cope with loss (Stroebe & Schut, 2010).

DEATH PLAY

Children may re-enact scenarios relating to the dying or death by playing doctor, recreating the funeral with dolls, burying toys in the ground, talking about their experiences through puppets, etc. Children may also explore their feelings and experiences by drawing or writing about the illness, the death or the dying/dead person. Through play, children can find ways to express themselves and work through their ideas and understanding of death.

"Play is serious business for children and the fundamental way for them to work on their feelings... We need to support this kind of play without interfering with it. Often our most appropriate role is that of a quiet observer, nearby and available for conversation if the play leads naturally to talk" (Sharapan, 2005, P.7).

REGRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS

The death of a loved one can significantly shake a child's sense of security. Some children revert back to behaviours that they have previously outgrown in an attempt to re-establish feelings of safety. A child who has experienced an emotional trauma might start sucking their thumb again, wet the bed, seek comfort in an old *blankie*, ask to sleep with the light on, cling to their caregivers, etc. No matter how inappropriate you feel the behaviour is for the child's age, it is imperative that you refrain from shaming the child for engaging in harmless regressive behaviours. Your approach should be to support them as they learn about healthy coping strategies and introduce them to new self-soothing experiences.

NEW ROLES & ROLE REVERSALS

When a family member dies, children may take on new and sometimes very adult roles. New roles, such as additional chores or helping to prepare dinner, may be taken on out of need. Children may also experience parentification – a role reversal where a child takes on tasks that would usually be the responsibility of an adult caregiver. A child may feel emotionally responsible for surviving family members, take on an active role in the care of younger siblings and worry about finances. This type of behaviour is sometimes prompted by well-meaning adults who say things like, "You are the man/woman of the house now," or "Now it is your job to take care of your mother/father/siblings." These words can put a lot of pressure on a child who is already experiencing many changes in their life. Give grieving children permission to have fun and reassure them that there are adults in their lives who will take care of them and help out the family. Reinforce that while they may have more responsibilities around their home, they are still children and it is not their job to replace the person who has died.

ACTING OUT

Even as adults, it can be incredibly difficult to verbalize our thoughts and emotions. Now, take a moment to think about how frustrating that must be for a child. A child might not have the language or emotional literacy to be able to clearly articulate how they are feeling or what they are thinking. Even if they do have the words, many children are reluctant to share them because they are worried they will upset a family member or fearful of how their questions, thoughts and feelings might be received.

Without the words to name their feelings, the tools to self-regulate and/or a lack of security in knowing that there is someone they can talk to about these things, it is no wonder that children often express their grief by acting out! Depending on the child, 'acting out' might look different. A child might have emotional outbursts, which could present as crying, biting, yelling, hitting or throwing, and may result in verbal or physical altercations with others. Children might test the boundaries and challenge the authority figures in their lives by talking back or refusing to do chores/schoolwork. Attention seeking behaviours indicate that the child has needs that are not being met. During a stressful time in a child's life where much of the family's energy and attention goes towards the person who is dying, attention seeking behaviours often indicate a need for individual support. It is important for the adults in a child's life (guardians, teachers, coaches, peer's parents, extended family members, etc.) to be notified and educated about children's grief to better understand changes in behaviour and be there to support the child.

RE-GRIEVING

As children continue to develop, it is normal for them to revisit questions, ideas and beliefs about dying and death in an effort to understand what has happened and search for meaning. Special occasions and milestone events where the absence of the deceased is especially noted (birthdays, holidays, graduation, puberty, etc.) can cause a child to re-examine their understanding of the death and bring intense feelings back to the surface. What is important to remember is that grief is a lifelong process. It is completely natural and healthy for a child to re-grieve the loss again and again as their understanding of death evolves and they find new ways to express themselves.

RIGHTS OF GRIEVING CHILDREN & THEIR FAMILIES

1. **Every child has the right to physical and emotional safety.** Every child has the right to be protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation. Under Ontario's Child and Family Services Act, anyone who suspects that a child is or may be suffering from abuse, neglect and/or exploitation must personally report their concerns to the Children's Aid Society. To learn more about your duty to report and the signs of abuse and neglect visit:
www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/topics/childrensaids/Reportingchildabuseandneglect.pdf
2. **Every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.** Children and their families have the right to their own unique beliefs, rituals and approaches to grief and mourning. Supporters value diversity in all of its forms and will demonstrate unconditional compassion and positive regard for children and their families at all times.
3. **Every child has a voice, and the right to have their voice be heard and respected.** Supporters will respect each child's thoughts, questions and opinions. Each child has the right to share their thoughts, emotions and experiences on their own terms and at their own pace. Every child has the right to opt out of an activity and/or discussion, and for their decision to do so to be respected. Supporters will provide children with opportunities to express themselves and safely cope with difficult emotions in ways that honour their unique abilities and interests.
4. **Every child has the right to their emotions.** Each child is the expert of their own grief and has the right to feel what ever it is they are feeling at any particular moment.
5. **Children and their families have the right to access information about dying, death and grief.**
6. **Every child has the right to privacy.** Each child has the right for the information and experiences that they share with their supporter(s) to remain confidential. Children and their families have the right to be informed of the limitations to confidentiality and the process that would take place should a supporter be required to file a report.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ITS LIMITATIONS

Every child has the right for the information shared in support sessions to remain private. In order to honour a child's privacy while keeping guardians abreast, provide guardians with feedback and observations rather than specific details of what the child said or did in the session. It is important that children and their guardians understand that the information shared in support sessions will remain confidential except in the following circumstances:

- The child discloses or the supporter suspects that the child or another child residing in the home (under the age of 16) is suffering from abuse, neglect and/or exploitation
- The child discloses or the supporter suspects that the child has or may seriously harm themselves, another person or property
- The organization is subpoenaed by a court of law

ALWAYS ADHERE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CONFIDENTIALITY AND REPORTING POLICIES.

THE TOP TEN: HOW TO BE HELPFUL, NOT HARMFUL

1. SAFETY IS YOUR TOP PRIORITY

Creating and maintaining physical, socio-emotional, spiritual and cultural safety is your most important role. Always ensure that:

- The physical environment is safe and free of hazards
- The activities and materials are age appropriate
- You adhere to your organization's policies (confidentiality, in-home visits, reporting, etc.)
- You establish and uphold boundaries that promote healthy relationships
- You report to your supervisor when you have a concern about a child or a family member
- You approach every family with the same level of compassionate care
- You take the time to get to know the children and help them to get to know you
- You build relationships that are founded on empathy, authenticity, respect and acceptance

SETTING BOUNDARIES

It is important to set boundaries that serve to create structure, clarify expectations and empower those you work with. Below is a short list of boundaries to consider:

- Start and end support sessions on time
- Review your organization's confidentiality policy with the family
- Ensure that an adult is always present in the home during in-home support sessions
- Refrain from giving out your personal contact information
- Manage 'friend requests' and privacy settings on your personal social media accounts
- Do not drive those you support in your car (unless clearly defined as part of your role)
- Do not accept personal gifts from or give gifts to the families you work with
- Avoid initiating touch

It can be difficult to witness a child's pain and suffering, and our first instinct is often to provide comfort through touch. Sometimes what you feel is an appropriate and comforting touch may actually be culturally unacceptable or personally disliked by the child. You must also consider that any form of touch could potentially re-traumatize a child who has been physically or sexually victimized, no matter how harmless the gesture. There are many ways that you can comfort a child without touch by validating their thoughts and feelings with a warm and gentle voice, providing them with a pillow or stuffed toy to hug and teaching them self-soothing behaviours. As a cardinal rule, you should always practice child-lead touch, meaning you should avoid initiating. If you do engage in comforting touch (Ex: put a hand on their shoulder, gently pat their back, give a 'side hug') ALWAYS ask the child's permission first.

ALWAYS ADHERE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S POLICIES.

Keep reading – the following points all ultimately relate back to safety!

2. INVOLVE THE FAMILY

Caregivers know their child best and will likely be the child's primary source of support when you leave, so it is important to involve the family. Your relationship with the family members, especially primary caregivers, is very important. Take the time to get to know the family and ask questions in order to learn about their values, beliefs and rituals around health, dying and death. Approach them with empathy, respect and warmth and ask them how much the child knows about the illness/death. If the caregivers do not want the child to know certain information take the time to listen to their concerns and fears. Provide them with information (verbal and written material) about children's grief, their unique needs and the benefits of open and honest communication about dying and death. Most parents simply do not know how to explain the illness and death to their children (Sutter & Reid, 2012), and would benefit from support in opening a dialogue with them about the illness, treatment, death and dying (Lane & Mason, 2014). Keep caregivers well-informed, always adhering to your organization's confidentiality policy. If it is okay with the child, invite the family to participate in activities and discussions.

3. USE A CHILD-CENTERED APPROACH

Honour every child as the expert of their own grief. By doing away with your own personal agenda and allowing the child to take the lead you can better understand what their needs are and how best you can support them. Really listen to what a child has to say and respect their own self-knowledge - you can learn so much from a child if you give them a chance to teach you what they know, think, feel, and need. Never force a discussion or participation in an activity, instead allow the child to set the pace. Involve the child in choices by asking them what they want to talk about, what activity they prefer to do and what they think or need. Allow the child to opt out of a discussion or an activity to self-soothe and self-regulate. Observe the child's reactions to the things that you say, paying close attention to their behaviours – if you see a child becoming visibly uncomfortable check in with them to see how they are doing. What is important is that you give the child the space to learn, express themselves, and grow in their own way. Take a strengths-based approach when working with grieving children to help build self-esteem. You can do this by celebrating their strengths and naming the things that they are doing well. Acknowledge the healthy coping strategies they are already using and encourage them to safely express their grief in ways that work best for them.

4. NORMALIZE QUESTIONS, THOUGHTS & EMOTIONS

Let children know that they can ask ANY question they have about illness, death, and grief and encourage caregivers to do the same. Accept, honour and validate all of the questions, thoughts and emotions that you encounter in your work with grieving children and their families. Children's questions can provide valuable insight into their current understanding of death, their unique needs and how best you can help them. By responding to their questions with honesty, warmth and non-judgment, you can help to create a safe space for the child to explore and express challenging thoughts and emotions. Remember, it is okay to say, "I don't know," when a child asks you a question that you cannot answer. Let them know that all of their thoughts and feelings matter and are important to you, stressing that it is okay to feel how ever it is they are feeling. You should always emphasize that while there are no 'bad' or 'taboo' emotions, not all behaviours are safe and healthy. Help children to understand that everyone is responsible for their own behaviours and that there are a variety of ways that they can safely express difficult feelings without hurting themselves, other people or damaging property.

"Placing restrictions or discounting child's questions will tend to stop children asking them. Our goal is to create an environment where all questions are welcomed, accepted and responded to openly and without judgment" (Goldman, 2009, P.8).

5. DEVELOP GUIDELINES

Whether you are working one-on-one with a child or in the group setting, it is important to set boundaries so that children know what is expected of them and also, what to expect. Create 'Comfort Guidelines' by talking about confidentiality, what it means to be respectful of others and what behaviours will and will not be tolerated in the space. You should also have a discussion about consequences so each child is aware of what will happen if they behave inappropriately. These guidelines will help to create a sense of safety and reliability (see P. 28 and P. 30 for more information on 'Comfort Guidelines').

6. PRACTICE MINDFUL COMMUNICATION

Your interactions with children and their caregivers should be characterized by warmth and empathy. Take the time to think a thought or question through before saying it aloud. Be aware of the tone of your voice and the inflection of your words – you want your words to convey compassion, never judgment. In addition to words, you must also be mindful of your body language, always ensuring the two align. Maintain appropriate eye contact, keep your arms and legs uncrossed and refrain from fidgeting too much. Children can pick up on anxious energy and it may even make the child feel anxious themselves. Sometimes when people are listening intently the concentration on their face can be misread as a scowl. You can work on your facial expressions by practicing your listening face in the mirror - your goal is to appear caring and relaxed.

7. REDEFINE SUCCESS

Let's paint a picture. You have a great activity and related discussion prepared for a support session and are so excited to see it unfold. When you introduce the activity, the child wants nothing to do with any of it! Do not take this as a failure. Children appreciate the opportunity to make their own choices and feel respected when those choices are honoured. The session may not go as planned, but that is okay as long as you adhere to the sessional format and maintain the boundaries. Also, not every conversation or activity has to be steeped in dying, death and grief! It is okay to take a break from the tough stuff and just play – this lets the child know that it is okay to smile, be happy and have fun. Get to know the child outside of their grief experience – what hobbies do they have? Who are their friends? Redefine what success means to you. Success is not defined by your ability to adhere strictly to the curriculum and tick every activity off of your to do list as the weeks go by; rather, it is about creating a safe environment and making a meaningful connection. Security and trust form the foundation of the helping relationship – it is from there that children can truly begin to express their emotions and practice new skills.

8. CONSIDER YOUR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Loss is a part of life and your grief is valid. Contemplate your own personal experiences with grief and loss. If you have experienced the death of a loved one, consider where you are in your own grief journey. Working with grieving individuals can be a trigger for your own grief, and while we honour authenticity and see the value in modeling the healthy expression of emotion, you must be able to hold the space for the child as they navigate their grief. A fine balance is required in order to demonstrate genuine empathy while keeping the focus on the needs of the children at all times.

9. APPROPRIATE SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-disclosure can serve as a powerful tool when used appropriately. The authentic sharing of your experiences and emotions can model and help to normalize grief and mourning. Hearing other people's stories emphasizes that everyone's grief is unique, but also highlights commonalities, which can make children feel less alone in their grief. If you do share your story, keep it brief, avoid providing too many details and focus on emotions rather than just the facts. Self-disclosure should never take the focus away from the child or the group and should only be used to serve a specific purpose:

- To illustrate a concept
- To foster trust
- To connect with the group/child
- To normalize emotions
- To encourage communication
- Demonstrate hope for the future

**Before you share W.A.I.T,
and ask yourself, “Why Am I Talking?”**

10. RESPECT YOUR COMMITMENT

Loss can have a significant impact on a child's sense of security. Children who are coping with the dying or death of a loved one have already experienced major changes in their lives; therefore, it is imperative that you do your best to be consistent in your supportive efforts. Honour the commitment you make by attending scheduled support sessions and being prepared and fully present during your time with the children. Be mindful when scheduling support sessions – take commute time and road conditions into consideration. In the event that a sessions goes over the allotted time, you do not want to be rushing to get to your next scheduled appointment. Your full involvement is important for building rapport and establishing safety; however, be sure to maintain your boundaries as a supporter as over-involvement can create unrealistic expectations and dependencies from the child and their family (Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel, 2009).

A SUPPORTER SHOULD...

BE PREPARED

If you are unprepared, children will know! Unpreparedness can cause anxiety, which can make the children you are working with feel anxious and jeopardize the safety of the space. You want to be sure that you have all of the materials you will need before going into a support session. Review the activity guide a number of times until you feel comfortable with the steps. Do the activity at least once before introducing it to a child. The more familiar you are with an activity, the easier it is to make modifications to best meet the unique needs of each child.

BE FLEXIBLE

Although you will enter each session with a theme or an activity in mind, you must be ready to discard your plans in order to respond to the needs, mood, interests and abilities of the child or group. Sometimes the activities that you have planned for a session don't always go over so well – and that's okay! This can happen for a number of reasons, perhaps the child does not like working with the materials, isn't in the mood to have that particular discussion or maybe the activity asks the child to address something that they just are not ready for yet. For moments like this, be prepared with unstructured activities or games. Your toolbox should include various creative supplies that allow for non-directive play.

BE CHILD-LIKE

Get down on the child's level. This might mean conducting your sessions on the floor while sitting on big comfy cushions. Be casual – in your appearance and your gestures. If you go into a session wearing professional attire with rigid body language you may intimidate the child, making it difficult to make an authentic connection. Familiarize yourself with the latest trends and expressions – being in the know can help you to better connect with the children you are working with. Be silly when it is appropriate as this shows the child that support sessions don't always have to focus on the tough stuff and that it's okay to have fun. Your energy matters! How you introduce a new activity can influence how the child is going to approach it. Demonstrate an appropriate level of excitement when introducing an activity to a child. It is also best if you engage in the activity as well because by doing so, you are giving the child permission to do an activity even if they think it is silly or childish. When working one-on-one, do the activity side by side rather than across from one another.

BE PATIENT

Some children may trust you easily and may feel confident and comfortable enough to express themselves verbally. Others, may be reluctant to share their thoughts and emotions. A number of factors influence a child's ability and willingness to express themselves verbally: cultural background, familial upbringing, developmental level, self-esteem, sense of security, etc. Remember that every child is different and you must meet them where they are at. Do not push the child to share if they refuse or are uncomfortable doing so; rather, be patient and make yourself available if they do want to talk. On the flip side, children are curious and you may find that they ask the same questions again and again. As previously mentioned, grieving children may ask questions repeatedly in an effort to make sense of dying and death and may need to hear the answer multiple times. Once again, this calls for patience and tact.

BE CONSISTENT

Grieving children benefit from consistency. The changes that occur and feelings that come up due to the dying or death of a loved one can cause chaos in a child's life. You can help to create a sense of security by letting children know what to expect in a support session and what is expected of them. To maintain consistency of events, follow a similar structure for each support session and always do your best to start and finish each session on time. Boundaries are also important. By setting appropriate limits and addressing negative behaviours in a calm and non-judgmental manner, you demonstrate to the child that this is a safe place to make and learn from mistakes and that you care no matter what.

BE SILENT & LISTEN

Silence may cause you great anxiety and discomfort, but sitting in silence is one of the most important tasks of a supporter. Try not to give into those uncomfortable feelings and resist the need to fill the space with words. When you allow for silence, you give the child the opportunity to process their thoughts and find the language (verbal or non-verbal) to express themselves. While some children respond well when prompted by questions and actively engage in discussion during an activity, others might prefer to sit in silence. Never push a child to talk; instead, give the child space, remain available and provide them with many opportunities to share if or when they feel ready. **LISTEN SPELLS SILENT** – when a child is ready to share, be silent and listen without judgement! Award your full attention to the child, and when they are finished speaking, summarize what you think you heard and have the child clarify in order to promote greater understanding. Empathic listening validates the child's emotions and sends the message that what they have to say is important. Empathy is at the core of the supportive relationship as it promotes safety, making children more likely to explore and express their emotions. Remember that you can listen not only with your ears but also your eyes by keeping a watchful eye on their reactions and behaviours.

BE A ROLE MODEL

Children take cues from their environment - they learn how to behave from those around them. You can normalize mourning by serving as a role model for storytelling and the expression of emotion. Use 'I statements' to talk about your own feelings, when appropriate, in order to explain a concept and normalize the child's experiences. It is important that you believe in the information that you teach the child and that you practice what you preach by demonstrating self-regulation, participating in the activities and being your authentic self.

BE PRESENT

Grieving children need attention, which is why it is so important for you to be present during your time with them. Before you go into a session, it might be helpful to do a mindfulness meditation to bring you in to the present moment so you can focus all of your energy on the children. Working with grieving people, young and old, is tough work – it can be emotionally taxing to bear witness to the pain of others. In order to be fully present it is important that you possess an awareness of your triggers and personal limitations while practicing ongoing self-care. When you give and give and give, without taking the time to replenish yourself it can result in burnout, which can have a negative impact on both you and those you are working with (*See Your Needs Matter Too on P. 118 for more information about burnout and self-care*).

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DYING & DEATH

Children benefit from having open and honest conversations about dying and death. Some adults hold back from having these discussions with children out of fear of saying the wrong thing. Others avoid such discussions for fear that children are too young to understand or will not be able to handle the information.

The fact is that **children have great instincts and usually know that something is going on.** They notice that hushed words stop when they enter the room, they overhear bits of conversations, they notice changes occurring to the person who is ill and even pick up on the stress of their family members.

When children are left without answers to their questions they may feel left out and very alone. Without truthful explanations as to what is going on, children often use their imagination to try to make sense of the situation, which can sometimes be worse than the truth and can cause a lot of anxiety. Talking to children about illness, dying and death can be very tough – to some people these types of conversations are even more difficult than talking to kids about sex! It is important that you are comfortable having direct conversations about death. The following pages will help build your confidence in approaching this challenging topic.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Invite children to ask questions and welcome their questions with openness and non-judgment, as they can reveal so much about what the child is thinking and feeling, and can help guide you in your efforts to support them. While it is important to always honour a child's questions, that does not mean you need to jump to provide the answer without first exploring what they already know, what they think and what information they are looking for. **To avoid making any assumptions, clarify what the child is asking and find out what the child thinks by posing open ended questions:**

Child: "What happens when someone dies?"

Supporter: "What do you think happens?"

Child: "I saw on TV once that the dead person was put in a box and buried in the ground."

Many people would assume that the child is asking about spirituality and perhaps jump into a discussion about beliefs. Clarification reveals that the child is wondering about the body.

Always respond to the child's questions honestly – never lie or provide half-truths. Know that **it is okay to respond with, "I don't know"** when you do not have all of the answers. It may be helpful to create a list with the child of all of their questions and people in their life who they can go to for answers. Let the child know, however, that there are some questions in life that do not have answers.

LANGUAGE

When talking to children about illness, dying and death use concrete language. Use words like dying, died and dead. **Keep explanations clear and concise** – use simple and direct words to help the child understand complex terms. Avoid providing more information than the child wants to prevent overwhelming the child.

AVOID EUPHEMISMS

Children can be very literal so it is no wonder that some of the expressions that we use to describe dying and death can cause a great deal of confusion and fear in a young child.

"Daddy has gone to a better place."	A child might wonder why they cannot go to this place to visit their father, or think that if they are good maybe they can go to a better place too.
"God took your sister today." "Your sister has gone to heaven."	Abstract concepts, such as heaven can be challenging for a child to fully grasp. For children, the idea of "going to heaven" can be interpreted as though the person is just on a trip to Florida. They might wonder why they cannot visit their sister in heaven or fear that God is going to take them away too.
"Grandma has gone to sleep forever and she is never going to wake up."	A child might be scared to fall asleep, worrying that they might not wake up either.
"We lost your mother today."	A child might wonder why people are not out looking for her. The child might look around the house or in other places for their mother, believing that she can be found.
"Your father is not with us anymore."	This could cause a child to wonder if he is not with the family, where could he be?

CHECK IN OFTEN

After you provide a child with information, give them time to process what they heard. Check in often to see if they have any questions or if there is anything that they have not understood or are worrying about.

CHILD-FRIENDLY EXPLANATIONS

Cancer

"Cancer is actually a group of many related diseases that all have to do with cells. Cells are the very small units that make up all living things, including the human body. There are billions of cells in each person's body. Cancer happens when cells that are not normal grow and spread very fast. Normal body cells grow and divide and know to stop growing. Over time, they also die. Unlike these normal cells, cancer cells just continue to grow and divide out of control and don't die when they're supposed to. Cancer cells usually group or clump together to form tumors. A growing tumor becomes a lump of cancer cells that can destroy the normal cells around the tumor and damage the body's healthy tissues. This can make someone very sick" (KidsHealth, 2015). To learn more visit www.kidshealth.org.

Death

When a person dies their body stops working and will never work again. This means that their heart stops beating, their lungs stop breathing and their brain stops thinking. The person cannot walk, talk, see, smell or hear anymore. When a body dies it cannot feel anything – not even hurt. They do not need to eat or go to the bathroom.

The Body

When you talk about the body explain to children that you are talking about the whole body – head and limbs included (it is not unusual for children to wonder about this!). Explain to children that when a body dies the skin is tight and cold to the touch, unlike the skin of a living body, which is warm and squishy to pinch. Remind children that even though the body feels cold to the touch, the person does not feel cold (and in need of a blanket or a sweater!) because their body has stopped working.

Funeral

A service or gathering to honour and remember the person who died. It usually takes place at the time of the burial or interment.

Cremation

The dead person's body is put in a very hot room that turns the dead person's body into ashes. The dead person's body does not feel any pain because their body has stopped working. The ashes can be put into a special container, called an **urn**. The urn might be kept in the house, in a special building at the cemetery or be buried in the ground. Sometimes people decide to scatter the ashes in a place that is special to the person who died.

Burial

The dead body is put into a special box, called a **casket**, and then buried in the ground at a cemetery. A **cemetery** is a special place where bodies that have died are buried. A **gravestone** will help them to find where the person's body was buried. Sometimes the casket (with the body inside) is not buried, but kept in a special building at the cemetery called a **mausoleum** instead.

Grief

All the different thoughts and feelings we have when something difficult happens in life, such as when someone we care about has a serious illness, is dying, or has died.

