



A HANDBOOK FOR SUPPORTERS

Extending Compassion & Care to Grieving Youth



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This handbook is intended for volunteers and professionals who have received formalized training in the field of child and youth grief 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 supporter's existing toolkit and may not be applicable or appropriate in all situations. Supporters using this handbook should receive ongoing supervision by professionals at a reputable organization specializing in the socio-emotional support of grieving young people and their families. The wellbeing of children and youth 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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Please send comments, questions and requests to:

info@childrenandyoungriefnetwork.com

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

Do you support grieving children (ages 6 - 12)?

In 2015, **The Children and Youth Grief Network** released a free resource, **A Handbook for Volunteers: Supporting Children Grieving the Dying and Death of a Loved One.**

To request a copy, email:
info@childrenandyoungriefnetwork.com

French version available Spring 2018.



WHY A GRIEF NETWORK?

We recognize that the support received by grieving children or youth can significantly influence their wellbeing. As a result, we aim to connect individuals and organizations who provide services and resources that benefit children, youth and their parents or caregivers who are grieving a death.

www.childrenandyoungriefnetwork.com



OUR VISION

Every child and youth has honest information and well-informed support when someone they care about is dying or has died.

OUR MISSION

To advocate for educational opportunities and support services that will benefit children and youth who are grieving the dying or the death of someone they care about.

OUR VALUES

- Every child's rights should be respected
- There should be a broad range of grief support (formal and informal) available to all children and youth
- Grief support should be culturally sensitive
- Communities need to have capacity to support grieving children and youth: education and access to education, tools and services
- Every child is unique and their response to death is individual
- Grief support strives to give children and youth coping skills and increase their resilience to face life events
- Accurate language is especially important in talking to young people about grief and death



OUR NETWORK



www.hearthousehospice.com
www.facebook.com/Hearthousehospice
www.twitter.com/HearthHouseHosp

Heart House Hospice provides support to people and families living with illness, dying and grief who reside in Brampton, Mississauga and Malton. Programs are provided at no cost and include counselling, caregiver support and education, in home visiting, complementary therapies and wellness activities, children's counselling, spiritual care, bereavement support and education, community education and volunteer training.



www.drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca
www.twitter.com/DrJayCentre
www.facebook.com/drjaychildrensgriefcentre/

The Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre is a charity located in Toronto. They have a multidisciplinary team of counsellors, educators and volunteers who support children, youth and families during some of their most difficult moments before and after the death of a family member. They provide support through individual and family counselling, education, support groups, family events and Camp Erin Toronto.



www.dlhospice.org
www.twitter.com/dorothy_ley
www.facebook.com/The-Dorothy-Ley-Hospice-123474981148199/

The Dorothy Ley Hospice is a volunteer-based community service organization offering compassionate care to people living with the challenges of a life-limiting illness or loss. Our programs meet their physical, emotional, spiritual and support needs, helping them to live life to the fullest. Our services are provided at no cost to the individual thanks to the generosity of our donors and community partners.



www.bethellhospice.org
www.twitter.com/BethellHospice

Bethell Hospice is a non-profit organization that provides exceptional and accessible palliative and bereavement care to individuals of all ages and their families in Caledon, Bolton, Brampton, North Etobicoke, Rexdale, Malton, Dufferin County and West Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada. Our person-centred approach to care fosters dignity, respect and comfort for our clients and their loved ones.





www.grievingchildrenlighthouse.org
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.

Andrea Warnick Consulting

Supporting Grieving Children, Youth, and Adults, through Education and Counselling

www.andreawarnick.com
www.twitter.com/andreawarnick1
www.facebook.com/andrea.warnick.consulting

Andrea is an educator, registered psychotherapist, nurse, and thanatologist. Andrea provides grief counselling services as well as consultation, education and training on a wide range of topics related to supporting grieving children, their families and communities.



C. Elizabeth Dougherty Consulting

Supporting Children, Youth and Adults facing Complex Illness, Uncertainty and Grief

www.cedoughertyconsulting.org
www.twitter.com/CEDoughertyMSW
www.facebook.com/C.ElizabethDoughertyConsulting/

Elizabeth is a social worker and educator with extensive experience supporting children, youth and adults facing complex illness, uncertainty and grief. She has a community-based private practice in Hamilton, Halton and Peel and offers telephone and online counselling across Canada. Elizabeth is an Assistant Clinical Professor (Adjunct) with the Department of Family Medicine, Division of Palliative Care at McMaster University and is the Clinical Director of Camp Erin Hamilton, a free bereavement camp for children and teens.*



www.familyedcentre.org
www.facebook.com/familyedcentre/

Peel Family Education Centre has been enriching the lives of families for over 40 years. We offer parent-to-parent education, support and training through community-based courses, workshops, Meet Up groups, and online forums, such as podcasts, tip sheets and videos clips.



Centre for Grief & Healing

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel

www.bereavedfamilies.ca

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel is a non-profit, peer support organization providing services for individuals and families dealing with a death and coping with grief. Our mission is to provide inclusive, mutual support that fosters hope, healing and improved wellness. Services include 1:1 peer support sessions, various share and support groups and we partner with various organizations offering in-house support sessions within community high schools, colleges and workplaces.



Carpenter Hospice

www.thecarpenterhospice.com
www.twitter.com/carpenterhosp
www.facebook.com/TheCarpenterHospice

Carpenter Hospice is a home in the heart of Burlington that offers both residential-based care to people in the last stages of their lives, and community-based programs for people dealing with grief or a life-limiting illness. They offer compassionate, non-judgemental support to individuals and families experiencing loss in a safe, caring and compassionate environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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 31,900 teachers and coaches and 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.

MARY C. KRAFT, CCLS, MHPS

Mary is a Certified Child Life Specialist and holds a Masters degree in Hospice and Palliative Studies. Mary spent the last 17 years at the Children's Hospital of Michigan working with grieving children and families before taking on the role of Program Director at New Hope Center for Grief Support in Northville, Michigan. She participated in Camp Kangaroo, Season's bereavement camp for the past 2 years.

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Liana is a Registered Clinical Social Worker, Certified Play Therapist-Supervisor, and Certified TF-CBT Therapist who has been working with children and their families since 1988. She presents trainings across North America and abroad. Recent speaking engagements include South Africa, Israel, England, and Australia. Liana provides clinical supervision to mental health practitioners, runs a play-therapy internship program, and consults to several mental health agencies. Liana has authored numerous books, including: Creative Interventions for Troubled Children & Youth; Creative Interventions for Children of Divorce; Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children; Creative CBT Interventions for Children with Anxiety; and Cory Helps Kids Cope with Sexual Abuse. She is winner of the Monica Herbert award for outstanding contribution to play therapy in Canada.

CEILIDH EATON RUSSELL, PhD(c), CCLS

Ceilidh is a PhD candidate in the Family Relations and Human Development program at the University of Guelph, and a Child Life Specialist focusing on Research & Evaluation with the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre in Toronto. Since 2001, Ceilidh's clinical work, research and teaching has focused on communicating and supporting children and families living with the serious illness, dying or death of a close family member.

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Colleen is a Registered Psychotherapist who holds