SECTION 2: PLANNING YOUR APPROACH

SESSIONAL FORMAT

Consistency is critical in establishing and maintaining safety in your support sessions. When you follow the same format for each session, children know what to expect every time you meet. Predictability helps children to feel a sense of control over their environment, something that might be lacking in the home setting. The suggested format clearly identifies the beginning and ending of each session, which provides a container for discussions and the creative exploration of grief. Time management is critical, as you want to ensure that there is enough time to work through all **five** elements of the sessional format without rushing the children. Support sessions for children generally run between 60 – 90 minutes in length, depending on the age and needs of the child or group (Ex: 60 minute sessions for children ages 6 – 9; 90 minute sessions for children ages 10 – 12). The following format can be used for both individual support and group sessions:



Opening Ritual
Check-In
Activity
Check-Out
Closing Ritual

1. OPENING RITUAL

A simple activity that signals the beginning of each session and helps children to focus their energy and become present in the space. Opening rituals should be quite quick, lasting approximately 5 minutes. Simple grounding exercises can help children to transition from the chaos of daily life into the safety of the space.

Deep Breathing: Invite the child(ren) to sit in a relaxed position (with their eyes closed if they are comfortable doing so) and take three deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Listening Practice: Ring a meditation bell and ask the child(ren) to simply breathe and listen to the chime with all of their attention. Listen with their ears, their mind, their heart, their body. Suggest that when they no longer hear the sound they might sit for a moment longer and listen to the silence (*Provided by Marianne Gocker*).

Candle Lighting: If the space you are using for your support sessions allows for open flames, light a true candle. Otherwise, you can purchase flameless candles from the dollar store. You can invite the child(ren) to say the name of their loved one who is dying/has died as they 'light' their candle.

2. CHECK-IN

An opportunity to find out how children are feeling as they come into the session. The check-in can provide incredible insight as to whether you should proceed as planned or modify your approach to meet the immediate needs of the child or group. The check-in should only take about 5 – 10 minutes.

Your Day/Week: Invite the child(ren) to share a little bit about their day or week. When working with younger children ask a question that focuses on that day, “*Who did you play with at recess today?*” “*What did you do at school today?*” If you are working with older children, it may be alright to ask broader questions, “*How has your week been?*” “*What is one thing that happened this week that you want to share?*”

The Weather Inside: Lead the child(ren) through the mindfulness practice, ‘*Your Personal Weather Report*’ by Eline Snel (see box below). Afterwards, invite them to write and/or draw what the weather looks like inside of them in that moment.

Feelings Scale: Provide the child(ren) with the handout on P. 116 and invite them to mark how they feel on a scale of 1 – 10.

Grief Bundle: Ask the child(ren) to pick feeling stick(s) from their grief bundle (see P. 26) that describe how they are feeling today as they come into the session.

YOUR PERSONAL WEATHER REPORT

“Sit down comfortably somewhere, close or half close your eyes, and take some time to determine how you are feeling right now. What is the weather like inside you? Do you feel relaxed and sunny inside? Or does it feel rainy or overcast? Is there a storm raging, perhaps? What do you notice?”

Without really thinking about it too much, summon the weather report that best describes your feelings at the moment. Once you know how you are doing right now, just let it be...just as it is...; there is no need to feel or do anything differently. You cannot change the weather outside either, can you?

Stay close to this feeling for a while.

Direct your friendly and curious attention to the cloud, the clear sky, or the storm that is brewing...this is how it is right now...; like the weather, you simply cannot change a mood. Later today the weather will be completely different again..., but right now this is how things are. And that is absolutely fine. Moods change. They blow over. There is no need to take any action. What a relief.”

English Translation © 2013, *Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents)*, Eline Snel. Shambhala Publications Inc. ISBN: 978-1-61180-058-6. Reproduced with Permission.

3. ACTIVITY

The activity (and the discussion that occurs during and/or after the activity) should make up the majority of each support session. Be mindful of children’s abilities and the length of your sessions when selecting an activity to ensure that you have enough time to complete the creative exercise and bring the session to a close. After you have completed an activity, invite children to share their creation and/or reflect on the experience, always respecting a child’s right to pass. (See P. 22) for more information about the implementation of activities).

4. CHECK-OUT

Provides you with an idea of how group members are feeling as the session comes to a close and how the activity may have impacted them.

What I Learned: Ask the child(ren) to share one thing that they learned today.

Snack N' Chat: If you are including snack time in your support sessions, engage the child(ren) in casual conversation about the activity, what they learned and how they feel while you eat together.

The **Weather Inside**, the **Feelings Scale** and **Grief Bundle** activities described above can also be used as check-out exercises.

5. CLOSING RITUAL

Marks the end of and provides closure for the session. Closing rituals should help children to make the transition back to their every day life. Think of the opening ritual as *opening* the container and the closing ritual as *closing* the container.

Let's Get Moving: If you have spent the session relatively stationary, lead the children in a series of stretches or physical movements to release energy and get a bit silly. Consider playing a game of *Simon Says*, each taking turns being 'Simon.'

Dynamic Breathing: A fun breathing exercise to help relieve tension (see box below).

The **Deep Breathing** and **Listening Exercise** described under opening rituals can also be used as closing rituals.

Saying Farewell: In place of your regular closing ritual, you may want to plan a special farewell ceremony for your final session with the child/group. For example, you might provide each child with a certificate summarizing the things that they've learned, empowering them to cope with difficult feelings and acknowledging their courage to express their feelings.

DYNAMIC BREATHING (CHICKEN BREATHING)

Provided by Marianne Gocker, MD, FRPC(C)

This is a practice taught in an introduction to mindfulness and meditation course at Duke University called Koru. Koru is a Maori word referring to the spiral shape of an unfolding fern frond. Dynamic breathing inevitably brings laughter as it looks a bit ridiculous - it is a useful tension reliever and a way to wake up a sleepy mind.

1. Breathe quickly and deeply through the nose with mouth closed (keeping the mouth closed will prevent hyperventilation). This can be done standing or sitting forward on a chair with hands resting on hips.
2. This quick breathing can be reinforced by placing the hands near the armpits and moving the upper arms against the chest in time with the exhalations. The students in the Koru course have nicknamed this chicken breathing, as the movement is similar to birds flapping their wings.
3. A variation includes adding movement of the legs, bending the knees with each exhalation.

Source Text: Rogers, H. & Maytan, M. (2012). *Mindfulness for the Next Generation: Helping Emerging Adults Manage Stress and Lead Healthier Lives*. Oxford University Press.

IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES

THE BENEFITS OF A CREATIVE APPROACH

Creative activities can facilitate mourning by providing opportunities for children to grieve from the inside out. Activities can provide an alternative to verbal sharing, which can create a sense of safety and promote the expression of inner thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Creative activities can serve as a stepping stone for verbalization as they can help children to identify their feelings and find the words to describe their experiences.

Activities can provide children with a sense of mastery over their environment as they have control over their creations.

Creative activities introduce children to healthy forms of expression and positive coping strategies.

Activities promote healing and support children as they explore their memories and provide opportunities for meaningful connection with their loved one who is dying/has died.

Collaborative activities completed with a family or in the group setting foster interpersonal connection and prosocial behaviours.

Activities can also provide you as a leader with insight into a child's current understanding of what is going on.

A COUPLE OF KEY POINTS

No single activity will be successful with every child. Every child is unique in their grief, self-expression and coping style. What works for one child may not work for the next. This handbook has been designed in a way that allows you as a supporter to tailor programs and support sessions to the unique needs of the children that you are working with.

Select activities that match the child's interests and abilities. Try to use materials that the child enjoys working with. Familiarity promotes safety, and a child is more likely to create something that is meaningful when they feel safe.

It is not about aesthetics, but the process. Avoid commenting on how a child's creation looks or how well the child is doing. Instead, make comments and ask questions that relate to the child's process (*I see you've used lots of blue! Do the colours you've used mean anything to you?*).

Refrain from interpreting and making assumptions about a child's work. Always invite the child to tell you about their drawing or painting rather than making your own assumptions about what you think you see or what you think it means.

There is no right way or wrong way to approach an activity. Respect the strengths of the child and allow them to tell their story in their own way. Encourage the child to complete the activity in their own unique way. Provide lots of reassurance and give the child permission to explore and use the materials freely. Remind them that it is not a competition or a race.

CREATIVE MODALITIES

Drawing & Colouring (paper, pencils, pens, crayons, markers, pastels, scratchboard, etc.)

Encourages children to use colour, line, pattern and shape as a means to engage in non-verbal storytelling and self-expression. With relatively few materials, children can be engaged in drawing activities to explore a variety of topics and experiences. Invite children to draw their ideas (what does death look like, spiritual beliefs, causes of death), their experiences (hospital, funeral, memories, changes in the family), their emotions (feelings, worries/nightmares, 'grief monster') and resiliency factors (supports & coping strategies, strengths & abilities, dreams & goals for the future). Colouring premade images and designs can also be a positive tool for expression and relaxation as it alleviates the pressure of the child having to draw their own image.

Painting (paper/canvas, acrylic/watercolour/tempera, brushes/palette knives/sponges/combs/fingers, etc.)

Painting provides endless opportunities for expression as different paints and applicators have various properties and effects. Similar to drawing, children can use colour, line, pattern and shape as vehicles for expression. Paint also allows for expression via texture (thick brushstrokes, blobs of paint, patterns and words drawn into thick paint, etc.). Painting can be so much fun for children, providing an opportunity to get messy and engage with a medium that they can spread, scrape and splatter to form their creations.

Collage (paper/canvas, paste, scissors, print materials, paper products, buttons, coins, etc.).

The term collage comes from the French word, *coller*, which means 'to glue.' It is an art form based on the practice of gluing various print and paper materials onto a support surface to create an image. Collage can be used as an alternative for children who are intimidated by the idea of drawing or painting their own images as children can use existing images to express themselves. Children can use collage to explore a variety of themes and topics (emotions, coping strategies, about me/about my loved one, if your grief were a landscape...etc.).

Sculpture (clay/play dough/plasticine, soap/wax, craft supplies, found objects, carving/modeling tools, etc.).

This creative practice invites children to model, carve or assemble three dimensional creations as a means to express themselves. Sensory materials, such as clay, play dough and plasticine, can provide a cathartic experience as they hold, roll, squeeze, squash, smooth, pound and mold their creation. Kids can use their hands and tools to manipulate the medium. While play dough and plasticine are relatively tidy materials, clay can introduce the fun of getting messy! Children can use child-friendly polymer clay (Fimo®, Sculpey®) to create more durable sculptures, as it is easy to manipulate and remains soft until it is baked. Children can also create sculptures by carving soft materials like soap or assembling craft materials and found objects to form their creation. Sculpture can be used in many different ways with grieving children – you can invite the child to sculpt a memory or their funeral/hospital experience, to create a worry monster, or to simply knead and pound a piece of clay to release tension and anger.

Craft Creations

Crafts can provide children with an opportunity for emotional release and can also leave them with a tangible and usable object. Craft creations can help children to maintain an ongoing relationship with their loved ones and provide them with tools that promote emotional self-regulation. Creating a memory box provides children with a special place to store their memories and mementos. You can create wind chimes or garden stones and invite children to recall a special memory every time they hear the chimes or see the stone. Dream catchers and worry dolls can serve as sacred containers that can trap or hold onto fears and worries for the child.

Puppets & Role Play

Children can use puppets as a way to indirectly act out feelings and role play their experiences. They can communicate through the puppets – asking questions, expressing emotions and sharing stories that they are not ready to explore head on. Children can select puppets to represent different feelings or people, or they can create their own puppets (of themselves, their loved one, other family members, a grief puppet, etc.) to make the experience more personal. Older children may be reluctant to participate in puppet play; however, you can try to engage them in the dramatic arts by asking them to act out different emotions, scenarios or conflicts.

Movement

It can be very challenging for a child to sit quietly for extended periods of time, especially if they have difficulty expressing themselves using other creative modalities. Bodily movement in the form of dance, physical activity and yoga can help to release pent up energy and express emotion. Movement can also serve as a tool for storytelling and a means to cope with challenging emotions. Rather than drawing, painting or sculpting emotions, the child can act out emotions using facial expressions and gestures. Games that involve movement (tag, relay races, sports, etc.) can be fun to play and help to give children permission to be silly and take a much needed break from grief talk.

Music

Music is a powerful tool for coping and expression. Playing and listening to music can be a comforting and calming experience and can help people to convey and connect with their emotions and memories. Children may find comfort in a CD of their loved one's favourite songs, or may wish to bring in a piece of music that they can relate to. You may consider playing calming music in the background to create a sacred space when engaging in silent activities.

Writing

When children have difficulty expressing themselves verbally, writing can serve as an alternative or even a stepping stone. There are many ways that a child can express themselves through writing – poetry, song lyrics, journaling, free writing, etc. Letter writing can also be an effective outlet or source of connection as the child can write a letter to their loved one, other family members, friends, themselves or even a letter containing the wisdom that they would like to impart on other grieving children. For children who are not confident in their writing abilities or wish to keep their writing private, invite them to write in a secret code. Do not harp on children for their spelling and their grammar.

WHAT SHOULD I KEEP IN MY TOOLBOX?

While some activities will require very specific materials, you should always have a variety of games, craft supplies and educational materials in your toolbox in order to provide opportunities for unstructured play and be prepared to modify your planned activity on the spot. Every supporter's toolbox will be different depending on facilitation style, budget and availability of materials. Here are some ideas as to what you might keep in your toolbox:

Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Information for Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Kid's Books About Death & Grief <input type="checkbox"/> Kid's Books - Not Grief Related <input type="checkbox"/> Grief Bundle / Emotion Cards 	Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Puppets, Figurines & Stuffed Animals <input type="checkbox"/> Toy Doctor's Kit <input type="checkbox"/> Games (<i>Jenga®, Lego®, playing cards, puzzles, etc.</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Activity Books, Bubbles
Drawing, Writing & Colouring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Journals / Sketchbooks <input type="checkbox"/> Variety of Paper (<i>blank, lined, coloured, cardstock, scrapbooking, etc.</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Pens & Pencils <input type="checkbox"/> Sharpeners & Erasers <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Markers (<i>washable & permanent</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Pastels (<i>chalk and/or oil</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Colouring Books/Pages 	Craft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors & Stapler <input type="checkbox"/> Glue (<i>Mod Podge®, white glue, glue sticks, low temperature glue gun</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Tape (<i>masking tape, duct tape, clear tape</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Plasticine, Play Dough, Clay <input type="checkbox"/> Stamps & Ink, Stencils, Stickers <input type="checkbox"/> Beads, Buttons, String, Ribbon, Glitter <input type="checkbox"/> Pipe Cleaners, Pom Poms, Googly Eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Old Comic Books, Magazines, Sports Cards, etc.
Painting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Paints (<i>tempera, acrylic, watercolour</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Brushes & Sponge Applicators <input type="checkbox"/> Water Containers <input type="checkbox"/> Painting Paper or Canvas Boards 	Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation Bells <input type="checkbox"/> Kleenex & Paper Towel <input type="checkbox"/> Tablecloths/Drop Sheets, Aprons <input type="checkbox"/> Large Paper/Plastic Plates <input type="checkbox"/> Baby Wipes / Cleaning Wipes <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit

OTHER USEFUL TOOLS

Grief Bundle

A *Grief Bundle* is a simple tool to help children to build their emotional vocabulary and identify feelings. This do-it-yourself tool is low-cost and easy to make!

Materials: Large Popsicle Sticks, Permanent Markers, Rubber Band or a Pouch to hold the sticks together (a sandwich bag will do).

How To: Write one emotion on each Popsicle stick. Leave some sticks blank for the child to add other feeling words specific to their grief experiences.



This tool was provided by Anna Baas Anderson

If you are working with older children, consider writing a synonym of the feeling word on the other side of the stick (Ex: write angry on one side of the stick and furious on the other side).

There are many ways to use the grief bundle:

1. **Learning:** Play Emotional Charades or Emotional Pictionary® by taking turns selecting feeling sticks from a *Grief Bundle* and drawing or acting out the emotion for others to guess.
2. **Expression:** When children are having a difficult time verbalizing their emotions, invite them to select one or more sticks from their *Grief Bundle* to describe how they are feeling.
3. **Communication:** Provide each child with a *Grief Bundle* to keep at home to help them communicate their feelings with their family members.

Worry Stones

Worry Stones are smooth flat stones that usually have a thumbprint indentation on one side. Children can rub a worry stone to ease their worries and promote relaxation. You might give an anxious or fidgety child a worry stone to hold and rub during a session while they are listening or sharing. Consider giving each child a worry stone on your final session as a special token and practical tool for self-regulation. Children can keep it in their pocket and use it discreetly when they need to. Worry stones made of polished gemstone are readily available; however, you can easily make your own using polymer clay (Fimo®, Sculpey®), and turn it into a fun activity to do with the children.



Step 1: Select 3 colours of polymer clay and roll into small balls.



Step 2: Mash the three colours together into a single ball.



Step 3: Roll out the ball and use your thumb to create an imprint.



Step 4: Bake at 275°F for approximately 20-25 minutes.

SECTION 3: ACTIVITIES FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

The activities in this handbook have been categorized by **key themes** that have been ordered in such a way to support the development of programs that promote safety, develop self-expression, build resiliency and provide a positive termination experience.

KEY THEMES



IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- This handbook has been developed in such a way that encourages you as a supporter to select and modify activities to best meet the unique needs of the grieving children you are working with.
- **The activities in this handbook are best suited for grieving children ages 6 – 12;** however, you are encouraged to use your discretion as many of the activities can be adapted or used directly with younger and older age groups, depending on the child's developmental level, abilities and willingness to participate.
- The majority of activities can be used in individual support sessions and in the group setting, as well as with kids who are anticipating a death or are bereaved (⚠ unless otherwise specified).
- There are two types of activities, structured and unstructured. Structured activities provide a directive or prompt and are often focused on a particular topic or theme. The activities in this handbook would be considered structured activities. Unstructured activities give the child complete freedom to explore themselves using the materials provided. It is important to have supplies in your toolbox that allow for unstructured play.
- There are different ways that you can approach activities with children. You can serve as a silent observer, create your own piece side-by-side or introduce collaborative activities to make a shared creation.
- The dying and death of a loved one is a sensitive topic - it is essential that you take the time to build rapport before engaging children in activities that invite them to do any serious emotional exploration and expression.
- **'Comfort Guidelines'** are the guidelines that you as a supporter and the children agree to follow in order to ensure that everyone feels safe together. **Developing guidelines at your first meeting with a child or a group is essential to creating safety** (see P. 30).
- As you near the end of your program, sessions should begin to prepare the child for termination by:
 - Continuing the conversation about coping and support systems
 - Supporting children as they nurture an ongoing relationship with the person who is dying/has died
 - Building self-esteem by focusing on children's strengths, abilities and goals for the future
- One or two sessions before your last meeting, let the child/group know that you are nearing the end of your time together. The termination of a support program can cause anxiety and feelings of grief in some children. The conclusion of a program can be another loss as the sessions may be the only place a child feels truly understood and comfortable sharing their grief. It is important to make the children aware and prepare them for life beyond the program.
- The chart on the following page will provide you with a brief overview of the activities that have been included in this handbook (see P. 113 for sample sessions and curricula).

ACTIVITIES CHART

THEME	ACTIVITIES	PG.	NOTES
CREATING SAFETY	Comfort Guidelines	P. 30	⚠ Critical Activity
	Book About Me	P. 32	
	My Folder	P. 34	
	Who I Am Poem	P. 36	
	Crossing the Circle	P. 38	Designed for Group
	Peer Interview	P. 40	Designed for Group
TALKING ABOUT DYING & DEATH	Life and Death	P. 42	
	Play Dough Funeral	P. 44	⚠ Bereavement
	Before and After	P. 46	
	Growing Through Grief	P. 48	
	Basketball: Game About Life and Death	P. 51	
IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS	Feelings Circle	P. 57	
	Spongebombs	P. 60	
	Grief Soup	P. 62	
	Body Map	P. 64	
	Griefiti	P. 66	
	Feelings Bingo	P. 69	
	Child in the Middle	P. 73	Designed for Group
	Throwing Anger and Fear	P. 75	Designed for Group
COPING WITH THE TOUGH THING	My Safe Place	P. 77	
	Family Connection Tree	P. 80	
	Stress Balls	P. 82	
	Calming Jar	P. 84	
	Worry Dolls	P. 87	
STAYING CONNECTED	HUG	P. 89	⚠ Anticipatory Grief
	Memory Drawing	P. 91	
	Memory Box	P. 93	
	Memory Beads	P. 95	
	Memorial Weaving	P. 97	
	Prayer Flags	P. 100	
CELEBRATING ME	Helping Hands	P. 102	
	Bucket Fillers	P. 104	Designed for Group
	Character Collage	P. 106	
	Unique as a Fingerprint	P. 109	Some Advanced Prep Required
	Hope is in the Air	P. 111	Designed for Group

COMFORT GUIDELINES

Key Learning

To create a safe space and outline expected behaviours.

What You Need

- Poster Paper
- Drawing Materials
- Tape

No. of children

- 1 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that during our time together we are going to do lots of different activities to learn about grief and express feelings. It is really important that everyone feels safe asking questions, sharing feelings and talking about tough stuff if they want to. In order to make this space safe for everyone we are going to create some guidelines that we will call comfort guidelines. The comfort guidelines will be on display each time we meet to help us remember how to treat each other.

How to Play

1. Engage the child(ren) in the development of the guidelines by asking the following questions:
 - What can we do to make this a safe place where you feel comfortable sharing your feelings and asking tough questions?
 - What if you do not want to talk about something or do an activity? What do you want to happen then?
 - What does it mean to listen? To be kind? To show respect?
2. Invite the child(ren) to write 'Comfort Guidelines' at the top of the poster paper and record the guidelines as they are developed. *If you are working with younger children you may need to write them out yourself or provide assistance.*
3. Invite the child(ren) to decorate the poster with symbols and images that represent trust, safety and kindness.
4. Put the comfort guidelines on display for the child(ren) to see. Be sure to bring it with you every session.

The comfort guidelines that you create with each child and group may look different depending on the cognitive capacity and maturity of the child(ren) you are working with. That is okay; however, it is important to explain and include the following guidelines:

Confidentiality and its Limitations: Explain to the child(ren) that what they share in a support session will stay between you/the group – what is said here stays here. Clearly explain to them that you will have to tell someone if you are concerned about their safety or the safety of others.

Right to Pass: Reassure the child(ren) that they have the right to opt out of an activity or a discussion and that you will respect their choice.

*Adapted with permission from Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens (p. 2).
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CREATING SAFETY

COMFORT GUIDELINES CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

Which guideline is your favourite?
 Which guideline will be the easiest for you to follow?
 Which one do you think will be the toughest to follow?

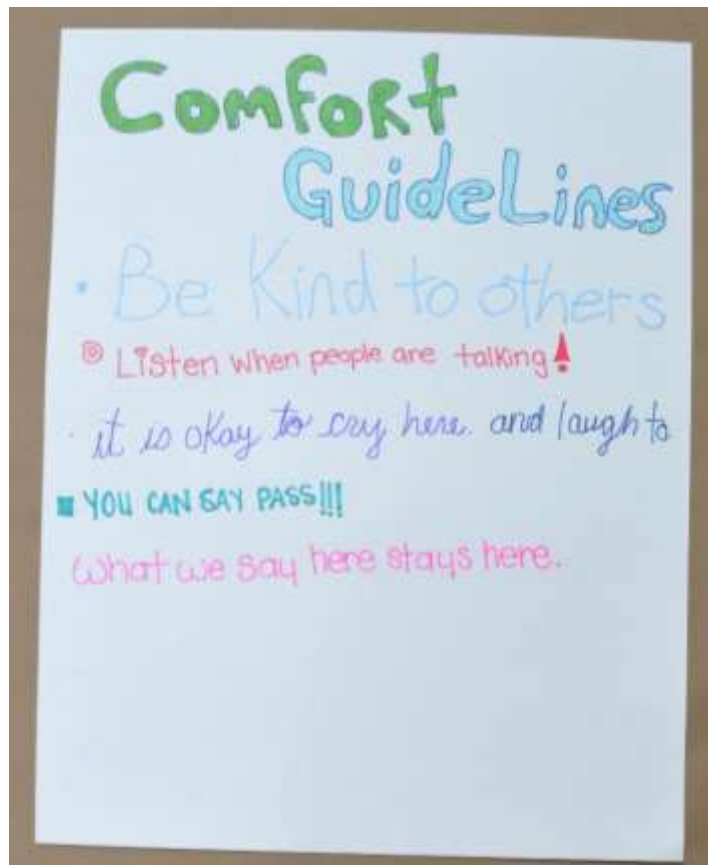
Connect

How does it make you feel when other kids laugh at you or say mean things?
 How would it make you feel if people were talking and being silly when you were trying to talk about sad feelings?

Apply

It is okay to feel how ever you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself or others. What are some positive things you can do to calm down when you are really upset?

- ⚠ When you are working one on one with a child, you can use a smaller piece of paper (Ex: 11 x 17") to make it more manageable to bring to sessions conducted in the home.



BOOK ABOUT ME

Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- 14 x 17" Paper
- Scissors & Glue
- Old Magazines & Catalogues
- Drawing Materials
- Craft Supplies
- Optional: Stapler

No. of children

- 1 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21qi9ZcQVto> and follow along with the video to learn how to fold the books (1 sheet of paper makes one book). Write the following prompts across the top of each page:

- My Favourite Things
- Special People In My Life
- Things I Want To Do

If you are working with older children, rather than preparing the books in advance you can assist them in folding the book and writing the prompts on their own.

2. Discuss the following concepts with the child(ren):
 - We are all unique individuals, which means that we all have things about us that make us different. It is okay to be different because it is those differences that make us special.
 - Even though every person is different, we can still share lots of things in common. We might like the same colour or music, we might both be kind and good at sports, we might have similar feelings or experiences, etc.
3. Invite the child(ren) to make an 'all about me' book. Our books will be filled with different things about ourselves (*hobbies, interests, abilities, dreams and goals, favourite people and things, etc.*). These books will celebrate the things that make us special and will help us to find things we have in common that connect us.

How to Play

1. Explain each page of the book before signaling for the child(ren) to begin:
 - Cover – a place for you to write the title of your book (could be your name, 'Book About Me,' or whatever you decide) and decorate it how ever you would like.
 - *My Favourite Things* – a place for all of your favourites! Favourite foods, colours, toys, music, activities/hobbies, animals, etc.
 - *Special People in My Life* – use this space to identify all of the people in your life that you love and care about! Family members, friends, neighbours, babysitters, coaches, teachers, church leaders, etc.
 - *Things I Want To Do* – a place for you to share the things that you wish to do one day and what you want to do when you grow up.

CREATING SAFETY

BOOK ABOUT ME CONTINUED

2. Emphasize that there is no wrong way to do this activity – they can write names, words, phrases, quotes and lyrics; draw images and symbols; cut and paste from magazines; use craft supplies to decorate!
3. Invite the child(ren) to share their completed book(s) if they feel comfortable doing so. Highlight commonalities between children/yourself.

**Discussion****Reflect**

What was your favourite part of the activity? Which page of the book did you like doing the most?

Was it easy for you to think of things to put in your book? Why? Why not?

Connect

What are some things that you share in common with me/other kids in the group?

We are all here today because we share something else in common, does anyone know what that might be? (*The dying or death of a loved one*).

Have you ever been made fun of for being different? What happened? How did it make you feel?

Apply

Sometimes people are picked on or teased for the things that make them different, which can really hurt their feelings.

What can we do instead to celebrate the things that make us different and special?



MY FOLDER

Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- Poster Paper
- Stapler
- Drawing Materials
- Craft Supplies
- Optional: Patterned Duct Tape

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Anna Baas Anderson. Anna is a Registered Therapist and Professor in the Early Childhood Education program at Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Anna has volunteered with Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel for the past 10 years as a member of the Professional Advisory Committee, a trainer and children's grief counsellor.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare one folder for each child in advance:
 - Fold a piece of poster paper in half. Most sheets of poster paper have two sides – matte and glossy. Ensure the matte side is facing outwards as the glossy side does not readily accept some drawing materials and is prone to smudging.
 - Staple the two sides of the folded piece of paper, leaving the top open.
 - Cover the staples with fun coloured/patterned duct tape.
 - If you are working with older children you can support them to make their own folder.
2. Invite the child(ren) to decorate their own special folders to keep their drawings, writings and other activities safe during our time together.

How to Play

1. Invite the child(ren) to write their name on the folder and decorate it with drawings and words that helps others to learn more about them. Draw/write about:
 - Your family and friends
 - Your favourite things (places, foods, colours, toys, music, brands, hobbies, sports, animals, etc.)
 - Your dreams for the future (things you want to do one day, what you want to be when you grow up)
 - Anything that you want to include
2. Emphasize that there is no wrong way to do this activity – they can write names, words, phrases, quotes and lyrics; draw images, patterns and symbols; use craft supplies to decorate!
3. Invite the child(ren) to share their folder(s) if they feel comfortable doing so. Highlight commonalities between children/yourself.

CREATING SAFETY

MY FOLDER CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

What is your favourite part of your folder?

Connect

What are some things that you share in common with me/other kids in the group?

We are all here today because we share something else in common, does anyone know what that might be? *(The dying or death of a loved one).*

Apply

It is really important to get to know each other so we feel comfortable talking about some tough stuff. What can we do to make you feel safe and comfortable with me/in the group?



WHO I AM POEM

Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- Blank Paper
- Scissors & Glue
- Drawing Materials
- Craft Materials

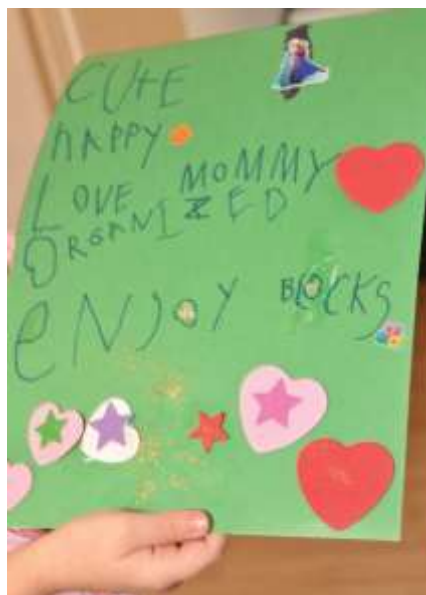
No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Familiarize yourself with acrostic poetry beforehand so you feel comfortable introducing the concept to the child(ren). Check out these sites to see some kid-friendly samples: www.gigglepoetry.com/poetryclassdetail.aspx?LessonPlanID=12 www.edu.pe.ca/stjean/playing%20with%20poetry/Hickey/acrostic.htm
2. Discuss poetry as a way to express our thoughts and feelings outside of regular language.
3. Read a few child-friendly poems on themes of connection, grief or sadness. Many children appreciate poetry but are not sure how to approach writing a poem themselves. You can find poems about grief and loss written by children and youth at www.kidsaid.com/storiesnart.html.
4. Explain acrostic poetry:
 - Acrostic poetry is a simple form of poetry that anyone can do. The first letters of each line spell out a word or a phrase. The word/phrase can be a name, thing, whatever you like.
 - The lines do not need to rhyme and each line can be as long or short as you want it to be (even just one word).
 - Usually, the first letter of each line is capitalized and made bold to stand out. This makes it easier to see the word spelled out vertically down the page.
5. Demonstrate how to make an acrostic poem to the group by showing them an example or creating one together.



CREATING SAFETY

WHO I AM POEM CONTINUED**How to Play**

1. Invite the child(ren) to write their name vertically on a piece of paper.
2. Ask the child(ren) to think about the theme of 'Who I Am,' and brainstorm words or phrases that describe them (*hobbies, interests, abilities, personality, favourite things, etc.*).
3. Place the brainstormed words/phrases on any lines that begin with the same letters. Support them to find synonyms and re-work phrases to fit them into their acrostic poem.
4. Allow time for the child(ren) to decorate their poem with drawings, more words, stickers, etc.
5. Invite the child(ren) to read their poem aloud if they feel comfortable doing so. Allow them the option to pass or have a supporter/another child read the poem if its author is too shy. If you are working in the group setting, highlight commonalities between children.

**Discussion****Reflect**

What is your favourite part/line of your poem? Why? Explain. Did you learn anything surprising about someone else as you listened to their poem?

Connect

If we were to do an acrostic poem about feelings, what feeling would you write a poem about?

Apply

We can use poetry as a way to express our thoughts and feelings, or to share stories about ourselves and the people we love. What are some other ways that we can express ourselves?

**Variations**

1. Invite the child(ren) to write a 'Who They Are' poem about their loved one, exploring their thoughts and feelings related to the person who is dying/has died.
2. Write acrostic poems on any subject matter – memories, feelings, hope, wishes, messages to the dying/deceased, self-care strategies, etc.
3. The poems can be created individually or as a group. When working in a group setting, invite participants to write individual poems using the same word to explore the different ideas and meanings that they associate with the same topic.

CROSSING THE CIRCLE

Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- Prepared Questions

No. of children

- 4 or more

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Preparation Activities

1. Review the sample questions on P. 39. Add, omit and modify questions to meet the unique needs of your group.
2. Explain that we all have things about us that make us special and unique (different from other people), but we can still share lots of things in common that help us to connect with one another. Today we will be playing a game to help us get to know each other and find out what we share in common.

How to Play

1. Have the children stand in a large circle facing one another.
2. Read a statement from the list of questions that you prepared in advance (always start with those that are lighter hearted).
3. Invite the children to cross the circle when a statement applies to them and find a new spot.



Discussion

Reflect

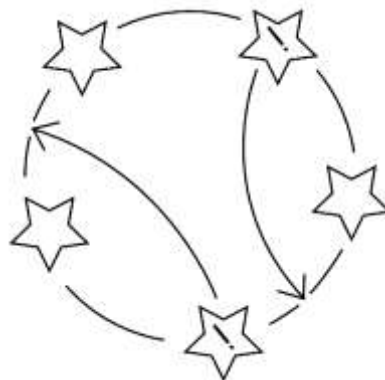
Was there anything that you were surprised to learn from the activity?

Connect

We are all here today because we share something in common, does anyone know what that might be? (*The dying or death of a loved one*).

Apply

It is really important to get to know each other so we feel comfortable talking about tough stuff. What can we do to make you feel safe and comfortable with me/in the group?



Sample Questions – Crossing The Circle

You have a dog

- Cat
- Fish
- Other kind of animal

Your favourite colour is blue

- Red
- Purple
- Green

Your favourite time of year is summer

- Spring
- Winter
- Fall

You like to play sports

- Sing
- Dance
- Draw/Paint

You like scary movies

You are scared or nervous to be here today

You have had a mom die/ You have a mom that is dying

- Dad
- Brother
- Sister
- Grandparent
- Friend
- Someone Else

You feel like no one understands what you're going through

You feel like people have been treating you differently since your loved one got sick / died

You worry that other people in your life might get sick/die

You have questions about the illness/the death

You are tired of hearing people say, "I am sorry for your loss"

You chose not to cross the circle even though you agreed with a statement

You still talk to the person who died

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Italicized text represents additional questions and modifications made to original text.

PEER INTERVIEW

Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- Interview Questions
- Dice
- 'How to Play' Guide

No. of children

- 4 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare a set of interview questions (P. 41) for each pair of children (photocopy a set of interview questions onto cardstock and cut them out individually).
2. Explain that we all have things about us that make us special and unique (different from other people), but we can still share lots of things in common that help us to connect with one another. It is important that we take the time to get to know each other so that we feel comfortable talking about all sorts of things during our time together. Today we will be doing an activity that will help us get to know each other, celebrate the things that make us different and find out what we share in common.

How to Play

1. Divide the group into pairs. Provide each pair with a set of interview cards, one die and a 'How To Play' guide (P. 41).
2. Introduce the activity:
 - Split the cards up so you and your partner each have five
 - Roll the die to see who goes first (each take a turn rolling the die, the person who rolls the highest number will start)
 - Roll the die - If you roll an odd number (1,3,5) select a question card from your hand for your partner to answer
 - If you roll an even number (2,4,6) select a question card from your hand for you to answer
 - Take turns asking/answering questions
3. Call the children back to the circle to introduce their partner to the group by sharing the things they learned about them during the game. Invite the group to answer any questions that they didn't have a chance to during their interview and highlight commonalities between group members.



Discussion

Reflect

What was it like to get to know someone new?

Connect

What are some things that you share in common with other people in the group?

We are all here today because we share something else in common, does anyone know what that might be? (*The dying or death of a loved one*).

Apply

It is really important to get to know each other so we feel comfortable talking about tough stuff. What can we do to make you feel safe and comfortable with me/in the group?

Peer Interview: How To Play

Odd Number (1, 3, 5) = pick a card from your hand to ask your partner

Even Number (2, 4, 6) = pick a card from your hand for you to answer

What is your nickname?	Who do you live with at home?
What is your favourite thing to eat?	Do you have any pets?
What is your favourite movie or T.V. show?	Who is your favourite teacher at school?
What is your favourite thing to do in the summer?	What is your favourite colour?
What is your favourite thing to do in the winter?	What do you want to be when you grow up?
If you could be an animal, which animal would you be?	If you could have one super power what would it be?

LIFE AND DEATH

Key Learning

To foster a greater understanding of death.

What You Need

- 14 x 17" Paper
- Drawing Materials

No. of children

- 1 or more

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Preparation Activities

1. Explain to the child(ren) that today we are going to talk about what it means to be alive, and what it means to be dead. All living things grow and change and eventually die. Death is natural and everything that lives eventually dies. Plants die, animals die, and people die. Death happens when a person's body becomes so old, sick or injured that it stops working and breathing.
2. Complete the following exercises to help children to understand the difference between being alive and being dead:
 - Take a deep breath and let it out. You are alive, which means you are breathing. When a person is dead, they do not breathe.
 - Put your hand on your heart and feel it beating. You are alive, which means that your heart is beating. When a person is dead, their heart stops beating.
 - Blink your eyes three times. You are alive, which means that you can blink your eyes. When a person is dead, they cannot blink their eyes.
 - Pinch your arm (not too hard!). You are alive, which means you can hurt and feel pain. When a person is dead they do not hurt or feel pain.
 - Do five jumping jacks. You are alive, which means that you can move. When a person is dead they cannot move their body.

How to Play

1. Draw Life & Death
 - Demonstrate to the child(ren) how to fold their paper in half and draw a line down the middle along the fold line. Invite them to write 'alive' on the left side and 'dead' on the right side.
 - When someone or something is alive, it can move, breathe, and feel. Draw a picture of an animal, insect, plant or person that is alive on the left side of your paper.
 - When someone or something is dead, it cannot move, breathe, or feel anything. Draw a picture of an animal, insect, plant or person that is dead on the right side of your paper.
2. Invite the child(ren) to share their drawings if they would like.

TALKING ABOUT DYING & DEATH

LIFE AND DEATH CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

Is there anything that you are confused or worried about?

Connect

What are three things that can cause someone or something to die?

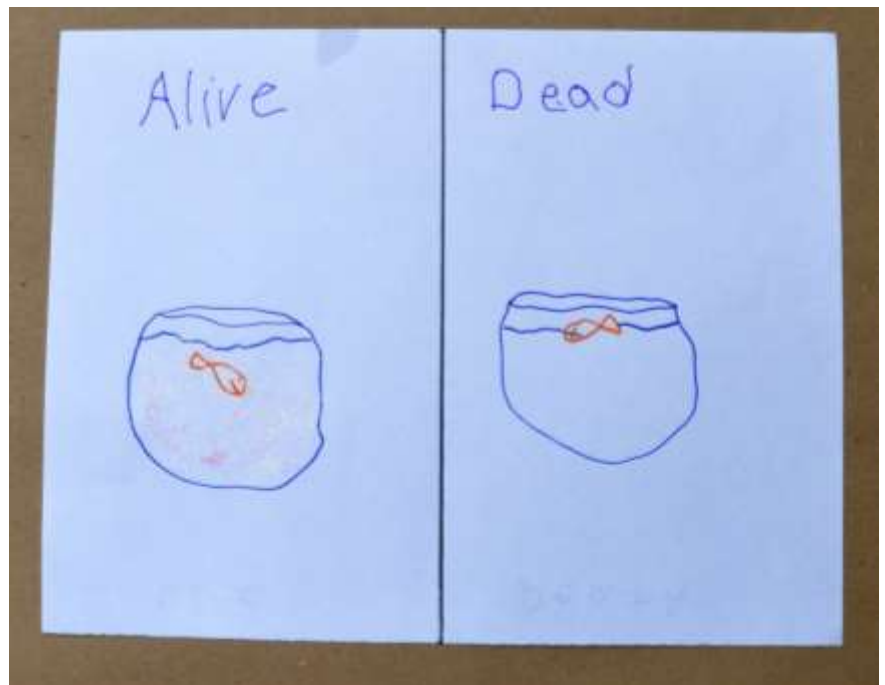
How did you find out that your loved one was going to die/had died?

What do you know about how, when and where your loved one died?

Did you see or touch the person's dead body? What was that like?

Apply

Who can you go to for help when you have questions or worries about death?




PLAY DOUGH FUNERAL

Key Learning

To learn about death rituals and promote self-expression.

What You Need

-  A Complete Book About Death for Kids
- Large Plastic Plates
- Play Dough
- Optional: Child friendly sculpting tools (often come in Playdoh® kits or can be found at local craft store)

No. of children

- 1 or more

Bereavement

This activity has been provided by Anna Baas Anderson. Anna is a Registered Therapist and Professor in the Early Childhood Education program at Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Anna has volunteered with Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel for the past 10 years as a member of the Professional Advisory Committee, a trainer and children's grief counsellor.

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that today we will be talking about what dead means and funerals. After, if you would like, we can do an activity where we make a picture of a funeral using play dough.
2. Read the book, *A Complete Book About Death for Kids*, by Earl Grollman & Joy Johnson (you may decide to read excerpts selected ahead of time).
3. Have a discussion about death and funerals to help the children reach a greater level of understanding. Some questions you can use to guide the discussion include:
 - What does dead mean? What does being dead look like? Do you know what happens to the person's dead body?
 - What is a funeral? What happens at a funeral?
 - Do you know of any other special rituals or ceremonies that happen when someone is dying/has died?
 - Did you go to your loved one's funeral? Did you want to go to the funeral? *(If the child chose not to attend the funeral, reassure them that it is okay that they did not want to go and that they made the choice that was best for them at the time).*
 - What do you remember from the day of the funeral? *(What happened? What did you see/hear? Who was there? What did you do? What were other people doing?).*

How to Play

1. Create a picture of what you remember about your loved one's funeral using the play dough *(If the child did not attend the funeral, invite them to make a representation of what they think happened at the funeral - Have you ever seen a funeral on T.V.? Did anyone tell you things about your loved one's funeral?).*
2. Invite the child(ren) to share their completed sculptures if they feel comfortable doing so.



Discussion

Reflect

What do you remember from your loved one's funeral? *(If the child did not attend)* What do you imagine happened at the funeral?

TALKING ABOUT DYING & DEATH

PLAY DOUGH FUNERAL CONTINUED**Discussion****Connect**

What was the weather like outside on the day of the funeral?

We can use the weather as a way to describe how we feel on the inside:

What was the weather like inside of you on the day of the funeral?

What is the weather like inside of you right now after talking about the funeral?

Why do you think we have funerals for people?

Why might someone choose not to go to a funeral?

Apply

(If the child did not attend) Who can you go to for answers if you have questions about what happened at the funeral?

Funerals bring people together to say goodbye to the dead body and to honour and remember the person who died.

What are some other ways we can honour and remember our loved ones who have died?

**Variations**

1. Use plasticine in place of play dough - this way the child(ren) can add to their creation over time as plasticine remains malleable and does not dry out.
2. Ask the child(ren) to draw the funeral experience instead of a play dough representation.
3. Ask the child(ren) to create a sculpture of their grief (if their grief was a person, animal, thing, what would it look like?). When they are finished – ask them if they would like to keep it or smash it up.



BEFORE AND AFTER

Key Learning

To explore changes that have occurred as a result of the illness and/or death.

What You Need

- 14 x 17" Paper
- Drawing Materials

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Anna Baas Anderson. Anna is a Registered Therapist and Professor in the Early Childhood Education program at Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Anna has volunteered with Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel for the past 10 years as a member of the Professional Advisory Committee, a trainer and children's grief counsellor.

Preparation Activities

1. Discuss different changes that can occur when a loved one is dying/has died:
 - Explain that when someone we love is dying/has died, we might experience lots of different changes in our lives (different chores to do and new responsibilities; meals and bedtime may change; family members might act differently; changes in the way people treat you/you treat others; grades at school might change because it is hard to concentrate, etc.).
 - Changes aren't always bad. When someone we love is dying/has died, we can also experience good changes (Closer to family members, feeling more thankful, etc.).
 - The changes that we experience can make us feel different things – sad, angry, jealous, alone, etc. It is okay to feel how ever you are feeling. Some kids might even feel relief when someone they love dies and that's okay.
 - Today we can do an activity that helps us to think about and draw the changes that have happened in our lives, the way those changes make us feel and what we imagine our futures will look like.

How to Play

1. Provide the child(ren) with a piece of paper that has been divided into three sections:
 - My life when the person was well/still alive
 - My life when the person got sick/died
 - My life in the future
2. Explain that in the first section they can write/draw about what their life was like before their loved one got sick/died. In the second section, they can write/draw about what their life was like after their loved one got sick/died. In the third section they can write/draw what they think their future might be like. Some children may feel lost with such broad parameters. For those who want more direction, ask them to draw their family or what home was like before and after the illness/death.
3. Assist the child(ren) in writing a phrase that describes each section of their drawing (Ex: *before my dad got sick/died...; after my sister got sick/died...; in the future...*).
4. Invite the child(ren) to share their *Before and After* drawing if they feel comfortable doing so.

TALKING ABOUT DYING & DEATH

BEFORE AND AFTER CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

What thoughts and feelings came up as you were drawing your picture?

Connect

What is one change that has happened in your life since your loved one got sick/died?
Have there been any good changes since your loved one got sick/died?

Apply

When someone we love is dying/has died, we can experience big changes in our lives, and these changes can bring up hard feelings. When you are having a tough time dealing with the changes that have happened in your life, what can you do to comfort yourself and cope with difficult feelings?



GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

Key Learning

To learn about life and death. To nurture meaningful connections.

What You Need

- 18 x 24" Cartridge Paper/Newsprint
- Crayons & Markers
- Stickers
- Perennial Seedlings (young plants)
- Potting Mix (seed starting mix)

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Towe. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Visit www.forgreenies.com/origami-newspaper-seedling-pots to learn how to fold an origami flowerpot. Before introducing the activity to the child(ren), practice folding the flowerpot. Experiment with your starting paper size and modify to find the desired completed pot size.
2. Discuss death and life cycles:
 - Death is a part of life for all living things. All things that live (plants, animals, humans) will eventually die. All living things have their own life cycle that is sometimes short and sometimes long.
 - For plants, some of them are called annuals, and they live only one season, growing in the spring or summer and then dying forever at the end of the summer when it gets cold. These plants include many flowers and sometimes vegetables. Other plants go to sleep at the end of the summer but then come back the next spring, and these are called perennials. This includes trees (fruit trees and trees that lose their leaves), many plants and flowers, etc. *(Revisit the difference between going to sleep and dying and emphasize that when a person is dead they cannot come back alive).*
 - Plants need certain things to stay healthy, just like people. Plants need water and sunlight and nutrients that they get from soil - they need to be tended. When we think about our relationships with people – both those living and those who have died – we see that our relationships also need care and attention to stay alive. Our memories need our care and attention to keep us feeling connected to people.
3. Explain that we will be planting a perennial flower:
 - In this activity we will put our thoughts and feelings and wishes into building a flower pot to hold this perennial, and when we plant it into the earth, the paper will compost and biodegrade, sending our wishes, thoughts and feelings out into the world.

TALKING ABOUT DYING & DEATH

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF CONTINUED 2/3**How to Play**

1. Have the child(ren) take a piece of paper and decorate it with thoughts, wishes, messages and pictures for the person who is dying/has died.
2. Demonstrate and assist the child(ren) to fold an origami flowerpot with their completed image(s).
3. Demonstrate and assist the child(ren) in planting their seedling.
 - Put some soil into your flower pot and poke a hole in the middle for the roots of your plant
 - Transfer a plant into your flowerpot
 - Add more soil so it is standing upright
 - Using your fingertips, gently pack the soil at the base of the plant
4. Have the child(ren) take their flower home. Encourage them to ask a trusted adult for help planting their flower in a special place (balcony, backyard, pot indoors, etc).



GROWING THROUGH GRIEF CONTINUED 3/3



Discussion

Reflect

What was your favourite part of the activity? Why?
 What does dead mean?
 Can a dead person come back alive?
 What can cause something or someone to die?

Connect

What are some things that other kids might worry about when someone they love is dying/has died?
 What sort of things did you include on your paper that was folded into the flower pot?
 People often send flowers when someone is sick or has died to show the grieving family that they care about them. What are some other things that people give to families who are grieving to show their love? (*food, cards, stuffed animals*)

Apply

Just like the plant, memories need to be cared for and nurtured so that we don't forget them. How can we help to keep our memories alive? (*Thinking about them, sharing them aloud with someone, writing, video diary, drawing pictures*)
 What can we do to stay connected with someone special who has died? (*person or animal*)



VARIATIONS

1. This activity can also be done with small ceramic pots that kids can decorate with paint, markers, stickers and other craft supplies.



AGES 6+

TALKING ABOUT DYING & DEATH

BASKETBALL: A GAME ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH

Key Learning

To develop an understanding of death.

What You Need

- Basketball Hoop & Ball (or crumpled paper and garbage can)
- Question Cards
- Tokens (Ex: Bingo markers, board game pieces, glass gemstones, etc.)
- Bag Filled with Small Prizes

No. of children

- 1 or more

⚠ Original questions by Liana Lowenstein are best suited for

Bereavement

⚠ Additional questions by Ceilidh Eaton Russell are best suited for children

Anticipating a Death

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Preparation Activities

1. Prepare the question cards found on P. 52 or 54 (photocopy the cards onto cardstock or heavy weight paper and cut them out individually).
- ⚠ Modify the question cards or add your own questions to meet the unique needs of the child/the group.
2. Make a copy of the answers sheet (P. 53 or 55/56) to have on hand during the game. You do not have to read the answers out loud to the children word for word. Familiarize yourself with the answers so you can use your own language and be more natural in your delivery.
3. Explain that it can be hard to talk about death, so we can play a special version of Basketball to make it easier.

How to Play

1. Explain how to play:
 - If you successfully throw the ball through the basketball hoop, you get two tokens
 - If you miss the basket, pick a question card and answer the question. You get one token for each question you answer
 - Trade in your tokens for prizes at the end of the game
 - 1-10 tokens = 1 prize
 - 11 or more tokens = 2 prizes



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you while we played the game?

Is there anything that we discussed that you are confused about? Do you have any questions?

What is one thing that you learned from playing the game?

Connect

Did the game answer any questions or calm any worries that you had?

Apply

Who can you go to for help when you have questions or worries about death?

Basketball Game Questions Cards

<p>-1-</p> <p>True or False: Most people find it hard to talk about death.</p>	<p>-2-</p> <p>True or False: Every living thing eventually dies.</p>
<p>-3-</p> <p>What are some things that cause death?</p>	<p>-4-</p> <p>Name three things that happen to a person's body when they die.</p>
<p>-5-</p> <p>What is a casket?</p>	<p>-6-</p> <p>What is an urn?</p>
<p>-7-</p> <p>True or False: When a dead person is cremated or buried, they feel scared because they don't like being burned or put in the ground.</p>	<p>-8-</p> <p>If someone in your family dies, does that mean that you will die soon too?</p>
<p>-9-</p> <p>Can a dead person come back alive?</p>	<p>-10-</p> <p>True or False: Everyone feels sad and cries when someone in their family dies.</p>
<p>-11-</p> <p>True or False: Only old people die.</p>	<p>-12-</p> <p>True or False: Even though your special person died, you can still be happy, laugh and play.</p>

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Answers to the Basketball Game

1. **True or False: Most people find it hard to talk about death.** True: Death can be hard to talk about, but the more you talk about it, the easier it gets.
2. **True or False: Every living things eventually dies.** True: Death is natural and everything that lives eventually dies. Plants die. Animals die. People die.
3. **What are some things that cause death?** People die for different reasons. They get into an accident, get sick, get killed or kill themselves, or they die of old age.
4. **Name three things that happen to a person's body when they die.** When a person dies, their body stops working. The heart stops beating, the person stops breathing, they don't blink their eyes, they stop growing, and they don't feel any pain.
5. **What is a casket?** A casket is a wooden or steel box that holds the body of the person who died. It is sometimes called a coffin.
6. **What is an urn?** An urn is a container that holds the ashes of the person who died after the body has been cremated.
7. **True or False: When a dead person is cremated or buried they feel scared because they don't like being burned or put in the ground.** False: Although it may seem strange or scary to cremate someone or bury them in the ground, it doesn't hurt to be cremated or buried because once someone is dead, they cannot feel anything. They do not feel scared, and they do not feel any pain.
8. **If someone in your family dies, does that mean you will die soon too?** No. Most people live a long time and die when they are old.
9. **Can a dead person come back alive?** No, even if we wish really hard, when a body dies it stops working forever, and so it cannot come back alive again.
10. **True or False: Everyone feels sad and cries when someone in their family dies.** False: People have different reactions when someone dies. Some people feel sad and some people don't feel anything at all. Some cry, and some don't. Some people are in shock, which means they find it hard to feel anything at all.
11. **True or False: Only old people die.** False: People of all ages die. Babies, children, teenagers, adults and elderly people die. It is very sad when someone young dies. Most people live a long and healthy life.
12. **True or False: Even though your special person died, you can still be happy, laugh and play.** True: Even though you may feel very sad about your special person's death, you can still feel happy, laugh and play. There may be times when you feel sad, and other times when you feel happy. All of your feelings are normal and okay.

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Basketball Game: Additional Questions (Anticipating a Death)

Developed by Ceilidh Eaton Russell. *Format credited to Liana Lowenstein.*

<p>-1-</p> <p>Can you catch the illness from being close, touching, hugging or kissing someone who has it?</p>	<p>-2-</p> <p>True or False: There is nothing a kid could say or do to cause someone else to get this disease.</p>
<p>-3-</p> <p>True or False: Thinking about a person dying, or talking about it might make it happen.</p>	<p>-4-</p> <p>What are 3 feelings someone might have if a family member was dying?</p>
<p>-5-</p> <p>True or False: Sometimes people feel very different feelings at the same time.</p>	<p>-6-</p> <p>True or False: It is selfish to spend time thinking or doing things that are not focused on the person who is sick, or wishing to have your "normal life" back.</p>
<p>-7-</p> <p>What are 2 things that might help you, or someone else who was feeling sad?</p>	<p>-8-</p> <p>What are 2 things that might help you, or someone else who was feeling angry?</p>
<p>-9-</p> <p>What are 2 things that people (friends, family, teachers) could do to show you that they care about you?</p>	<p>-10-</p> <p>What are 3 things you can do with, or for the person who is dying?</p>
<p>-11-</p> <p>Who could you ask for help, or tell how you feel, or ask questions if you needed to?</p>	<p>-12-</p> <p>True or False: There is nothing wrong with having fun sometimes even though someone you care about is dying.</p>

Basketball Game: Additional Answers (Anticipating a Death)

Developed by Ceilidh Eaton Russell. *Format credited to Liana Lowenstein.*

1. **Can you catch the illness from being close, touching, hugging or kissing someone who has it?** With cancer, ALS, heart disease, and most other illnesses, the answer is no, you cannot catch it from another person no matter what. When people hear that cancer has “spread” they often think that means it’s become contagious, but in fact, it can only spread inside a person’s body, not outside, to someone else’s body. ***Make sure to find out about the person’s specific illness. If the disease IS contagious, use this opportunity to talk about safety precautions in place to ensure that other family members do not get sick, and to assure them that they did not give the other person the disease in the first place.
2. **True or False: There is nothing a kid could say or do to cause someone else to get this disease.** True: (Ask the child if they ever thought they may have done - or not done - something to cause it so you can address their specific ideas). Many kids remember saying, “I hate you,” or “I wish you were dead” and need reassurance that no matter what they said or felt, they did not make this happen. Some kids have heard, “you’re giving me a headache,” “you’re going to give me a heart attack” or worry that their behavior caused stress that led to the illness. Try to remember that everyone in the world has stress in their lives, most people have headaches, but even with both of those things most people do not have cancer or other serious illnesses.
3. **True or False: Thinking about a person dying, or talking about it might make it happen.** False: Nothing that a person says, or thinks can cause a person to die. Sometimes people try to focus on hope or positive thoughts, and may feel bad about having worries or thoughts about what could happen if the person did die. Although these thoughts and feelings can be difficult, they are not “bad” and cannot hurt another person.
4. **What are 3 feelings someone might have if a family member was dying?** All feelings are natural to have when a person is dying. Worried, sad, angry, and lonely are some of the feelings that kids think of first, but let them know that all different feelings are natural, including: hopeful, jealous (of the attention), numb or surreal, guilty (that they are not sick, or believing they caused it), betrayed (sometimes related to faith), helpless, and anything else.
5. **True or False: Sometimes people feel very different feelings at the same time.** True: Grief is complex; people may feel opposite feelings, like relief and sadness, or confused and angry, at the same time. These feelings may change very quickly, or last a long time.
6. **True or False: It is selfish to spend time thinking or doing things that are not focused on the person who is sick, or wishing to have your “normal life” back.** False: It is not selfish, it is natural to miss the things you used to do, and to feel tired of feeling worried, or sad, or focused on the person who is sick. It does not mean that you don’t care about them or that you want them to be gone or to need less care or attention.
7. **What are 2 things that might help you, or someone else who was feeling sad?** *All ideas count.* Can suggest: a hug, crying as a way of letting out feelings, someone to listen or sit quietly with, going for a walk, listening to music, reading a book, physical activity, watching a movie, doing an art or creative project, cooking, etc. Try to think of some activities that are focused on feeling or expressing emotion, and others that offer distraction.
8. **What are 2 things that might help you, or someone else who was feeling angry?** *All ideas count.* Emphasize that it’s ok to feel angry, and it is important to find ways of letting it out without hurting themselves or others. Can suggest: crying or yelling into a pillow, throwing a ball or water balloons against a wall, jumping / stomping, hitting or kicking a punching bag, singing along with “angry” music, drawing the feeling and crumpling the paper, etc.

Basketball Game: Additional Answers (Anticipating a Death) *Cont'd*

Developed by Ceilidh Eaton Russell. *Format credited to Liana Lowenstein.*

9. **What are 2 things that people (friends, family, teachers) could do to show you that they care about you?** *All ideas count.* Can suggest: asking how you are, playing with you, spending time together, showing affection.
10. **What are 3 things you can do with, or for the person who is dying?** Listen to music, watch a movie, read a book, look at photos together, tell them about your day, do their hair or nails, put lotion on hands or feet, do homework in the same room as them, sit quietly with them, decorate their room, make them a snack, talk to them quietly even if they are asleep, etc.
11. **Who could you ask for help, or tell how you feel, or ask questions if you needed to?** Encourage them to think of as many people as possible, including family, friends, teachers, neighbours, baby-sitters, coaches, etc.
12. **True or False: There is nothing wrong with having fun sometimes even though someone you care about is dying.** True: Although there will be times when you can't imagine having fun, at other times you will play and feel happy or calm. It doesn't mean that you don't care about the person or your family, but that there is room for all of these feelings inside of us.

AGES 6 – 9 / 10+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

FEELINGS CIRCLE

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy. To normalize emotions and promote self-expression.

What You Need

- Crayons or Pencil Crayons
- Emotion Cards (or Grief Bundle)
- *How I Feel* Handout
- Flipchart Paper

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been adapted from Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel's *Children's Group Manual: A Guide for Supervisors* (n.d) by C.Grosset.

Preparation Activities

1. Discuss what grief means with the child(ren):
 - Grief is a word that describes the feelings and thoughts we have when someone we love is dying/has died.
 - Everyone's grief is different – we feel and react in different ways - sad, mad, happy, numb, scared, etc.
 - Grief feelings change all the time – your feelings can change from one moment to the next, you can feel one way today and another way tomorrow, and you can have lots of different feelings all at once.
2. Brainstorm and discuss different feelings:
 - Take turns selecting Emotion Cards (P. 114) and acting out and guessing the different emotions. If a child is unfamiliar with the emotion invite them to ask you/the group for help.
 - Write each new emotion that is introduced on a piece of flip chart paper and give the child(ren) an opportunity to share a time when they felt this way.
3. Emphasize that all emotions are okay but not all behaviours are safe and healthy:
 - There are no good or bad emotions, but sometimes our feelings can make us feel gross inside (*stomachaches, racing thoughts, headaches, shaky, sleepy, sick, etc.*).
 - Sometimes when we are having a hard time dealing with the changes in our lives and the hard feelings we have inside, we might act out and do things we don't really mean to do.
 - It is okay to feel how ever you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself, others or property.
4. Invite the child(ren) to do an activity that helps us to express the feelings we have inside and show how strong the different feelings are inside of us.



FEELINGS CIRCLE CONTINUED

How to Play

1. Demonstrate and explain the *How I Feel* Handout (P.59):
 - The circle represents you and the colours you use to fill it in will describe the feelings you have on the inside when you think about the illness/death and how your life has changed because of it (*Other Prompts: When you were told your loved one was going to die/had died, when you attended the funeral, the first holiday without them, etc.*).
 - Pick a different colour for each of the feelings you have and use them to colour in the circle. Use the colours to show how strong your feelings are (*Ex: if you feel really really sad and picked yellow for sad, colour the circle with a lot of yellow; if you picked green for happy and only feel a little happy, colour the circle with a little bit of green*).
2. Invite the child(ren) to share their Feelings Circle if they feel comfortable doing so.



Discussion

Reflect

Are there any feelings that confuse you that you want to learn more about? Which ones?

Connect

Why might someone keep their feelings to themselves?
Why is it important to express your emotions? (*May feel even worse, say/do things that hurt self or others, etc.*)


Apply

Today we did art to express ourselves, what are some other positive things you can do to express your feelings?

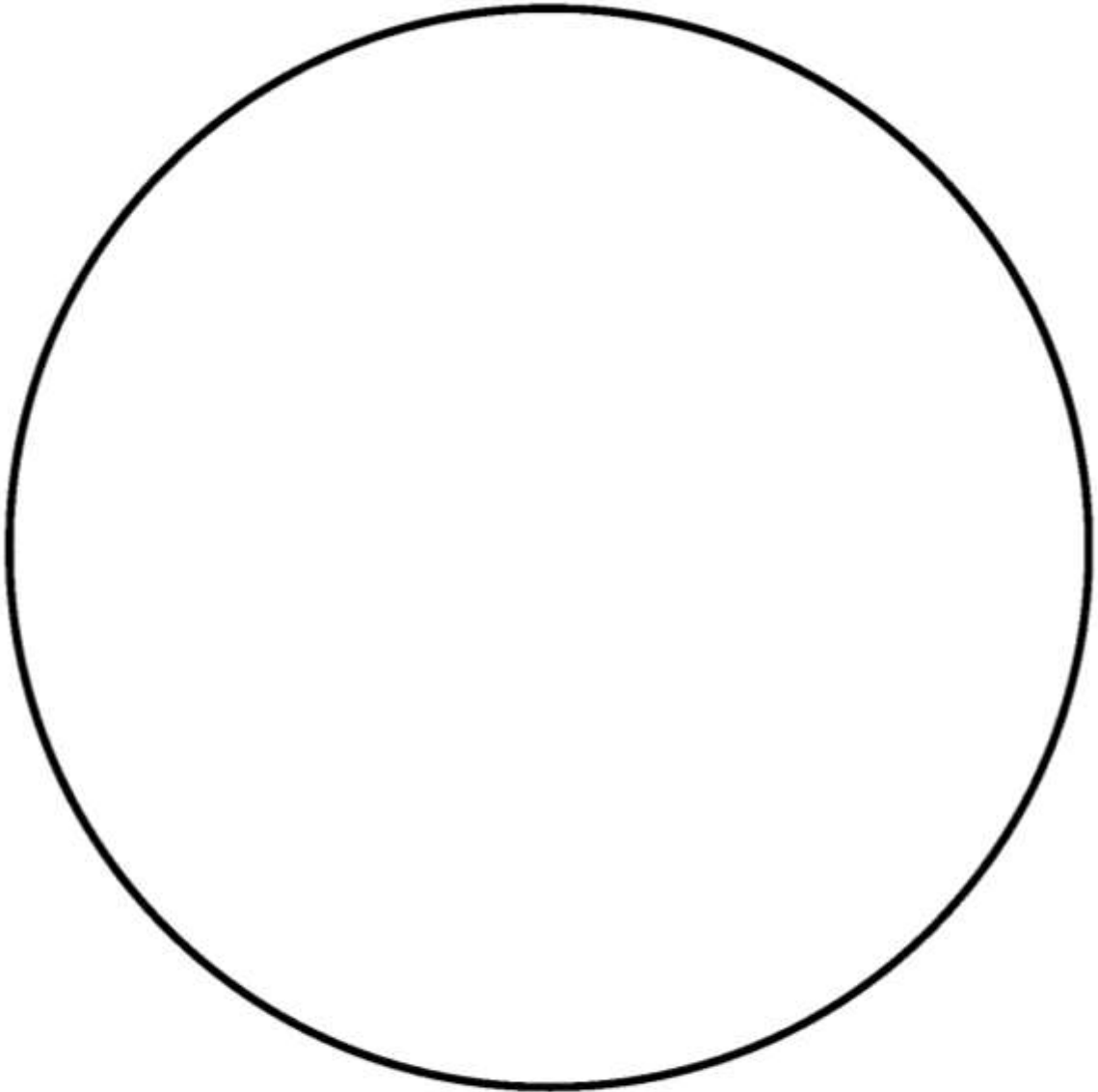


Variations

1. For younger children, you can use the feeling sticks from your Grief Bundle (see P. 26) in place of the Emotion Cards during your brainstorming session.
2. For older children, you can turn this into a mandala exercise, inviting them to fill their circle with shapes, lines, patterns and colours that represent their grief. To learn more, visit www.creativityintherapy.blogspot.ca/2012/11/mandalas.html.

 You can purchase a beautifully illustrated deck of cards, called Mixed Emotions at www.mixed-emotions.com/. These cards appeal to children, teens and adults alike.

HOW I FEEL...



MY FEELING LEGEND:

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

SPONGEBOMBS

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy. To normalize emotions and promote self-expression.

What You Need

- Washable Markers
- Tracing Paper (large sheets)
- Duct Tape
- Bucket of Water
- Sponges (6 or more per child)
- Dental Floss
- Scissors

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, MSc, CCLS. Ceilidh is a Child Life Specialist with the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre and a PhD student in the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition at the University of Guelph. In her clinical role she supports children and families living with the dying and death of a family member, and educates professionals about supporting and communicating with grieving children.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare the spongebombs:
 - ⚠️ You can use plain old sponges for this activity instead of following the process below if you are tight on time & supplies.
 - Cut each sponge into 3 strips
 - Hold 6 sponge strips together and wrap dental floss around the middle, cinching and tying as tightly as possible with a double knot
 - Twist the sponge strips to 'fluff' the spongebomb
 - Try to make between 3 – 6 spongebombs per child
2. Ask the child to think about the difficult things in their life that they wish to get rid of, let go of, or destroy:
 - Is there anything you wish you could **get rid of**? (the disease, nightmares, the thing that caused the family member's death, etc.)
 - Is there anything that you would like to **let go of**? (difficult memories, worries, strong feelings that are painful/scary)
 - Is there a feeling that you want to **let out**? (to help the children consider this, draw a few sample images of what the feeling could look like if it was trapped in their body)
3. Invite the child(ren) to do an activity that helps us to let our feelings out and to symbolically destroy the things that are beyond our control.



IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

SPONGEBOMBS CONTINUED**How to Play**

1. Explain that they will be making targets by drawing about the feelings and thoughts that they wish they can let go of/destroy. Inform the child(ren) that they will have a chance to destroy their target by throwing spongebombs that will wash away their drawings.
2. Invite the child(ren) to draw any thoughts and feelings they would like to destroy on the tracing paper:
 - Draw what your feelings might look like if you could look inside yourself or what you think feelings would look like as cartoon characters.
 - Write or draw pictures, symbols or 'secret code' about anything that's difficult that you wish you could let go of, get rid of, or let out.
 - The more colour you use to make your target the more dramatic the end result will be.
3. Let the child(ren) know that if they've created something that they want to keep, they are welcome to do so (It is very important to check in with the child to make sure that they still want to destroy their target before proceeding with the spongebombs). If they decide to destroy the target, tape it firmly to an outdoor wall, fence or garage door. If it is not feasible to go outside, tape the paper to a shower wall and make sure there are towels on the floor to soak up spills and splashes.
4. Encourage the child(ren) to soak their spongebombs in water and throw them at their target until they feel finished.

**Discussion****Reflect**

What did it feel like to destroy your difficult thoughts and feelings? Why?

Connect


Why might someone keep their feelings to themselves?
Why is it important to express your emotions? (May feel even worse, say/do things that hurt self or others, etc.).

Apply

When we keep difficult feelings to ourselves, we can start to feel even worse inside. That is why it is important to express our feelings. What are some other safe and healthy ways to get our feelings out?

**Variations**

1. As an alternative to spongebombs, you can use large syringes (without the tips) and turkey basters to spray and squirt water at the target.

 This activity works very well in groups as long as children have the option to choose a private corner to work in and it is understood that everyone will only throw sponges at their own work.

GRIEF SOUP

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy. To normalize emotions and discuss how to care for grief.

What You Need

- 📖 Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss
- Large Soup Pot
- Ladle
- Found Ingredients (objects from the kitchen that are ready for disposal. Ingredients do not need to be edible)
- Masking Tape
- Permanent Markers

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that when we are grieving, we can experience lots of different emotions (sad, angry, jealous, guilty, happy, etc.). All of these different feelings are often mixed together and they change all the time. Sometimes we have more of one ingredient than another (today I have a lot of sad; yesterday I was mostly numb.) We need to take care of our grief and pay attention to how it is showing up and what it needs at different times.
2. Introduce and read the book, *Tear Soup*, by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen (as the book is quite long, you may decide to read predetermined sections rather than the whole book in the interest of time).
3. Invite the child(ren) to make a 'grief soup.'

How to Play

1. Place all of the supplies in the center for easy access.
2. Ask the child(ren) to name feelings that can be a part of grief and choose different ingredients to represent the emotions. The child(ren) can label the ingredients by writing on the tape with permanent marker (Ex: box of blue Jello® labelled sad; a cup of milk labelled numb, bowl of chocolate chips as happy, green food colouring labeled mad, etc.).
3. When all of the ingredients have been identified, invite the child(ren) to once again name the feelings as they put them into the grief soup and stir it up. The soup may become quite gross and kids can look at how it is developing as it 'cooks' – this allows for a playful engagement with 'gross' as well as a learning opportunity about how our mixed up feelings can make us feel gross inside if we don't take care of our grief.



IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

GRIEF SOUP CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

Are there any feelings that confuse you and that you want to learn more about? Which ones?

Were you surprised by any of the feelings that we added to the grief soup? Which ones?

Connect

Just like the soup, when we have mixed up feelings that we keep inside it can start to feel gross in our bodies. What does it feel like in your body when you have a lot of tough and mixed up feelings inside?

What foods remind you of your loved one?

Apply

What are some things we can do to express difficult thoughts and feelings?

Grief can be really tiring and expressing our feelings is hard work. If we do not take care of ourselves we can start to feel gross just like the soup. What are some ways we can stay healthy and take care of our bodies?

**Variations**

1. Older children can use real ingredients to create edible food products and then can share their 'grief' food with others. This can be a creative way for the child to engage in caretaking and help out the family.



BODY MAP

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy. To normalize emotions and promote self-expression.

What You Need

- Emotion Cards (or Grief Bundle)
- Long Roll of Paper (for body tracing)
- Drawing Materials
- Flipchart Paper

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been adapted with permission from *Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens* (P. 22). © 2012 by **The Dougy Centre for Grieving Children & Families**. Visit their website at www.dougy.org.

Preparation Activities

1. Discuss that when we are grieving, we can experience lots of different emotions (sad, angry, jealous, guilty, happy, etc.).
2. Discuss different grief feelings:
 - Take turns selecting Emotion Cards (P. 114) and acting out and guessing the different emotions. If a child is unfamiliar with the emotion invite them to ask you/the group for help.
 - Write each new emotion that is introduced on a piece of flip chart paper and give children an opportunity to share a time when they felt this way.
 - Talk about the ways that our emotions can feel in our bodies. *What does ____ feel like in your body?*
3. Invite the child(ren) to do a body tracing activity that helps to express our feelings and show where they happen in our bodies.

How to Play

1. Make the Body Tracings
 - Group Setting: Have the children pair up and take turns tracing each other's body outlines.
 - One-on-One Support Session: Have the child sit with their legs outstretched to trace **their own legs**. Then, have them lay all the way down and assist them in tracing their upper body. It's best that you use pencil to do the body tracing as to avoid getting marker on clothes.
2. Invite them to identify the emotions they experience and choose a colour that represents it (*anger with green, worry with blue, excited with purple*). Remind them that there's no one right colour/emotion combination and that everyone has different ideas.
3. Have the child(ren) colour the parts of the body where they feel that emotion (*red on feet and fists, blue on chest and tears on face, etc.*). Inform the child(ren) that they can also write words and draw pictures to describe their emotions and where in their body they experience them.
4. Hang up the body tracing(s) when finished and allow the child(ren) time to share what they drew and what the experience was like for them if they are comfortable doing so.

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

BODY MAP CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

Are there any feelings that we talked about today that confuse you and you want to learn more about? Which ones?

Does your body always feel the feelings you identified on your map or do the feelings change?

What kinds of thoughts or situations make these feelings happen in your body?

Connect

Do you remember a time when you felt ____? What made you feel that way? (*mad, sad, numb, etc.*)

Why might someone keep their feelings to themselves?

Why is it important to express your emotions? (*May feel even worse, say/do things that hurt self or others, etc.*)

Apply

It is okay to feel how ever you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself, others or property. What are some positive things you can do to get your anger out and calm down when you are really upset? (*Make a list together*)

Who can you go to for support when you are having a tough time?

**Variations**

1. Play emotions Pictionary® by drawing out the different emotions for each other to guess.
2. For younger children, you can use the feeling sticks from your Grief Bundle (see P. 26) in place of the Emotion Cards during your brainstorming session.



⚠ You can purchase a beautifully illustrated deck of cards, called Mixed Emotions at www.mixed-emotions.com/. These cards appeal to children, teens and adults alike.

GRIEFFITI

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy and promote self-expression.

What You Need

- Images of Street Art/ Graffiti
- Music Player (to play hip hop for inspiration)
- 11 x 8" Paper
- Large Mural Paper
- Drawing Materials
- Permanent Markers (big ones)
- Paints Supplies
- Stencils
- Glue (preferably wheat paste but white glue is fine)

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Mount a large piece of mural paper on the wall, prepare the painting materials and lay down the drop sheet before your session begins.
2. Discuss the history of graffiti:
 - Who knows what graffiti and street art is? Where do you usually see it? What do you think of it?
 - Graffiti usually takes the form of publicly painted art, drawings or words but can actually be any kind of deliberate application of a media by people on any surface, both private and public.
 - Urban street art – some people think of it as vandalism, but a lot of people, especially young people, see it as a way to express themselves and represent city life and aesthetics. Street art challenges old-fashioned values and ideas about who owns our public space and who makes and owns art by making art free and accessible.
 - Graffiti has existed at least since the days of ancient civilizations such as classical Greece and the Roman Empire when people used to write on walls or post comments about public or political issues.
 - Graffiti started getting attention in the 1960's and 1970's when it started appearing everywhere in urban neighborhoods in the US. Some people connect graffiti becoming popular with gangs using it, but really graffiti has been connected with hip hop culture in general, and more recently, with young artists looking to make their art accessible, public, or to take it "out of the gallery", and has kept a lot of young people out of trouble with the law.
 - Today, you should know that if you draw a pretty picture on a wall without a property owner's consent it can be considered vandalism, although in many countries the owner must press charges before it would be considered a crime. If you listen to the news, you can hear arguments from time to time about whether graffiti is art or vandalism. Today, we are going to be calling it art, as long as it stays on your paper!
3. Invite the child(ren) to create graffiti that expresses their grief (*we will call it grieffiti!*)
4. Give the child(ren) time to look at a wide variety of graffiti/street art images to inspire them.

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

GRIEFFITI CONTINUED 2/3**How to Play**

1. Allow the child(ren) to practice writing an individual tag (stylized signature) or image that conveys something about them and the person who is sick/has died. For example, a person might decide to draw a combination of names, two names side-by-side or just stick with a picture.
2. Invite the child(ren) to tag their names and the name of the person who is sick/has died on the 'wall.' Encourage them to include images that represent grief, connection, emotions and what their life is like (*how they feel, what grief is like, what that person taught them, etc.*). Individual tags can be directly drawn onto the mural paper or drawn on smaller pieces of paper and cut and pasted to the mural. Encourage the child(ren) to layer and be experimental – allow for mess and play.
3. Ask the child(ren) to stand back and admire the completed mural. Provide the opportunity for the child(ren) to share their contributions.



GRIEFFITI CONTINUED 3/3



Discussion

Reflect

How do you feel after putting your thoughts, emotions and memories on paper in such a creative way?

Connect

Sometimes people hide their thoughts and feelings. Why might someone keep thoughts and feelings to themselves?

Why do you think it is important to get your feelings out? *(Feel even worse inside, say/do things that hurt self or others)*

What does it feel like in your body when you keep difficult thoughts and feelings to yourself?

Apply

Art is one way we can express ourselves. Can you think of any other ways to share your thoughts and feelings without hurting yourself, others or property? *(Make a list together)*



Variations

1. In the group setting, participants can create a group mural or they can work on individual mini murals.
2. When conducting a one on one support session in the home consider taping some mural paper to the child's room door and provide them with drawing materials to work on their mural. This way, the child can continue to draw their mural even after the support session is over. **Ask the child's guardian for permission first!*
3. This activity can also be broken down over several sessions to develop graffiti skills and further explore different topics such as: emotions, memories & connection, changes in their life, gratitude, strengths & abilities, etc.

AGES 6+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

FEELINGS BINGO

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy. To normalize emotions and promote self-expression.

What You Need

- Printed Bingo Templates
- Emotion Cards
- Bingo Markers
- Coloured Cardstock
- Crayons or Pencil Crayons
- Scissors & Glue

No. of children

- 1 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare a set of Emotion Cards to be used for the Bingo draw (photocopy the cards found on P. 114, cut them out individually, fold them in half and place in a container).
2. Discuss what grief means with the child(ren):
 - Grief is a word that describes the feelings and thoughts we have when someone we love is dying/has died
 - Everyone's grief is different – we feel and react in different ways (*sad, mad, happy, numb, scared, etc.*)
 - Grief feelings change all the time – your feelings can change from one moment to the next, you can feel one way today and another way tomorrow, and you can have lots of different feelings all at once
3. Play the matching game to help children learn about new emotions and share their experiences.
 - Photocopy and cut out 2 sets of Emotion Cards (P. 114) onto cardstock paper
 - Lay the cards face down on the table/floor in a series of rows and columns
 - Take turns selecting two cards in an attempt to make a match
 - Discuss the feeling when a match is made
 - *What does ____ look like? (sad, mad, numb, scared, etc.)*
 - *Do you remember a time when you felt ____?*
 - Remove pairs from the game as they are found and continue until there are no cards remaining

How to Play

1. Provide each child with the Bingo templates found on pages 71 and 72.
2. Demonstrate how to make the game card:
 - Cut out each card individually
 - Paste them into the spaces on the Bingo card in any order that you'd like.
3. Play Bingo:
 - Provide each child with Bingo markers and set a goal (*one line horizontal or vertical, box, full card*)
 - Draw cards one at a time and read aloud
 - Support the child(ren) to find and mark off each emotion as it is read
 - Tell them to yell Bingo when they reach the goal
4. When the game is complete, have the child(ren) colour in the feelings that come up when they think about their loved one who is dying/has died.
5. Invite the child(ren) to share the feelings they coloured in on their Bingo card if they feel comfortable doing so.

FEELINGS BINGO CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

Are there any feelings that confuse you and you want to learn more about? Which ones?

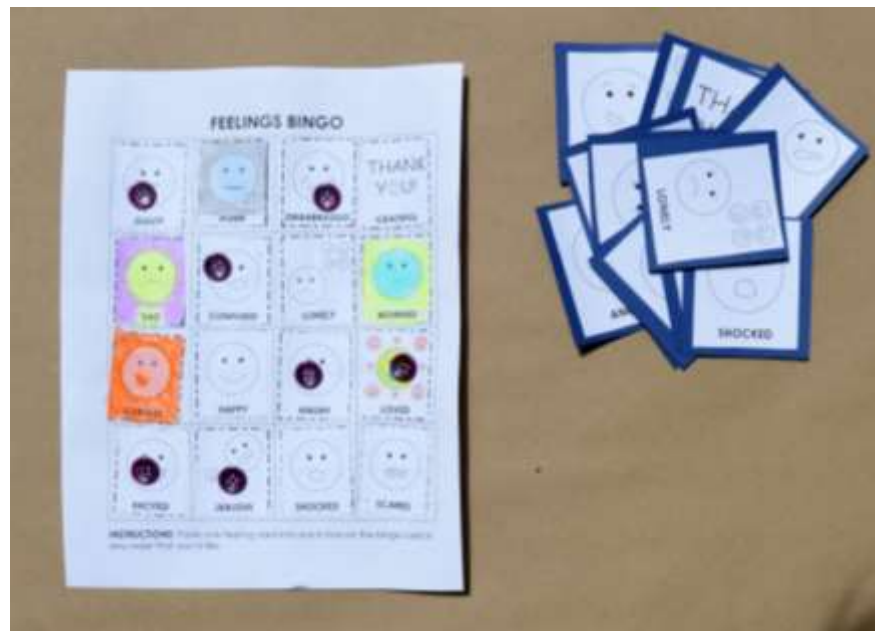
Connect

Why might someone keep their feelings to themselves?
Why is it important to express your emotions? *(May feel even worse, say/do things that hurt self or others, etc.)*

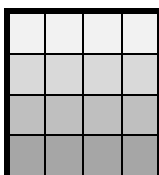
Apply

It is okay to feel however you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself, others or property. What are some positive things you can do to get your anger out and calm down when you are really upset? *(Make a list together)*

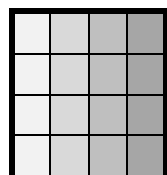
Who can you go to for support when you are having a tough time?



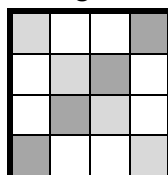
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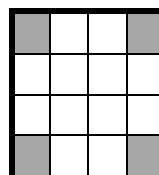
Down



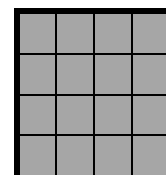
Diagonal






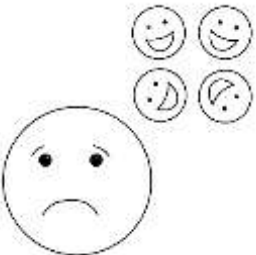
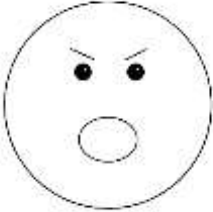


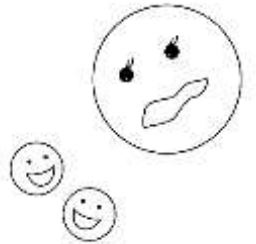

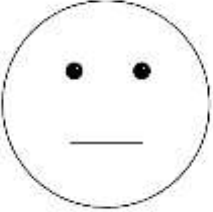

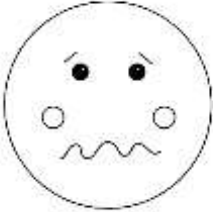



4 Corners



Full Card



Feelings Bingo - Emotion Cards

			
EXCITED	HAPPY	SAD	LONELY
			
ANGRY	SCARED	SHOCKED	JEALOUS
			
CONFUSED	GUILTY	NUMB	WORRIED
			THANK YOU! 
EMBARRASSED	CURIOUS	LOVED	GRATEFUL



INSTRUCTIONS: Cut out each feeling face and paste one into each box on the Bingo card in any order that you'd like.

Feelings Bingo

[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]
[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]
[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]
[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]	[PASTE HERE]

INSTRUCTIONS: Paste one feeling face into each box on the Bingo card in any order that you'd like.

AGES 6+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

CHILD IN THE MIDDLE

Key Learning

To develop self-regulation skills.

What You Need

- Ball (x1)

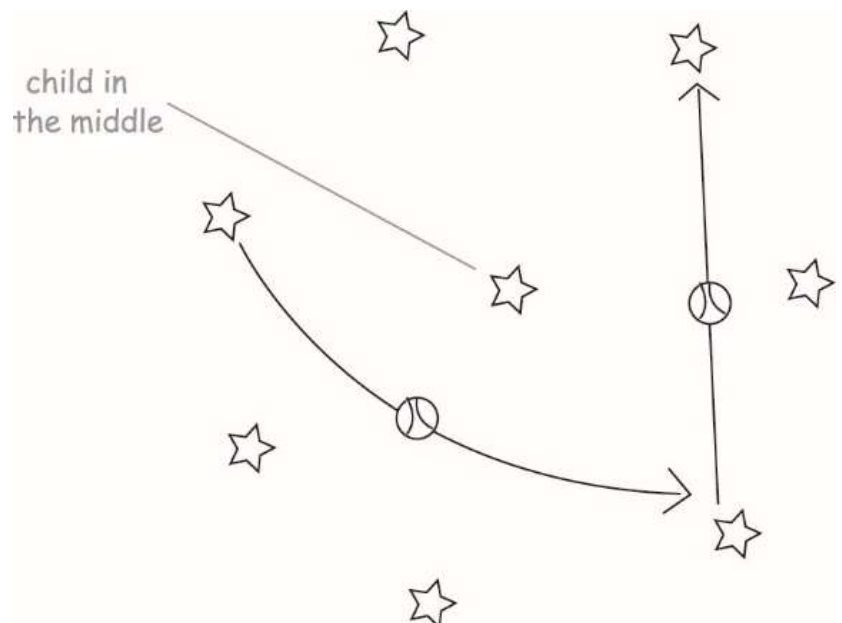
No. of children

- 6 or more

This game has been taken with permission from Right To Play's collection of play-based learning activities.

How to Play

1. Divide the children into groups of 6-10.
2. Ask children to form a circle.
3. Ask for 1 volunteer from each group to stand in the centre of the circle.
4. Give each team a ball.
5. Explain and demonstrate that:
 - The children in the circle will throw the ball across the circle to players on the other side of the circle **without** allowing the child in the middle to catch the ball.'
- ⚠ Make sure the children are not throwing the ball too hard.
 - Children are not allowed to pass the ball to the child beside them. They must try to pass the ball **across** the circle.
 - The child in the middle must try to catch the ball.
 - If the child in the middle catches the ball, then they switch positions with the child who threw it.
- ⚠ If the child in the middle does not catch the ball after 2-3 minutes, consider asking another child to take a turn in the middle.
6. Repeat game for as long as you wish.



CHILD IN THE MIDDLE CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

How did you feel being the child in the middle?
How did you feel when you were a part of the circle and not in the middle?

Connect

What is difficult about being the only one not included in activities?
Are there times when you feel left out at home or that you don't get as much attention as you used to before your loved one got sick/died?
How do you usually take care of yourself when you feel left out or alone?

Apply

How can you ensure that everyone is included?
When you need special attention from the adults in your life because you are having a difficult day or just want to have fun with them, how can you communicate what you need?



Variations

1. Divide the children into groups of three. Two children in each group must try keep the ball away from the third child.
2. Kick the ball on the ground instead of throwing it.
3. Increase the number of balls used.
4. Challenge the children to throw the ball with their non-throwing hand.

AGES 10+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

THROWING ANGER AND FEAR

Key Learning

To develop self-regulation skills.

What You Need

- Softball (1 per player)
- Chalk (anything to divide the playing area – you can use Painter's Tape indoors)

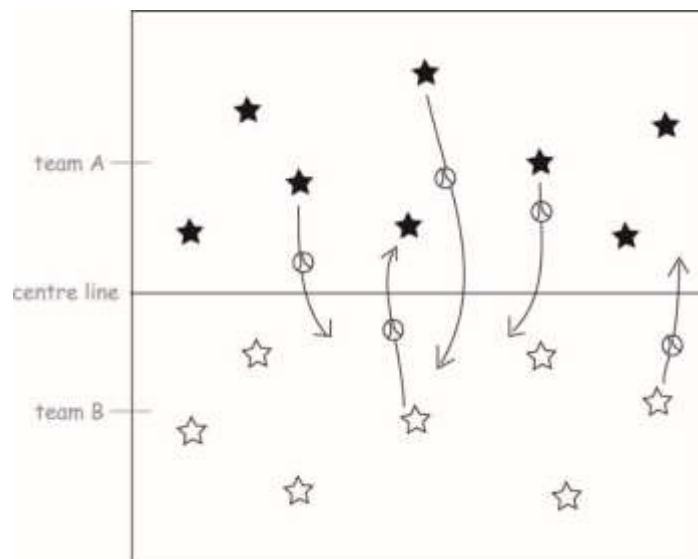
No. of children

- 5 or more

This game has been taken with permission from Right To Play's collection of play-based learning activities.

How to Play

1. Divide the play area into 2 equal sides using chalk or markers (see diagram).
 2. Ask the children what is the first word/thought/action they think of when you say the word "anger." Repeat the question for the word "fear."
 3. Show the children the balls they will be playing with and explain that each ball represents both "anger" and "fear."
 4. Give each child a ball.
 5. Divide the children into 2 equal-sized teams.
 6. Send Team A to one side of the play area and Team B to the opposite side.
 7. Explain and demonstrate that:
 - When the game begins, each team will gently throw their balls to the other team's side
 - Players may not cross into the other team's side
 - The teams are trying to keep their section clear of balls (*the balls must stay in the play area*)
 - After 2 minutes, you will call "Stop!" At that time, everybody stops throwing balls and sits down with arms folded
 - Count the balls on each team's side
 8. Continue playing, stopping and counting every 2-3 minutes.
- ⚠ Ensure that the children are not throwing balls at their opponents.



THROWING ANGER AND FEAR *CONTINUED*



Discussion

Reflect

How did it make you feel when you had many balls in your section?

Connect

At the beginning of the game, I said that the balls represented "anger" and "fear." How is this game similar to how many people deal with anger and fear in real life?

Apply

How can sports help you to deal with feelings of anger or fear? The next time you are angry or afraid, what can you do to help yourself deal with these emotions?



Variations

1. The game can be made more difficult by adding more balls or increasing the size of the area.

AGES 6+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

MY SAFE PLACE

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy and promote self-regulation.

What You Need

- Masonite/Canvas Board
- Pasticine (not play dough)
- Safe Place Visualization Script
- Chime (Meditation Bells)

No. of children

- 1 or more

The Pasticine Safe Place activity was provided by Lysa Toye.

Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

The Visualizing a Safe Place activity was provided by Marianne Gocker.

Marianne has worked as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in varied community settings. Currently Marianne is working in private practice and at the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre. Her private practice focuses on supporting children and families coping with grief or terminal illness within their family.

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that when we are grieving, it is normal for people to feel scared, worried or anxious. Normalize scared and worried feelings by giving the child(ren) an opportunity to share their own personal experiences. *Is there anything that you worry about? What makes you feel scared? What might other kids worry about when someone they love is dying/has died?*
2. Explain that when we are having these difficult feelings, sometimes it helps to think of a place that makes us feel good, happy or safe. This may be a place we have been to that reminds us of good memories, it may be a place from a book or a movie that we love or a place in our imagination. Calling this place to mind and experiencing how it makes us feel in our bodies can help us to relax and feel safer.
3. Invite the child(ren) to do a relaxation exercise where we visit our safe place in our minds and afterwards we will create a sculpture of our safe place.

How to Play

1. Lead the child(ren) through the guided imagery exercise using the script provided on P. 79 to help them reach a state of relaxation and identify their safe place.
 - Do this exercise in a quiet place where interruptions are unlikely. Soft music may help create a feeling of calm. It may help mark the time for this as being apart from the ordinary sounds of the day.
2. Provide each child with a board to use as a base for their sculpture and invite them to use the pasticine to sculpt an image of their safe place.
3. Allow time for the child(ren) to share their sculpture and talk about their safe place and how it makes them feel good.
4. Emphasize that this place is a tool that they can carry with them all of the time – they can visit their safe place whenever they feel stressed, scared or worried. The more they practice going there in their minds, the easier it will be to call upon when times are hard.

MY SAFE PLACE *CONTINUED*



Discussion

Reflect

How did you feel as you were visiting your safe place in your mind today?

Was it hard to get to your safe place in your imagination?

Connect

When/Why might someone visit their safe place in their imagination?

Apply

What are some other things you can do to help yourself to feel safe when you are worried or scared?

Who can you go to for support when you are having a tough time? *(Make a list together)*



Unlike play dough, plasticine doesn't dry out, it remains pliable which means sculptures can be modified over time. Kids can create multiple sculptures to build their tool box of self-support strategies or use this single activity as a jumping-off place to brainstorm other strategies.



Variations

1. Instead of a sculpture, children can create a mural. Plasticine is very adherent and can be applied directly to the wall. Keep in mind that some colours may stain (especially red)!
2. Children can draw or paint a picture of their safe space or find photos in magazines and online to create a collage.



Visualizing a Safe Place

Provided by Marianne Gocker

Begin by finding a comfortable way to sit or lie down. Let your eyes close gently if you feel comfortable doing so. Otherwise let your gaze rest on a place on the floor a few feet in front of you. Notice how you are breathing and attend to your breathing for a few moments. If you feel comfortable, notice your breathing in your belly...notice how your belly gently expands when you breathe in and how your belly gently deflates (or gets smaller) as you breathe out. Perhaps you might want to let out a long slow sigh.... Aaah.

As you continue belly breathing (breathing deeply) imagine a place you like to be where you feel safe. This might be a place in your home, at school, or a place you have visited. Perhaps it is a place near a lake or the ocean. Perhaps it is a place in a park. It might even be an imaginary place, a place you might like to go. A place where it is beautiful and peaceful, where you feel good and safe.

Take a few moments to notice what you see there. What do you see? What is around you? What do you notice? What colours do you see? Are there other people with you? Are there animals there? Do you see the blue of the sky, the green of trees or the colours of the walls of a room where you feel safe? (Pause...)

What do you hear in this place? Perhaps the wind in the trees or the sound of waves hitting the shore or the voices of people you love, or pots and pans, or birds or....Just spend a few moments listening to the sounds in your place. (Pause....)

What do you smell? Do you smell the sea air, or the leaves on the forest floor, or the smells of someone cooking dinner, or the smell of laundry detergent, of shampoo, of... (Pause....)

What do you feel in this place? Do you feel the warmth of the sun on your face, a cool breeze on your cheeks, the softness of a pillow or stuffed animal, the fur of a pet, the softness of sand or the hard surface of a boulder or... (Pause....)

Lastly, what might you taste? The salt air on your tongue, the taste of your toothpaste, the taste of something you had for lunch, the taste of....Of course, if there is no sense of taste connected with your place that is fine too. Just notice.... (Pause....)

Now just spend a few minutes relaxing in your safe place...You have no place to go, nothing to do and no special way you have to be. Continue breathing deeply in this place and notice how your body feels.

Remember that you can return to this special place anytime. It can be especially helpful to visit this place when you are experiencing stress. You might just visit for a brief moment by pausing to take a few deep breaths and bringing this place to mind. This safe place is always inside of you.

When the chime sounds gently open your eyes and bring your attention back into the room at your own pace. (Chime....)

FAMILY CONNECTION TREE

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy and promote self-regulation.

What You Need

- Poster Paper
- Scissors & Glue
- Drawing Materials
- Craft Supplies

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Discuss how when we are grieving, sometimes it can feel like we are all alone. But if we take the time to think about it, we realize that we often have a large support circle of family, friends and other people from our community – including people who have died.
2. Talk with the child(ren) about the different ways of being connected.
3. We can stay connected with people who are far away by communicating with them by phone or the computer. We can keep them in our hearts and memories.
4. Even though they are not physically here with us, we can still feel loved by a person who has died. We can keep them in our hearts by thinking about them and sharing stories.
5. Our community may consist of family members, friends and neighbours; babysitters, teachers and people from church; teammates, coaches and other group members; animals and even imaginary friends.

How to Play

1. Invite the child(ren) to draw an image of a tree representing their family and their extended support system.
2. Encourage them to find creative ways to represent all of the people that are a part of their life, both those who are living and those who have died (*write names on the branches, flowers, fruits or leaves; draw people as different animals found in the trees like birds, bugs and squirrels*).
3. Invite the child(ren) to share their completed tree(s). If you are working in the group setting, children may think of new people to add to their tree as they listen while other children share their work.

- ⚠ If you are working in the group setting, the children can link their individual trees together to make a "forest."
- ⚠ When working one on one with a child, you can invite the whole family to do the activity (if the child consents).

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FAMILY CONNECTION TREE CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

Did you know that you have so many people around to support you during tough times?

Connect

Do you remember a time when you went to someone for help when you were having a tough time with your feelings? Did this person do or say anything that made you feel better?

Apply

Who on your family connection tree do you feel comfortable asking questions to and sharing tough feelings with? If a friend were to come to you for help because they were having a tough time, how would you be there to support them?

**Variations**

1. Instead of drawing, invite children to paint the tree instead!
2. Children can cut images out of magazines or find pictures online to paste onto their tree.



STRESS BALLS

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy and promote self-regulation.

What You Need

- Deflated Balloons
- Spoon
- Scissors
- Permanent Markers
- Filling (cornstarch, sand, rice, icing sugar, etc.)

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Towe. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Discuss how grief can sometimes cause us to feel more physical and emotional stress, and difficult feelings such as anger, that can be intense or hard to manage. Having a physical outlet to release these feelings can be helpful to encourage relaxation and relieve tension.
2. Invite the child(ren) to make balloon stress balls. Balloon stress balls are small and can be kept in your pocket, in your desk at school or anywhere else and used as a way to help you to feel more relaxed and more focused.

How to Play

1. Have each child choose a buddy in the group to work with on their stress ball. If you are conducting a one on one support session, take turns helping each other instead.
2. Ask each child to choose two balloons in colours that match their mood. Invite them to share their mood and the colour(s) they chose if they are comfortable doing so.
3. Instruct the child(ren) to stretch out their balloons – they can do this with their hands or by blowing them up a little. To make the stress balls the balloons need to be deflated so be sure to let all of the air out.
4. Ask the child(ren) to cut the 'neck' (long part) off of the first balloon – discard the 'neck'. Repeat this step for the second balloon as well. Provide assistance where necessary.
5. Instruct the child(ren) to have their helping buddy (which may be you) stretch and hold open the hole of the balloon with both hands while the child spoons in the filling. Fill it as full as possible for the best stress ball - the balloon will continue to stretch as it is filled.
6. Explain that they will now use the second balloon to keep the sand (or whatever filling you are using) from spilling out. Stretch the second balloon over the top of the filled balloon to cover the cut hole, almost like a swimming cap or hat. The child(ren) might need help from their buddy for this part.
7. Provide the child(ren) with permanent markers to decorate their stress ball with words, facial expressions, or other designs. Emphasize that they need to let the marker dry before playing with it, or else they will get marker all over their hands.
8. Share stress ball creations and discuss other ways of working with difficult feelings like anger or stress. (*Stress balls can be used for juggling!*)

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

STRESS BALLS CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

What makes you feel stressed, worried or upset?

Connect

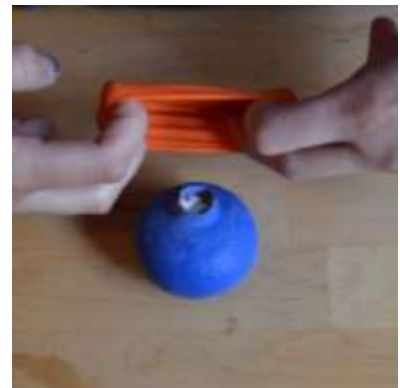
What do you feel like doing when you get upset? Some people yell, hit or break things when they are mad – do you ever feel like doing these things when you are upset?

Apply

It is okay to feel how ever you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself or others.

Sometimes it helps to get your stressed or angry energy out by doing something physical, like squeezing or pounding a stress ball. What are some other safe and healthy things you can do to release anger and calm down when you are really upset? *(Make a list together)*

- ⚠ If it is too difficult for kids to put the second balloon over the first when it is filled with the neck cut off, you can modify the activity by leaving the neck of the first balloon intact. Use a funnel to fill the balloon and tie it off once it is filled. Then cut down the neck close to the knot before covering it with the second balloon. This will ensure that there is no spillage when putting the second balloon over the first.




CALMING JAR

Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy and promote self-regulation.

What You Need

- Emotion Cards (or Grief Bundle)
-  Moody Cow Meditates or internet access to watch short video
- Small Glass Jar (with a good seal)
- Elmer's Clear Glue (or glitter glue)
- Warm Water
- Food Colouring
- Glitter (coarse & fine) and Sequins
- Small Dowel/Plastic Knife (for stirring)
- Optional: Patterned Duct Tape

No. of children

- 1 or more


This activity was inspired from the book, *Moody Cow Meditates* (2009) by Kerry Lee MacLean. You can find many different

'recipes' for a calming jar online. The 'recipe' used for this activity was adapted from a blog post by Natalie Shaw:

www.doodlecraftblog.com/2012/08/diy-calming-glitter-jars.html

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare a set of Emotion Cards by photocopying the sheet on P. 114 and cutting each card out individually. Place them in a container.
2. Discuss different grief feelings:
 - One at a time, select a new card from the container and take turns acting out and guessing the different emotions. If a child is unfamiliar with the emotion invite them to ask you/the group for help.
 - With each new emotion, give the child(ren) an opportunity to share a time when they felt this way. Ask the child(ren) to name other emotions, aside from the ones already discussed. Explain that sometimes, when we have so many thoughts and feelings swirling around in our heads it can be hard make sense of all of the mixed up feelings. We can do an activity today that helps us to settle our minds and calm our bodies when we feel upset or overwhelmed.

 You do not have to use all of the Emotion Cards provided on the sheet. Select cards that are mindful of the child's developmental level as well as their unique needs. For example you might only chose to use basic emotions (happy, sad, mad, numb, etc.) with younger children or you might select specific cards to help a child learn new words to describe their experiences.

3. Read *Moody Cow Meditates* by Kerry Lee MacLean or visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNmMH6tqiMc to watch the video, *Mind in a Jar – Planting Seeds: The Power of Mindfulness for Children* (2013) posted by Mindfulcloud Entertainment.

How to Play

1. Make a Calming Jar
 - Pour about 2 tbsp. of glue into the glass bottle (the more glue you use, the longer the glitter will stay suspended in the water before settling on the bottom)
 - Fill the jar with warm water, leaving about 1.5 inches of space at the top
 - Add 1 drop of food colouring and stir (*Think of the coloured water in this jar as your mind. The glitter that we add will be your thoughts and feelings. What feelings do you want to add to your jar?*)

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CALMING JAR CONTINUED 2/3

- Add about 3-4 tsp. of glitter (*If you have various colours of glitter on hand, you can have the child(ren) pick a different colour of glitter to represent different emotions*)
 - *Do you have any thoughts or worries that are bugging you?* Invite the child(ren) to add a few sequins to the jar – naming one thought or worry as they add each sequin.
 - You can add a bit more water if necessary, but be sure to leave enough space at the top to shake it up! If you have any fun patterned duct tape in your toolkit, wrap some around the lid to make sure it is extra secure.
2. Explain the meaning behind and purpose of the Calming Jar to provide closure for the worries that the child has put into it and reinforce it as a coping tool:
- *What do you think will happen when we shake up our jars?* Our worries and upset thoughts (the sparkles) that we added to our jars will get all mixed up.
 - That's what our minds looks like when we feel really upset or stressed out – all of our mixed up thoughts and feelings are swirling about, making it hard to think clearly and control our actions.
 - *What do you think will happen if we sit quietly and let the jar rest?* Our worries will eventually settle on the bottom of the jar and our minds (the water) will become clear again.
 - Just like the water in the jar, we can clear our minds by sitting quietly and paying attention to our breathing. When you feel really upset you can use this jar to help calm your body and clear your mind.
3. Teach the child(ren) how to use the Calming Jar:
- Shake up your jar really well.
 - Set the jar on the floor or a low table and sit down on the floor in front of your jar. Sit with your legs crossed, your back straight and your hands resting on your knees/by your sides.
 - Now focus your attention on the sparkles swirling around in the jar. As you watch the sparkles spin around the jar, breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, then slowly let the breath out through your mouth (*be sure to demonstrate*).
 - Keep breathing this way until I signal to stop (*once the water starts to clear and the glitter begins to settle on the bottom signal the child(ren) to stop and move on to the discussion questions*).

CALMING JAR CONTINUED 3/3



Discussion

Reflect

How do you feel after watching your jar and practicing deep breathing?

Connect

Do you remember the last time you got really upset? What made you feel that way? What other things make you feel angry or upset?

What do you feel like doing when you get mad? Some people yell, hit or break things when they are mad – do you ever feel like doing these things when you are upset?

Apply

It is okay to feel how ever you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself, others or property. We already know we can use the jar to calm down, what are some other positive things you can do to calm down when you are really upset? *(Make a list together)*



Variations

1. Invite child(ren) to draw the emotions instead of acting them out.
2. Play the matching game instead of pulling cards from a container for discussion:
 - Photocopy and cut out two sets of Emotion Cards (P. 114)
 - Lay the cards face down on the table/floor in a series of rows and columns
 - Take turns selecting two cards in an attempt to make a match
 - Discuss the emotion when a match is made
 - Continue until all of the pairs have been found



AGES 6+

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WORRY DOLLS

Key Learning

To identify and address worries. To promote self-regulation.

What You Need

- Clothes Pins (use one piece pegs)
- Pipe Cleaners
- Coloured Yarn
- Craft Supplies (Ex: buttons, beads, glitter, fabric scraps)
- Markers
- Small Pouches
- Low Temperature Glue Gun or Double Sided Tape

No. of children

- 1 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Watch the YouTube video, *Worry Dolls* (2012) by Pam Dyson at www.youtube.com/watch?v=35iKmlLk-RI in advance for ideas and to familiarize yourself with the craft process.
2. Normalize anxiety by explaining that everyone has worries. *Some people worry about school, about upcoming sports games, about what we are wearing, about getting in trouble, etc. When someone we love is dying/has died, sometimes we have more worries than usual.*
3. Give the child(ren) an opportunity to share some of their worries. *What are some things that you worry about? What sort of things might a child worry about when a loved one is dying/has died?*
4. Discuss the history of Guatemalan Worry Dolls with the child(ren):
 - Worry Dolls are tiny dolls hand-crafted by artisans in Guatemala. According to legend, Worry Dolls hold onto a person's worries so they can sleep soundly at night.
5. Invite the child(ren) to make their own Worry Dolls and explain how they can use them as a coping tool:
 - Each night, before bed you can share your worries with your dolls (by saying them out loud or in your head). Once you have given away your worries, you can put them in the pouch to keep on your nightstand or under your pillow while you sleep. They will do the worrying for you so you do not have to.
 - If you have worries during the day, you can keep them with you in your backpack and they will hold on to your worries for you while you are at school.
 - You can make Worry Dolls for yourself, or you can give them to someone else to help them with their worries.

How to Play

1. Show the child(ren) some sample Worry Dolls so they understand the concept (make some samples yourself or provide images from online).
2. Encourage the child(ren) to select materials for their dolls in colours that make them feel happy, peaceful and relaxed.
3. Support the child(ren) as they create their Worry Dolls.
4. Invite the child(ren) to give their dolls names and provide each child with a small pouch to hold their Worry Dolls.

WORRY DOLLS *CONTINUED*



Discussion

Reflect

What kind of worries do you think you'll give to your Worry Dolls tonight?

Connect

When you have a big worry what does it feel like in your body?

Apply

One way we can let go of our worries is by giving them to our Worry Dolls. What are some other things that we can do to make us feel less worried or scared?



Variations

1. With younger children you can make Worry Dolls using popsicle sticks. Depending on the child's abilities, they can colour the popsicle stick with markers instead of wrapping it with yarn.
2. Instead of making a Worry Doll, invite the child(ren) to make a worry monster out of play dough. When they are finished they can smash it up. Or they can sculpt a worry warrior out of polymer clay and keep it – giving their worries to it every night similar to the Worry Dolls.



Variation 1: Popsicle stick Worry Doll for younger children.

AGES 6+

STAYING CONNECTED

HUG

Key Learning

Validate the connection between the child and the person who is dying. Support opportunities for the child to give and receive care and comfort.

What You Need

- Permanent or Fabric Markers
- Fabric Paints
- Brushes
- Scissors
- Fabric (12" wide by 3 to 5 feet long; any soft fabric will work)
- Optional: Needle & Thread, Sequins, Ribbons, Buttons

No. of children

- 1 or more

⚠ Anticipatory Grief

This activity has been provided by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, MSc, CCLS. Ceilidh is a Child Life Specialist with the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre and a PhD student in the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition at the University of Guelph. In her clinical role she supports children and families living with the dying and death of a family member, and educates professionals about supporting and communicating with grieving children.

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that when someone is dying/has died we can still feel their love and stay connected to them. We can do this by sharing special memories; thinking and talking about the person, the things you have in common and the things that you've learned from one another.
2. Invite the child(ren) to make a 'hug' and explain that they can put all of the memories and love that they have for the person who is dying into that hug. They get to decide what to do with the hug that they make - they can keep the hug for themselves as comfort or they can give it to someone else (the person who is dying, another family member, etc.).

How to Play

1. Lay a piece of fabric out on a flat surface. Help the child(ren) to trace their hands, one at a time, on either end of the strip of fabric. If possible, try to space their traced hands about the same distance as their reach, so that when the fabric is wrapped around someone, it represents the child's hug as closely as possible.
2. Demonstrate how to draw lines to connect their two hands so that it resembles a scarf with hands on each end. Some children may want to cut out their hugs, while others may want to keep the strip of fabric intact. Encourage the child(ren) to do whatever they feel is right for them.
3. Invite the child(ren) to draw, paint or sew images, words and symbols onto the hug. They can draw or write about anything they'd like (*special occasions, trips, funny stories, etc.*).

HUG CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What kinds of things have you enjoyed doing together with your loved one (special occasions, trips, funny stories, etc.)?

Connect

What do you have in common with this person (traits & mannerisms; hobbies & skills; favourite foods, activities, music, colours)?

What have you learned from or taught this person?

Is there a special gift that this person gave to you that brings you comfort when you see/hold/wear it?

What kind of advice would your loved one give you when you're having a hard time?

Apply

What are some other ways you can show you care and feel connected to your love one who is dying?



Variations

1. Using a sheet or piece of clothing belonging to a special person to create the hug can make this activity even more personal and meaningful.
2. This activity can be done individually with the child or as a family to give to the person who is dying. When their loved one dies, some children and families choose to place the hug in the casket while others choose to hold on to them as precious keepsakes and as comfort when they are grieving.
3. Children may want help to make a hug by tracing the hands of the person who is dying to keep for comfort after their loved one has died. Be sure to get permission from the person who is ill before providing this option to the child.



AGES 6+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY DRAWING

Key Learning

To validate and support an ongoing connection with the person who is dying/has died.

What You Need

- 14 x 17" Paper
- Drawing Materials

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Anna Baas Anderson. Anna is a Registered Therapist and Professor in the Early Childhood Education program at Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Anna has volunteered with Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel for the past 10 years as a member of the Professional Advisory Committee, a trainer and children's grief counsellor.

Preparation Activities

1. Invite the child(ren) to bring in a photograph or special memento in advance (*gift they received from their loved one, one of their loved one's possessions, anything that makes them feel connected to their loved one*).
2. Explain that when someone is dying/has died we can still feel their love and stay connected to them. We can do this by sharing special memories; thinking and talking about the person, the things you have in common and the things that you've learned from one another; hearing stories and learning about your loved one from other family members.
3. Ask the child(ren) if they would like to share a little bit about the photograph or memento that they brought in.
4. Invite the child(ren) to draw a special memory.

How to Play

1. Take a minute to think about a memory of your loved one that makes you feel comforted (favourite vacation, something you liked doing together, meal you shared together, memorable holiday, something they taught you, a special gift you gave/received, etc.).
2. Draw a picture of your memory. There is no wrong way to do this activity – you can draw images, symbols and patterns; write names, dates, a poem or story about your memory, etc.
3. Invite the child(ren) to share their memory/drawing if they feel comfortable doing so.
4. Assist the child(ren) in writing a phrase that describes their memory on the drawing.
5. Let the child(ren) know that they can keep their drawing(s) to help them remember and bring them comfort during difficult times. The child(ren) may decide to give the original or a copy of the drawing to someone else (the person who is dying, a family member, etc.).

MEMORY DRAWING CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up as you were drawing your picture?

Connect

Why is it important to talk about the special memories you have of your loved one?

Are there any memories you wish you could erase or forget?

Apply

We did a drawing of a special memory today. What are some other ways we can share and record our special memories?

Who can you share memories about your loved one with?

Who can you talk with to learn more about your loved one?



Variations

1. Instead of drawing, bring out the paints or provide the child with plasticine to sculpt their memory.
2. Have the child(ren) draw a portrait of their loved one instead of a memory (they can use the photograph they brought in as a reference). Let them know that they are welcome to include anything they want in their drawing, including themselves!
3. Invite the child(ren) to write a poem or a short story about their favourite memory.



AGES 6+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY BOX

Key Learning

To validate and support an ongoing connection with the person who is dying/has died.

What You Need

- Raw Cardboard Boxes (not glossy!)
- Paper (blank, tissue, scrapbooking, etc.)
- Old Magazines, Catalogues, Comics
- Drawing Materials
- Craft Supplies
- Glue (Mod Podge® for pasting photos & paper; low temp. glue gun for heavier embellishments)
- Plastic Plates & Foam Brushes
- Scissors

No. of children

- 1 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Inform the child(ren) of the activity one week in advance so they have time to make copies of photographs and gather other special items to put on/in their box (*poem, quote, sample of loved one's handwriting, obituary, etc.*).
2. Explain that when someone is dying/has died we can still feel their love and stay connected to them. We can do this by sharing special memories; thinking and talking about the person, the things you have in common and the things that you've learned from one another.
3. Ask the child(ren) if they would like to share a little bit about the photographs or mementos that they brought in.
4. Invite the child(ren) to make a memory box to hold their special memories and things that help them to stay connected with their loved one.

How to Play

1. Provide each child with a box to decorate.
2. Pour some Mod Podge® onto a plastic plate and demonstrate how to adhere paper materials to the box:
 - Inform the child(ren) that Mod Podge® is a type of glue that dries clear (they might be worried it will stay white)
 - Cut or rip an image from a magazine
 - Apply a thin layer of glue onto the box where you want to paste the image
 - Lay the image down on the freshly glued area
 - Now apply a thin layer of glue on top of the image
3. Encourage the child(ren) to be creative (*paste photographs; cut out single letters from magazines to form names and words; write and draw directly on the box; add embellishments, etc.*).
4. Invite the child(ren) to share their memory box if they feel comfortable doing so.
5. Remind them that when they need to, they can look through their box to help call special memories to mind and to feel connected to their loved one.

MEMORY BOX CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What kinds of things can we keep in our memory boxes?
(photographs, jewelry, cards or special gifts, a piece of their clothing, memories written on strips of paper, letter to or from your loved one, tickets to events you attended together, small objects that remind you of your loved one, etc.)

Connect

Special things that were given to us or belonged to our loved one can bring comfort and make us feel connected to them. Is there a special gift that this person gave to you that brings you comfort?

Apply

You can go through your box when you want to remember and feel connected. What are some other things you can do to honour their memory and feel connected to the person?
(Brainstorm ideas and make a list together)



Variations

1. Rather than a mixed media approach, the child can paint their memory box instead.
2. You can use all of these supplies to make a Memory Frame instead! Provide the children with a blank wooden picture frame (found at your local craft store) to paint. When dry, they can put their favourite picture of their loved one or a special quote/poem/lyric in the frame.



AGES 6+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY BEADS

Key Learning

Validate the ongoing connection between the child and the person who is dying/has died.

What You Need

- Colourful Paper (magazines, old calendars, comics or scrapbook paper work well, but any paper will do)
- Scissors
- Glue (preferably white glue but a glue stick will do)
- Toothpicks
- Clear Nail Polish
- String
- Optional: Beads

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, MSc, CCLS.

Ceilidh is a Child Life Specialist with the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre and a PhD student in the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition at the University of Guelph. She supports children and families living with the dying and death of a family member, and educates professionals about supporting and communicating with grieving children.

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that sometimes we need help to remember the things that bring us comfort, like warm memories.
2. Invite the child(ren) to make special beads that will help them to remember special memories and stay connected. Give the child(ren) the option of making beads for themselves, their loved one who is dying or another family member.

How to Play

1. Support the child(ren) as they fill their beads with memories:
 - Encourage the child(ren) to select paper with the colours that they like
 - Assist them in cutting long (6 – 8") narrow (0.5 – 1.0") triangles (each triangle will make one bead)
 - Lay the triangles colourful side facing down
 - Invite the child(ren) to write a special memory on the back of each triangle (*special occasions, trips, funny stories, what your loved one looked/smelled like, their favourite things, things they taught you, special gifts, etc.*)
 - Encourage the child(ren) to do what ever is right for them (*draw images, write words/dates/quotes/lyrics that remind them of their loved one, etc.*).
2. Reassure the child(ren) that when the bead is finished, the writing will be hidden so their memories will stay private. Some children may want to write in "secret code" either to keep their thoughts confidential or if they are not confident in their writing or spelling abilities.
3. Provide the child(ren) with the option of creating a legend or list of the things that they have written down to help them remember what each bead represents.
4. Explain and demonstrate how to make the beads:
 - Roll the wide end of the triangle around a toothpick to form a bead
 - Glue the last inch of the narrow end and finish wrapping it to complete the bead
 - Hold the end down for a few seconds to make sure that it is securely glued
 - Seal the beads with clear nail polish and allow them to dry
5. When the beads are dry, invite the child(ren) to string them together to make a necklace, bracelet or keychain that they can keep with them to help them remember.
6. Invite the child(ren) to share their beads if they wish to.

MEMORY BEADS CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts or feelings came up as you made your beads?
Are there any memories that you would like to forget?
How do you feel as you wear/hold your memory creation?

Connect

What helps you to feel comforted? (*hug, talking to someone, special blanket, etc.*)
What are some thoughts that bring you comfort? (*memories, spiritual beliefs, etc.*)

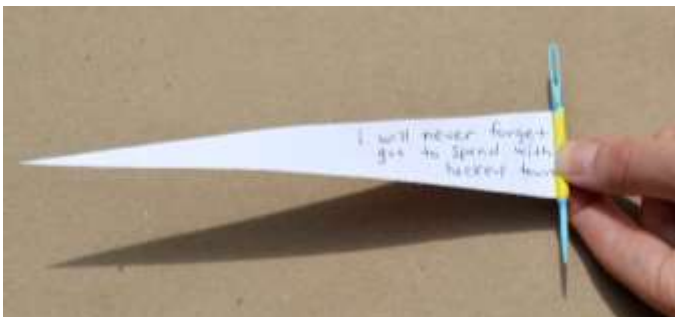
Apply

Who can you talk with to hear stories and learn more about your loved one?



Variations

1. You can use the book *The Invisible String* (2012) by Patrice Karst to explain the idea of being connected to someone despite their physical absence. To symbolize the invisible connection and love in our hearts, invite children to use invisible jewelry wire to make their beaded creation.
2. Modify this activity to develop coping strategies and promote self-regulation by prompting the child(ren) to identify healthy coping strategies to write on their beads (*things they can do to express their feelings and release tension, people in their life that they can go to for support, things that bring them comfort and help them to relax, etc.*).
3. Modify this activity to build self-esteem by prompting the child to identify positive things about themselves to write on their beads (*their unique strengths, personal characteristics, achievements, goals for the future, etc.*).



AGES 6+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORIAL WEAVING

Key Learning

To validate and support an ongoing connection with the person who is dying/has died.

What You Need

- Ribbon, String, Yarn, Fabric Strips, etc.
- Small Strips of Paper (a hole punched in each one)
- Pens & Markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Craft Supplies
- Loom for Weaving

No. of children

- 1 or more

⚠ While the instructions are written for the group setting, the activity can be done individually

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Introduce the idea of ritual:
 - A ritual is a type of ceremony that creates a special and safe space to honour the person who is dying/has died. It can be something that is done over and over, or just once. Many people/families have rituals that they participate in that have been given to them, and many create their own.
2. Discuss examples of rituals (*church, lighting a candle, funerals, birthday and holiday rituals, prayers, family traditions, etc.*).
3. Create a sense of sacred space (perhaps by playing music in the background and requesting silence while creating).
4. Invite the child(ren) to participate in a special ceremony that honours loved ones who are dying/have died.
5. Ask the children who they would like to honour, remember or care for in this ceremony. Invite them to reflect on their person. *What makes them important for you? Feel how you carry them in your heart with you now. What is the feeling that you have for them?*

⚠ In order to create the memorial weaving, you will need a frame! You can use a loom kit or you can make your own. See the photos provided on P. 99 or visit these websites for different ideas:

www.kidsactivitiesblog.com/69290/artful-kids-weaving-craft

www.honestlywtf.com/diy/diy-woven-wall-hanging

How to Play

1. Explain and demonstrate how to weave memories and experiences:
 - On a small strip of paper write whatever you would like (*a message to your loved one, names, memories, feelings, music lyrics, etc.*)
 - Pick a piece of material, you can pick whatever you would like (*string, a ribbon, a strip of fabric, etc.*)
 - Attach your message to the piece of material you've picked by threading the string through the hole in the paper
 - Weave the string - with the message attached - by threading it over and under, over and under
 - Decorate it in ways that feel meaningful for you (*Take your time, and if you wish to say something, make a dedication, share a thought or a word or a name, please do so*).

MEMORIAL WEAVING CONTINUED 2/3

2. Explain that the more we add to the weaving, the more we touch, connect, overlap with each other, the more beautiful the piece becomes as we thicken it with our experiences.
3. Ask the child(ren) to stand back and look at the completed group weaving. Note how our experience is woven together with that of the people in our lives who are dying/have died and with each other. We can see our strings touching – we are connected. See how our feelings and concerns have been woven together. We share the space of this experience and that is very special.
4. Explore the contributions others have made. *Is there a special message or memory that you wrote down and wove into the memorial weaving that you'd like to share with us?*
5. Sit in meditation with this community creation if there is time remaining.



Discussion

Reflect

What did it feel like to work in silence? (If you asked the children to do so during the activity to create sacred space) What thoughts or feelings came up as you were weaving?

Connect

When we create things in honour of our loved one, we can feel very connected to them. After doing the memorial weaving, do you feel connected to your loved one who is dying/has died?

Apply

What are some other things we can do to honour and celebrate loved ones?



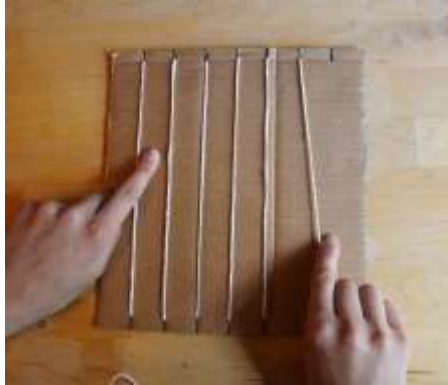
Variations

1. Although this activity is presented as a group weaving, where group members work together to create one memorial weaving that is symbolic of connection and community, group members can also do this project individually by creating their own personal memorial weaving to take home.
2. Similarly, this activity can be done in a one on one support session where the child completes their own memorial weaving. If the child consents, you could also invite the family to come together to complete a family weaving.

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORIAL WEAVING CONTINUED 3/3

⚠ To make this simple loom all that was required was a small piece of cardboard, some scissors to cut the slits and some string!



1. Cut slits 1" apart on the top & bottom of a piece of cardboard. Wind string around the board & through the slits to create a loom.



2. To attach a message, thread a strip of fabric through the hole punched in the paper.



3. Weave strips by passing it over, under, over, under. Continue until complete.



4. Help the child to staple loose tails around the back of the board to secure the weaving.



PRAYER FLAGS

Key Learning

To validate and support an ongoing connection with the person who is dying/has died. To develop compassion.

What You Need

- Multicoloured Fabric (cut into rectangles)
- Scraps of Fabric
- Fabric Paints, Fabric Pastels and/or Fabric Markers
- Painting Supplies
- Craft Materials (beads, buttons, sequins, feathers)
- Needle & Thread
- Rope
- Scissors
- Paper & Pencils
- Images of Prayer Flags

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Provide some background about prayer flags:
 - A prayer flag is a colourful panel or rectangular cloth often found strung along mountain ridges and peaks high in the Himalayas by the people of Tibet to bless the surrounding countryside or for other purposes.
 - ⚠ Visit www.theprayerflagproject.blogspot.ca/ for images from Vivika Hansen DeNegre's *Prayer Flag Project*.
 - They are decorated with sacred words, in traditional colours associated with earth, water, fire and air, and with prayers for good fortune.
 - Traditionally, prayer flags are used to promote peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom. Tibetans believe the prayers and mantras will be blown by the wind to spread good will and compassion to benefit all people, animals and the land. They hang the flags in high places that carry the blessings depicted on the flags to all beings. As wind passes over the surface of the flags, the air is purified.
 - They believe that the prayers in the flag become a permanent part of the universe as the images on them fade from exposure to the elements. Just as people die and new people are born, Tibetans express their hope for the world by continually putting up new flags alongside the old. This act welcomes the many changes in life and reminds us that we are all part of a greater cycle of life and death.
2. Explain that today, we will explore this idea of sending blessings and prayers to our loved ones, the land and all people and things.

How to Play

1. Ask the child(ren) to take some time to think about what they want to put on their prayer flag.
 - A prayer or wish for the person who is dying/has died or for other kids/people
 - Telling their story using colours, words and/or images
 - Symbols that feel powerful to them
 - Passing down wisdom and advice from their own experiences
 - Express care and compassion for others who might be suffering
 - Whatever feels right for them

STAYING CONNECTED

PRAYER FLAGS CONTINUED

2. Invite the child(ren) to start creating their prayer flag. Allow them the opportunity to sketch out their design on a piece of paper before moving onto their flag.
3. Provide the child(ren) with an opportunity to share their flag if they feel comfortable doing so.



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts or feelings came up for you while you were making your prayer flag?

Connect

How do you like to be cared for or supported when you are having a tough time?

What have you learned from your grief experiences that might be helpful for other kids to know?

Apply

How can you show other people that you care about them?



Variations

1. If you are working with a family or in the group setting, participants can decide whether they would like to keep their individual flags or hang them together in the home/group space to share prayers and wishes there. If the participants wish to display their flags together, support them in sewing the flags onto a big long rope and find a place to hang the flags.



HELPING HANDS

Key Learning

To build self-esteem and prosocial skills.

What You Need

- Large Paper
- Scissors & Glue
- Drawing Materials

No. of children

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lysa Toye. Lysa is a Psychotherapist, Social Worker and Expressive Arts Therapist employed at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre, with a private psychotherapy practice working with adults and youth living with grief and trauma.

Preparation Activities

1. Define grief and talk about the many feelings that can be included in grief. How can grief show up in our bodies? *How can it look on the outside? How long can it last?*
2. Discuss other things aside from death that can cause grief feelings to arise (*parental separation/divorce; older sibling going away to college; moving here from somewhere far away and leaving family, friends and the home you loved behind; losing a pet or something you really cherished, etc.*). All people experience grief of some kind in their lives. We often wish that people around us understood how to support and care for us when we are grieving, but we can also learn how to support others when they are grieving or having other hard feelings. Helping others can make us feel better and more positive.
3. Brainstorm things that can be very helpful to offer to others who are grieving (*listen, ask what they need or if they want to talk, include them, use gentle words, show them that you care, use humour, give hugs, be a good friend, treat them the same as always, acknowledge their grief, etc.*).

How to Play

1. Invite the child(ren) to talk or think about three things that they can do for or offer to someone who is grieving. Acknowledge that everyone is different and has different gifts, strengths and skills to offer.
2. Have the child(ren) trace one of their hands, write their name in it and the three things that they can offer.
3. Allow time for the child(ren) to decorate their hand using the materials provided. They can decorate their hand with colours, words and images that express their gifts and personal strengths.
4. Support the child(ren) as they cut out their hand(s).
5. Invite the child(ren) to share their gifts if they feel comfortable doing so and explain that they can keep it as a reminder of the nice things that they can offer others who need support.

CELEBRATING ME

HELPING HANDS CONTINUED**Discussion****Reflect**

Which supportive strategy makes you feel cared for?

Connect

Sometimes people say/do things that are hurtful or have not been very helpful. What are some things that people have said or done for you that has not been very helpful?

What are three things that others could do to help you when you are having a hard day?

Apply

How can we communicate what we need to feel better to the people around us?

**Variations**

1. If you are working with a family or in the group setting, the completed hands can be collaged together (a tree, bouquet of flowers, circle or other design) and put up on the wall as a reminder of all of the skills they have to care for themselves and others.
2. You may decide to complete this activity earlier in your program when discussing coping strategies. If you are working with a family or in the group setting, invite participants to mount their hands on the wall and explain that when someone is having a hard day, they can go over and see who might have something nice to offer that will help them feel better.




BUCKET FILLERS


Key Learning

To build self-esteem and prosocial skills. To empower children to feel confident in their ability to cope with tough situations.

What You Need

- Flipchart Paper
-  Fill a Bucket: A Guide To Daily Happiness for Young Children or internet access to watch a short video with older kids
- Small Buckets (or any small container)
- Large Labels (self-adhesive)
- Small Hearts (cut out of paper)
- Drawing Materials

No. of children

- 1 or more
-  See Variations for one-on-one support

Preparation Activities

1. Explain that grief comes and goes like waves in the sea – sometimes when the grief waves come in we might have really strong and painful feelings, other times when the waves of grief go out we might feel hopeful and happy. When we are feeling really upset, it can be helpful to remember that there are things we can do to help ourselves feel calm, comforted and loved.
2. Brainstorm supportive strategies and record them on a piece of flipchart paper. *What kinds of things can you do to help yourself feel better? What kinds of things can other people do to help you feel better?*
3. Explain that helping and being kind to others can also make us feel better.
4. Read the book, *Fill a Bucket: A Guide To Daily Happiness for Young Children*, by Carol McCloud and Katherine Martin. If you are working with older children watch the video, *How to Fill Your Bucket* (2014), posted on YouTube by Michelle Privette instead, www.youtube.com/watch?v=cv3_IN968iM.
5. Tell the child(ren) that we will be doing an activity where we fill our own and each other's buckets with kind and inspiring words.

How to Play

1. Have the children write and decorate their name on a large label – when they are finished have them stick it on their bucket.
2. Provide each child with enough heart cut outs to write a positive message for each group member and a couple extras for themselves.
3. Explain how to fill each other's buckets:
 - Pass your bucket to the person on your right.
 - Look at the name on the bucket you have in front of you – take a minute to think about that person and write or draw something positive about them on a heart and put it in their bucket (*something they said or did in group that helped you, something they are good at*).
 - When I say pass, pass the bucket you just finished with to the person on your right and write a kind message in the new bucket that was passed to you. We will keep going until your bucket has made it around the circle and back to you.
4. Invite the children to fill their own buckets:
 - Now that you have your own bucket back in front of you, fill it with kind words about yourself by writing on hearts and putting them in your bucket (*things that make you a good person, how you help others, things you are good at, etc.*).

CELEBRATING ME

BUCKET FILLERS CONTINUED

5. Allow the children some time to read their heart messages before inviting them to share their buckets with the rest of the group if they feel comfortable doing so.
6. Explain that they can keep their buckets to read when they are having a difficult time and as a reminder that sometimes saying/doing kind things for others can make us feel better.

**Discussion****Reflect**

What was your favourite part of the activity?

How do you feel after reading the kind words others have put into your bucket?

How did it feel to put kind words in other people's buckets?

Connect

What are some things that people have said or done for you that made you feel better when you were having a difficult time?

Apply

How can we communicate what we need to feel better to the people around us?

**Variations**

1. This activity is most effective in the group setting. To make the activity more powerful when working with a child individually you can invite other family members to participate by filling the child's bucket with positive messages!



CHARACTER COLLAGE

Key Learning

To build self-esteem and prosocial skills.

What You Need

- Mixed Media Paper or Small Canvas Board
- Old Magazines, Catalogues & Comics, etc.
- Blank Paper
- Scissors
- Craft Materials
- Mod Podge® (use glue sticks with younger children)
- Plastic Plates & Foam Brushes
- Character Cards

No. of children

- 1 or more

Preparation Activities

1. Define positive qualities/character traits with the child(ren):
 - We all have good things about us, those good things are called positive qualities or traits. They make us who we are and they are the things that make us good people (*kind, loving, generous, fair, etc.*). Positive traits are different than skills and abilities (*things that we are good at or come easily to us – math, spelling, sports, dance, art, etc.*).
2. Play the matching game to help children learn about positive character traits:
 - Photocopy two sets of Character Cards (P.108) onto cardstock paper and cut them out individually.
 - Lay the cards face down on the table/floor in a series of rows and columns.
 - Take turns selecting two cards in an attempt to make a match.
 - Discuss the quality when a match is made. *What does it mean to be ____? Can you give me an example?*
 - Remove pairs from the game as they are found and continue until there are no cards remaining.
3. Invite the child(ren) to make an artwork using a technique called collage:
 - The term collage comes from the French word *coller*, which means to *glue*. A collage is made by gluing different materials to a surface.
 - The collage we will be making today will highlight our unique skills and positive qualities (*those we already possess and those we want to work on*).



CELEBRATING ME

CHARACTER COLLAGE *CONTINUED*

How to Play

1. Provide each child with a piece of mixed media paper or a small canvas and set out the materials in the middle.
2. Demonstrate how to adhere materials to the paper/canvas:
 - Inform the child(ren) that the glue (Mod Podge®) dries clear
 - Cut or rip an image from a magazine and apply a thin layer of glue onto the paper/board with a foam brush
 - Lay the image down on the freshly glued area and apply a thin layer of glue on top of the image
 - Encourage the child(ren) to be creative – they can cut out images, single letters, words or phrases from the print materials provided
 - Invite the child(ren) to embellish their collage with the craft materials provided
3. Invite the child(ren) to share their completed collage if they feel comfortable doing so.



Discussion

Reflect

What is your favourite quality about yourself?

Can you think of any positive qualities that we did not talk about today?

Connect

Can you remember a time when you were ____? (*Patient, Trustworthy, Honest, etc.*)

Can you remember a time when someone else was ____? (*Helpful, Loving, Kind, etc.*)

Are there any qualities that you want to work on?

Apply

What can we do to be more ____? (*Honest, Kind, etc.*)

What can we do to show people that we are ____? (*Caring, Loving, etc.*)



Variations

1. The collage activity can be modified to focus on a variety of other topics: memories, emotions, coping strategies, etc.
2. You can work with the children to trace their profile onto a piece of paper by tracing each other's profile shadow. They can glue their collage onto their profile to make it more personal.

Character Cards

Confident	Honest	Sharing
Loyal	Outgoing	Loving
Kind	Hard Worker	Caring
Optimistic	Gentle	Patient
Creative	Responsible	Trustworthy
Peaceful	Helpful	Giving
Polite	Hopeful	Respectful

AGES 10+

CELEBRATING ME

UNIQUE AS A FINGERPRINT

Key Learning

To build self-esteem and prosocial skills.

What You Need

- Pencil, Clear Packing Tape & White Paper
- Scanner, Computer & Printer
- Enlarged Finger Print
- Drawing Materials
- White Glue
- Flipchart paper

No. of children

- 1 or more

"Each person's grief is as unique as a finger print or a snowflake."
– Earl Grollman

The instructions for taking an impression and printing the finger print were adapted from the blog post, *Creative Writing Day 10: About Me Fingerprint* (2011), by Montserrat on the blog Cranial Hiccups: www.cranialhiccups.com/2011/11/creative-writing-day-10-about-me-fingerprint.html.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare the finger prints in advance:
 - With a pencil, colour a small piece of paper heavily; have the child rub their finger in the pencil lead so it is well coated; place their finger on the sticky side of a piece of clear packing tape; place the tape sticky side down onto a white piece of paper.
 - Scan and enlarge the image to fill an 8.5 x 11" paper.
 - Reduce the intensity of the image so that it prints light grey (the child will be writing over the lines – if the image of their fingerprint is too dark, it may obscure the text).
 - If you are not computer savvy, take the thumbprint to a printer and they will help you out.
2. Explain that we are all unique individuals, which means that we all have things about us that make us different. It is okay to be different because it is those differences that make us special. Over the past few weeks we have learned that everyone's grief is unique – people have different thoughts, beliefs, feelings and ways of expressing and comforting themselves. Even though everyone's grief is different, we can still share feelings and experiences in common with others - these commonalities connect us to other people and make us feel less alone.
3. Today we are going to do a writing and drawing activity that celebrates what makes us unique and what we've learned about ourselves and our grief during our time together.

How to Play

1. Provide the child(ren) with their enlarged fingerprint and show images of completed works (*search fingerprint poetry online*).
2. Tell the child(ren) that they can write whatever they'd like on the lines of their fingerprint. You may want to write some ideas out on flipchart paper to help them with their process:
 - Your feelings, your thoughts and the things that you learned about grief during our time together
 - Memories, names, dates, quotes, lyrics, symbols, images
 - Things that you do to safely cope with tough feelings
 - People in your life that you can go to for support
 - Your wishes, interests and goals for the future
 - The positive qualities (character traits) that make you a good person
3. Invite the child(ren) to share their finished fingerprint.

UNIQUE AS A FINGERPRINT *CONTINUED*



Discussion

Reflect

What is your favourite quality about yourself?
What is the most important thing you learned during our time together?

Connect

How can you use the things you learned during our time together to help other kids who are grieving?

Apply

What is one thing you would tell other people about grief that they might not already know?
What are some things you will try to do to take care of yourself and express your feelings?
Who will you go to for support when you are having a tough time?



Variations

1. To modify this activity to focus on storytelling and the identification and expression of emotion, have the child write about their grief experiences in their fingerprint (*who died, what happened, the funeral, changes, how they feel, etc.*).
2. With the permission of the person who is ill, the child might want to take their loved one's finger print and fill it with special memories and things that they've learned from them.



AGES 6+

CELEBRATING ME

HOPE IS IN THE AIR

Key Learning

To develop a sense of hope and optimism.

What You Need

- Balloon (for indoor activities) or Soft Ball (for outdoor activities)
 - 1 Per Team
- Chalk (anything to draw squares on the ground)
 - You can use Painter's Tape to make squares indoors

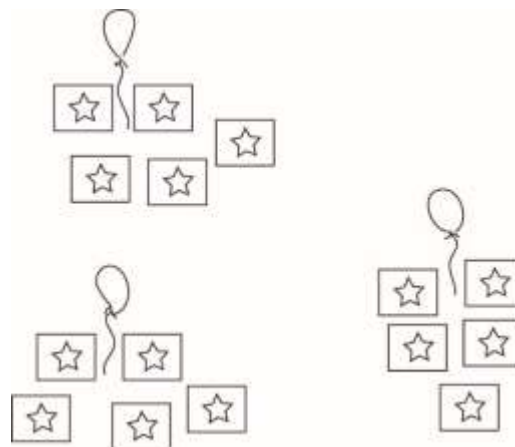
No. of children

- 5 or more

This game has been taken with permission from Right To Play's collection of play-based learning activities.

How to Play

1. Divide children into teams of 4-6.
2. Draw one square on the ground for each child. Each team's set of squares must be close together. Each square should be 1.5 x 1.5 metres (see diagram).
3. Ask each child to stand in a square.
4. Ask each child to think of one thing they hope for in life.
5. Show the children the balloon. Explain that the balloon represents "hope" in this game.
6. Explain and demonstrate that:
 - The object of the game is for the children to keep the balloon in the air.
 - The children can hit the balloon with any part of their bodies to keep it in the air, but they are not allowed to step outside their squares.
 - The children are only allowed to hit the balloon once before another player hits it.
 - Encourage the children to try to keep the balloon in the air as long as possible.
7. Once the balloon touches the ground, the game can begin again and the children can try to keep the balloon in the air for a longer period of time.



HOPE IS IN THE AIR CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

How did you feel when the team successfully kept the balloon in the air?

How did you feel when the balloon touched the ground?

Connect

What is the one thing you hope for in life?

What do you think the squares represent in real life?

How is the balloon similar to feelings of hope?

Have you ever hoped for something and then stopped believing it was possible? How did that feel?

Apply

What are some of the things you can do in your day-to-day life to maintain hope?



VARIATIONS

1. Increase the difficulty of the activity by making the squares smaller or the space between the squares larger. You can also allow children to use an implement to hit the balloon if the squares are farther apart (Ex: a racquet or a stick).
2. Establish a set order that the balloon must be hit in (Ex: player one must always hit the balloon to player two, and from player two to player three, etc.).

APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR SUPPORTERS

SAMPLE CURRICULA

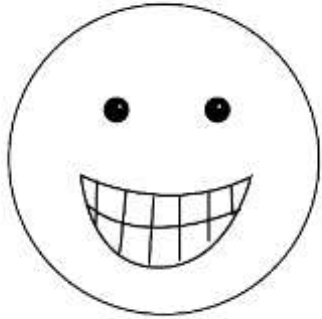
INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT: ANTICIPATORY GRIEF SAMPLE 6-WEEK SUPPORT PROGRAM	
Session 1	Creating Safety: Comfort Guidelines, Who I Am Poem
Session 2	Talking About Dying & Death: Basketball Game, Before and After
Session 3	Identifying & Expressing Emotions: Spongebombs
Session 4	Coping with the Tough Stuff: My Safe Place
Session 5	Staying Connected: Hug
Session 6	Celebrating Me: Unique as a Fingerprint

SAMPLE AGENDA SESSION 5	
Opening Ritual	Listening Practice
Check - In	The Weather Inside
Activity & Discussion	Hug
Check Out	The Weather Inside
Closing Ritual	Let's Get Moving

GROUP SUPPORT: BEREAVEMENT SAMPLE 8-WEEK SUPPORT PROGRAM	
Session 1	Creating Safety: Comfort Guidelines, Crossing the Circle, My Folder
Session 2	Talking About Dying & Death: Life and Death, Play Dough Funeral
Session 3	Talking About Dying & Death: Before and After, Growing Through Grief
Session 4	Identifying & Expressing Emotions: Feelings Bingo, Body Map
Session 5	Identifying & Expressing Emotions: Throwing Anger & Fear or Child in the Middle Coping with The Tough Stuff: Stress Balls
Session 6	Coping with the Tough Stuff: Family Connection Tree
Session 7	Staying Connected: Memorial Weaving
Session 8	Celebrating Me: Hope is in the Air, Bucket Fillers

SAMPLE AGENDA SESSION 7	
Opening Ritual	Candle Lighting
Check - In	Grief Bundle
Activity & Discussion	Memorial Weaving
Check Out	Snack & Chat
Closing Ritual	Dynamic Breathing

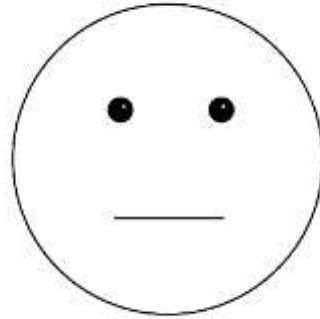
EMOTION CARDS



EXCITED



HAPPY



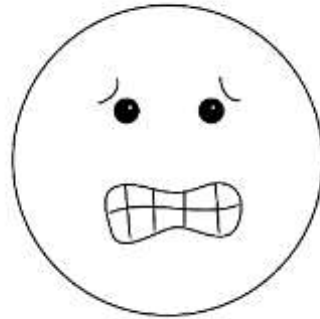
NUMB



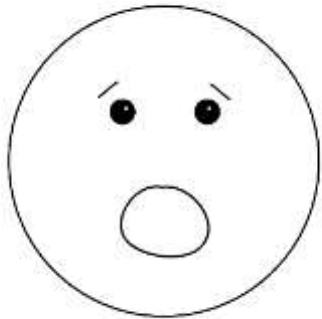
SAD



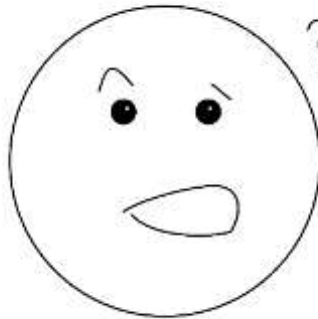
WORRIED



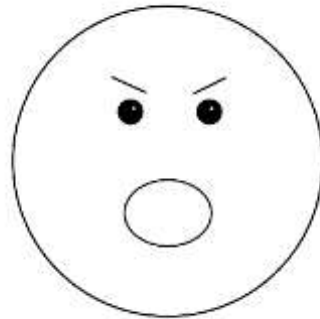
SCARED



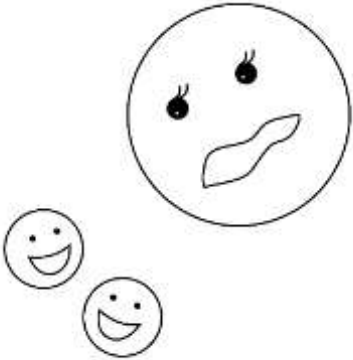


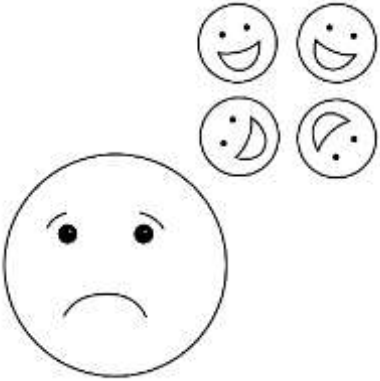
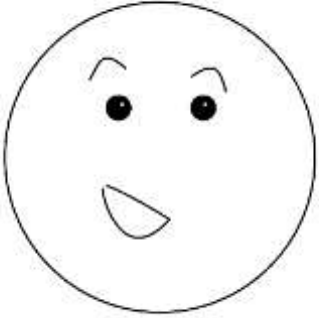

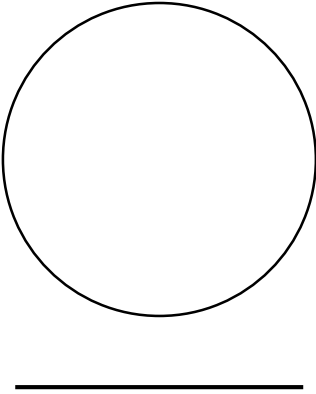
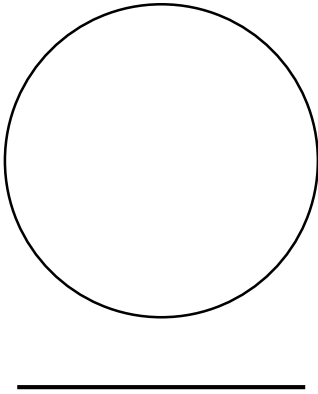
SHOCKED



CONFUSED

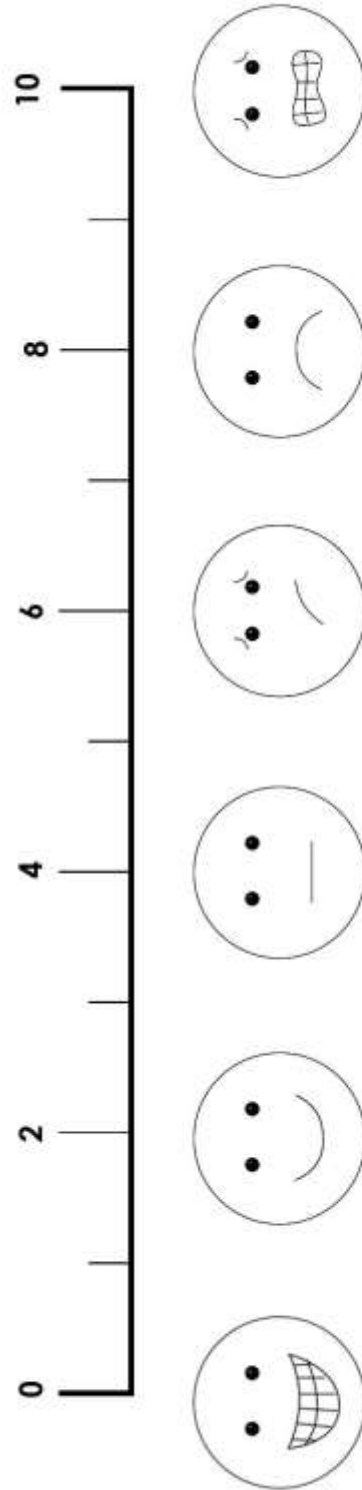


ANGRY

 <p>JEALOUS</p>	 <p>GUILTY</p>	 <p>EMBARRASSED</p>
 <p>LONELY</p>	 <p>CURIOUS</p>	 <p>LOVED</p>
<p>THANK YOU!</p> <p>GRATEFUL</p>		

FEELINGS SCALE

Colour in the face that describes how you are feeling right now.



CURRICULA & ACTIVITY GUIDES FOR SUPPORTERS

Companioning the Grieving Child: Activities to Help Children and Teens Heal by Patricia Morrissey

Notes: Engaging Activities, Based on A. Wolfelt's 6 Needs of Mourning

Suggested Ages: 4 – 18

Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children by Liana Lowenstein

Notes: Information & Activities for Professionals

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

For the Grieving Child – An Activities Manual by Suzan E. Jaffe

Notes: Information for Adults, Activities for Children

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

GriefWork for Teens: Healing From Loss by Ester R.A. Leutenberg & Fran Zamore

Notes: Reproducible Handouts, Emotions, Coping, Relationships, Changes

Suggested Ages: 12 – 18

Healing Activities for Children in Grief by Gay McWhorter

Notes: Group Curricula, Theme Based Activities

Suggested Ages: 5 – 18

Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens by The Dougy Centre

Notes: Activities & Handouts, Emotions, Coping, Memory

Suggested Ages: 6 – 18

Mourning Child Grief Support Group Curriculum by Linda Lehmann, Shane R. Jimerson & Ann Gaasch

Notes: 10 Session Guide, Engaging Activities, Useful Forms & Handouts

Early Childhood Edition

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Middle Childhood Edition

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

Puppet Plays for Grieving Children by Sharon Rugg

Notes: 16 Puppet Play Scripts, Various Losses, Discussion Questions

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) by Eline Snell

Notes: Mindfulness, Guided Exercises CD, Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation

Suggested Ages: 5 – 12

Teens Together Grief Support Group Curriculum by Linda Lehmann, Shane R. Jimerson & Ann Gaasch

Notes: Engaging Activities for Grieving Teens

Suggested Ages: 12 – 18

Why Did You Die? Activities to Help Children Cope with Grief & Loss by Ellen Goldring & Erika

Leeuwenburgh

Notes: First section for caregivers, Second section for kids

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

YOUR NEEDS MATTER TOO

While it is a privilege to bear witness to others' stories of love and loss, supporting grieving individuals – young and old – is hard work. Being present with the suffering of others can be overwhelming at times and can have a profound effect on your emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing.

BURNOUT

Emotional, mental and physical exhaustion that occurs as a result of excessive and enduring stress. Burnout often occurs when a person feels overwhelmed and overworked, with little support and appreciation. A person experiencing burnout may notice changes in their mood, attitude and motivation – losing sight of the passion that once motivated them to take on a supportive role.

COMPASSION FATIGUE

Emotional strain caused by burnout and exposure to traumatic events. A supporter may experience trauma first hand (Ex: witnessing the dying process in their role as a hospice volunteer) or second hand (Ex: listening to a child talk about the traumas they have endured). This emotional strain can overwhelm a person's ability to cope with intense emotions and result in impaired cognitive ability, loss of hope, and a diminished capacity for genuine empathy.

When you concentrate all of your energy into your role as a supporter it is easy to neglect your own needs. In order to maintain your personal wellbeing and effectiveness as a supporter, it is important to develop **self-management** skills and practice **self-care**.

SELF-MANAGEMENT	SELF-CARE
<p>It is the ability to identify and cope with intense emotions by using self-regulation strategies that work for you. The ability to self-regulate allows you to respond rather than react to stressful situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop emotional awareness by conducting regular mind-body scans. • Practice self-compassion by extending the same compassion to yourself as you would to others. You are human – everyone makes mistakes and it is normal for supporters to experience stress and hardship. • Set realistic expectations for yourself and respect your own personal limitations. Know that it is okay to take time for yourself and say 'no' to requests when you feel over extended. • Maintain a healthy work-life balance. Try not to take work home with you. • Identify and implement self-soothing strategies that work for you (Ex: meditation, mindful breathing, count to 10, positive affirmations). • Debrief with your supervisor and team members. • Practice self-care regularly. 	<p>The practice of caring for and replenishing oneself physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat sensibly and drink plenty of water. • Limit your substance use (alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, etc.). • Get some rest. Sleep is important to your health. • Engage in physical activity (Ex: dance, take a walk, join yoga, play a sport). • Find a creative outlet (Ex: art, music, writing). • Find time to relax (Ex: meditate, practice mindful breathing, use aroma therapy, take a bath, treat yourself to a massage). • Get in touch with nature (Ex: garden, take a nature walk, go fishing or camping). • Snuggle a beloved pet. • As much as possible, continue to participate in previous social and recreational activities. • Spend time with and seek social support from family and friends. • Seek out professional support if you feel that you are unable to safely cope with stress on your own.

For self-assessment tools visit: www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/selftest.html.

Side A

SIGNS OF STRESS

Identifying the sources of stress in your life and becoming aware of how stress uniquely affects you can help you to develop a personal plan for self-management and self-care. Self-awareness is critical in preventing and reducing stress. Take a moment to review the common sources of and reactions to stress and try your best to answer the following questions below:

1. What is the hardest part of my role as a supporter?
2. What aspect of my role causes me the most worry, frustration or fear?
3. What are my personal limitations and emotional triggers?
4. How do I know when I am feeling stressed and overwhelmed? What are my signs?
5. What can I do to take care of myself when I am feeling stressed and overwhelmed?

COMMON SOURCES OF STRESS

- Focus entirely on extending compassion and care towards others at the expense of self-care
- Unrealistic expectations (set by yourself, the organization and/or clients)
- Perfectionist tendencies; Need to be in control
- Inability to sustain appropriate boundaries
- Pushing too hard (heavy workloads, long hours)
- Competing priorities; Organizational pressures
- Limited access to support and resources
- Reluctance to access support system for fear of appearing incapable
- Lack of self-awareness (in terms of triggers, abilities, needs, self-soothing strategies, etc.)

COMMON STRESS REACTIONS

Physical

- Feeling Drained; Fatigue; Restlessness
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Changes in libido
- Unexplained headaches, muscle aches and/or other physical pain
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Increased susceptibility to colds, flu and infection.
- Skin breakouts (acne, hives, rashes)

Behavioural

- Isolation (social withdrawal)
- Easily startled; Always on edge
- Changes in communication patterns
- Excessive blame (self and/or others)
- Increased substance use
- Chronic procrastination
- Increased absences at work, arriving late and leaving early.

Emotional

- Feeling helpless, overwhelmed and/or overextended
- Feelings of anxiety; Dreading work
- Feelings of inadequacy; Chronic fear of failure; Hopelessness
- Decreased motivation; Detachment
- Fragile; Cry easily and/or frequently
- Mood swings; Irritability
- Emotional blunting; Apathy

Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions
- Difficulty retaining information; Memory blanks
- Confusion; 'Brain Fog'
- Questioning why terrible things happen
- Negative self-talk
- Negative outlook on life; Increased pessimism

Some content from this handout has been adapted from *Responding to Stressful Events: Self-Care for Caregivers* (2005) published by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Your Needs Matter Too - Side B

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS

INFORMATION SHEETS FOR CAREGIVERS

As a supporter, it is a good idea to have printed copies of information sheets that cover a variety of different topics relating to children's grief in your toolbox to give to caregivers.

When to Tell the Children: Preparing Children for the Death of Someone Close to Them – Andrea Warnick
www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/Communication/When+to+Tell+the+Children+Preparing+Children+for+the+Death+of+Someone+Close+to+Them.aspx

Children at the Bedside of a Dying Family Member or Friend – Andrea Warnick
www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/Final+Days/Children+at+the+Bedside+of+a+Dying+Family+Member+or+Friend.aspx

Don't Use the 'D' Word: Exploring Myths About Children and Death – Andrea Warnick
www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/Emotional+Health/Don_t+use+the+D+word+Exploring+myths+about+children+and+death.aspx

Talking with Young People About Illness and Dying - The Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre
www.tlcpc.org/patients/childrens-grief/our-resources/talking-with-young-people

Attending Funerals, Memorials and Other Rituals - The Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre
www.tlcpc.org/patients/childrens-grief/funerals

Supporting Grieving Kids and Teenagers - The Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre
www.tlcpc.org/patients/childrens-grief/our-resources/support-holidays

Helping Children & Teens Cope with Fear After a Death – The Dougy Centre
www.dougy.org/docs/TDC_Fears_Tip_Sheet_10_14.pdf

Supporting Grieving Preschoolers – The Dougy Centre
www.dougy.org/docs/TDC_Preschoolers_Tip_Sheet_2014_rev.pdf

Supporting Grieving Siblings – The Dougy Centre
www.dougy.org/docs/TDC_Sibling_Grief_Tip_Sheet_10_14.pdf

The Charter For Bereaved Children – Winston's Wish
www.winstonswish.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Charter-published-August-2010.pdf

10 Things Grieving Children Want You to Know - The Mourning Star Centre for Grieving Children & Teens
www.childrengrieve.org/sites/default/files/spiritweb/10%20Things%20Grieving%20Children%20Want%20You%20to%20Know.pdf

Ten Ways to Help Grieving Children – The Amelia Centre
www.childrengrieve.org/sites/default/files/spiritweb/10%20Ways%20to%20Help%20grieving%20children.pdf

When a Parent Dies by Suicide...What Kids Want to Know - Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/for_children_youth/Pages/when_parent_suicide.aspx

BOOKS FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

Always read the book before introducing it to a child to ensure that it is appropriate for their level of development, personal situation and unique needs. An age group has been identified for each book, but keep in mind that it is *just a suggestion*. You might be surprised to learn that picture books often resonate with teens and even adults!

TALKING ABOUT DEATH

A Child's Book About Burial and Cremation by Earl Grollman

Notes: Funeral, Burial, Cremation

Suggested Ages: 4 +

A Complete Book About Death for Kids by Earl Grollman & Joy Johnson

Notes: Death, Dying, Funeral, Cremation, Emotions

Suggested Ages: 6 +

I Found a Dead Bird: The Kids' Guide to the Cycle of Life & Death by Jan Thornhill

Notes: Life Cycle, Death

Suggested Ages: 9 – 13

I Miss You: A First Look at Death by Pat Thomas

Notes: Death, Funeral, Emotions

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen

Notes: Life Cycle

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages by Leo Buscaglia

Notes: Life Cycle

Suggested Ages: 6 +

Waterbugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children by Doris Stickney

Notes: Life Cycle

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

What Happens When Someone Dies? A Child's Guide to Death and Funerals by Michaelene Mundy

Notes: Dying, Death, Funeral, Emotions

Suggested Ages: 4 +

What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? by Trevor Romain

Notes: Death, Funeral, Big Questions, Emotions, Memory

Suggested Ages: 5 – 10

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

Notes: Death, Causes, Emotions, Memories

Suggested Ages: 5 – 10

When Uncle Bob Died: Talking It Through by Althea

Notes: Illness, Death, Funeral, Emotions, Memories

Suggested Ages: 2 – 5

TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS & MEMORIES

A Birthday Present for Daniel: A Child's Story of Loss by Juliet Rothman

Notes: Sibling Loss, Changes, Emotions, Memory, Special Occasions

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Always and Forever by Alan Durant and Debi Gliori

Notes: Emotions, Memory

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley

Notes: Dying, Death, Emotions, Memory

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Goodbye Mousie by Robie H. Harris

Notes: Death, Pet Loss, Emotions

Suggested Ages: 2 – 5

Healing Your Grieving Heart For Kids: 100 Practical Ideas by Alan Wolfelt

Notes: Emotions, Coping, Memory

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

If Only by Carole Geithner

Notes: Parental Loss (mother), Cancer, Life after Loss, Emotions

Suggested Ages: 10 – 15

Michael Rosen's SAD BOOK by Michael Rosen

Notes: Emotions, Coping, Memory

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

Missing Mummy by Rebecca Cobb

Notes: Parental Loss (mother), Emotions

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Missing My Best Friend by Norma Thorstad Knapp

Notes: Friend Loss, Emotions, Memory

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing With Loss by Michaelene Mundy

Notes: Emotions, Coping, Christian

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Samantha Jane's Missing Smile: A Story About Coping with the Loss of a Parent by Julie Kaplow

Notes: Parental Loss (father), Emotions, Worry

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss by Pat Schwiebert & Chuck DeKlyen

Notes: Emotions

Suggested Ages: 6 +

The Day the Sea Went out and Never Came Back: A Story for Children Who Have Lost Someone They

Love by Margot Sunderland and Nicky Hancock

Notes: Emotions, Memory, Hope

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

The Scar by Charlotte Moundlic

Notes: Emotions, Worry, Ongoing Connection

Suggested Ages: 6 +

When Families Grieve by Sesame Street

Notes: Emotions, Memory (guide for caregivers, kids book & DVD)

Suggested Ages: 3 – 6

When Mom or Dad Dies: A Book for Comfort for Kids by Daniel Grippo

Notes: Parental Loss, Emotions, Christian

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

SERIOUS ILLNESS & DYING

A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness

Notes: Cancer (mother), Emotions, Fear

Suggested Ages: 12 +

Duck, Death and the Tulip by Wolf Erlbruch

Notes: Dying, Death, Emotions, Fear

Suggested Ages: 9 +

Flamingo Dream by Donna Jo Napoli

Notes: Cancer (father), Dying, Death, Remembrance

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying by Joyce C. Mills

Notes: Dying, Death

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

Let My Colors Out by Courtney Filigenzi (American Cancer Society)

Notes: Cancer (mother), Emotions

Suggested Ages: 2 – 5

The Secret C: Straight Talking About Cancer by Julie Stokes (Winston's Wish)

Notes: Cancer

Suggested Ages: 6 – 10

Tickles Tabitha's Cancer-tankerous Mommy by Amelia Frahm

Notes: Cancer, Treatments, Side Effects

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

The Medikidz graphic novel series was developed to help kids to understand cancer.

By Kim Chilman-Blair. Published by The American Cancer Society. (Suggested Ages 12 +)

- What's Up With Jo? Medikidz Explain Brain Tumors. (2011)
- What's Up With Richard? Medikidz Explain Leukemia. (2010)
- What's Up With Bridget's Mom? Medikidz Explain Breast Cancer. (2010)
- What's Up With Our Dad? Medikidz Explain Colorectal Cancer. (2013)
- What's Up With Jerome's Grandad? Medikidz Explain Prostate Cancer. (2013)
- What's Up With Sam's Grandma? Medikidz Explain Lung Cancer. (2013)
- What's Up With Tiffany's Dad? Medikidz Explain Melanoma. (2012)
- What's Up With Lyndon? Medikidz Explain Osteosarcoma. (2011)

NOT DEATH SPECIFIC...BUT STILL HELPFUL!

A Terrible Thing Happened by Margaret M. Holmes

Notes: Emotion, Trauma

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry Lee MacLean

Notes: Emotions, Coping, Meditation, Mindfulness

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

Rabbityness by Jo Empson

Notes: Loss, Emotions, Coping

Suggested Ages: 4 +

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) by Eline Snel

Notes: Mindfulness, Guided Exercises CD, Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation

Suggested Ages: 5 – 12

The Great Big Book of Feelings by Mary Hoffman

Notes: Emotions

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

Notes: Loss, Connection, Memory

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

NON-PROFIT PROFILE: BUILDING RESILIENCY THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION



Art with Heart (www.artwithheart.org) has developed a number of strengths-based creative resources that support the emotional well-being of children who have experienced trauma and hardship. The books are appealing to children and youth, with vibrant and eye catching illustrations that encourage and inspire creative expression. *Draw It Out* was developed specifically to help address grief and bereavement. Their additional titles are very relevant and readily applicable to address this need as well.

Draw It Out - Steffanie Lorig & Rosalie Frankel (2014).

Notes: Grief specific activity book that helps children to express emotions, ask questions and learn to safely cope with their grief.

Suggested Ages: 6 - 12

Ink About It - Annie McCall, Kate Gardener & Steffanie Lorig (2011).

Notes: Activity book exploring themes such as identity, self-esteem, changes, loss, support systems, coping, goals & dreams, etc.

Suggested Ages: 11 - 18

Chill + Spill - Jeanean Jacobs & Steffanie Lorig (2010).

Notes: Art journal exploring themes such as identity, self-esteem, changes, loss, support systems, coping, goals & dreams, etc.

Suggested Ages: 11 - 18

Magnificent Marvelous Me! - Annie McCall & Steffanie Lorig (2008).

Notes: Activity book that helps children to express difficult emotions and build resiliency through activities that focus on coping, communication and self-esteem.

Suggested Ages: 6 - 12

Oodles of Doodles - Steffanie Lorig (2005).

Notes: Activity book for pediatric patients to express their emotions, cope with physical and emotional pain, and feel empowered.

Suggested Ages: 6 - 12

ACTIVITY & WORKBOOKS

Provide children with support as they complete these activity books. It is important to make yourself available to answer questions, provide clear and concise explanations and offer comfort.

After a Death: An Activity Book for Children by *The Dougy Centre*

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

After a Murder: A Workbook for Grieving Kids by *The Dougy Centre*

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

After a Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids by *The Dougy Centre*

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

Angel Catcher for Kids: A Journal to Help You Remember the Person You Love Who Died by *Amy Eldon*

Suggested Ages: 5 – 10

Because...Someone I Love Has Cancer by *The American Cancer Society*

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

Children Also Grieve: Talking About Death and Healing by *Linda Goldman*

Suggested Ages: 5 +

Grief Encounter Workbook by *Shelley Gilbert* (Grief Encounter Project)

Suggested Ages: 6 – 12

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone Has Died by *Diana Crossley*

Suggested Ages: 4 – 8

My Life Changed: A Journal for Coping with Loss and Grief by *Amy, Allie & David Dennison*

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

The Grief Bubble: Helping Kids Explore and Understand Grief by *Kerry Debay*

Suggested Ages: 6 – 10

When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness: Children Can Learn to Cope with Loss and Change by *Marge Heegaard*

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief by *Marge Heegaard*

Suggested Ages: 9 – 12

BOOKS FOR ADOLESCENTS (... AND ADULTS)

Caregivers, supporters and adults who have themselves experienced the death of a loved one as an adolescent can also benefit from reading these resources.

A Monster Calls by *Patrick Ness*

Notes: Cancer (mother), Emotions, Fear

Suggested Ages: 12 +

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing Loss by *Enid Samuel Traisman*

Notes: Creative Coping, Memory

Suggested Ages: 12 – 16

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas by *Alan Wolfelt*

Notes: Coping, Self-Care, Healing Activities

Suggested Ages: 12 – 18

If Only by *Carole Geithner*

Notes: Parental Loss (Mother), Cancer, Life after Loss, Emotions

Suggested Ages: 10 – 15

I Will Remember You: A Guide Book Through Grief for Teens by *Laura Dower*

Notes: Personal Stories, Emotions, Coping, Memory

Suggested Ages: 12 +

The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends by *Helen Fitzgerald*

Notes: Dying, Funeral, Emotions, Changes, Relationships, Coping

Suggested Ages: 12 +

The Healing Your Grieving Heart Journal for Teens by *Alan Wolfelt & Megan Wolfelt*

Notes: Creative Coping, Memory, Gentle Prompts

Suggested Ages: 12 – 18

Weird is Normal When Teenagers Grieve by *Jenny Lee Wheeler*

Notes: For Teens By Teen, Emotions, Coping, Memory, Connection

Suggested Ages: 12 +

You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk About Life After the Loss of a Parent by *Lynne B. Hughes*

Notes: Personal Stories, Emotions, Coping, Memory

Suggested Ages: 12 +

ONLINE RESOURCES & SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

HELLO GRIEF

www.hellogrief.org

KidSaid

www.kidsaid.com

Grief Encounter

<http://www.griefencounter.org.uk/kids-zone/> (Kids Zone)

<http://www.griefencounter.org.uk/teen-zone/> (Teen Zone)

Winston's Wish

<http://foryoungpeople.winstonswish.org.uk/>

The Healing Garden

<http://www.healingthespirit.org/the-healing-garden/>

RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS (...AND SUPPORTERS)

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child by *The Dougy Centre*

A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children: Rebuilding Your Family After the Death of a Loved One by *Phyllis R. Silverman & Madelyn Kelly*

As Big as it Gets: Supporting a Child When a Parent is Seriously Ill by *Winston's Wish*

A Tiny Boat at Sea: How to Help Children Who Have a Parent Diagnosed with Cancer by *Izetta Smith*

A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger by *Elaine Whitehouse & Warwick Pudney*

Beyond the Rough Rock: Supporting a Child Who Has Been Bereaved Through Suicide by *Winston's Wish*

Companioning the Grieving Child: A Soulful Guide for Caregivers by *Alan Wolfelt*

Finding the Word: How to Talk with Children and Teens about Death, Suicide, Homicide, Funerals, Cremation and Other End-of-Life Matters by *Alan Wolfelt*

Great Answers for Difficult Questions About Death: What Children Need to Know by *Linda Goldman*

Helping Children Cope With Death by *The Dougy Centre*

Helping Teens Cope With Death by *The Dougy Centre*

Hope Beyond the Headlines: Supporting a Child Bereaved Through Murder or Manslaughter by *Winston's Wish*

Living Dying: A Guide for Adults Supporting Grieving Children & Teens by *Ceilidh Eaton Russell*

No Child Should Grieve Alone: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers & Professionals by *Emilio Parga*

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) by *Eline Snel*

What About the Kids? Understanding Their Needs in Funeral Planning and Services by *The Dougy Centre*

When a Parent Has Cancer: A Guide to Caring for Your Children by *Wendy Schlessel Harpham*

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Andrea Warnick Consulting

www.andreawarnick.com

Association for Death Education and Counselling

www.adec.org

Canadian Virtual Hospice

www.virtualhospice.ca

Centre for Loss & Life Transition (Alan Wolfelt)

www.centerforloss.com

Coalition to Support Grieving Students

www.grievingstudents.org

Dr. Jay Children's Grief Program

www.drjayfoundation.com/griefprogram.html

Liana Lowenstein

www.lianalowenstein.com

National Alliance for Grieving Children

www.childrengrieve.org

The Dougy Centre: The National Centre for Grieving Children & Families

www.dougy.org

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk

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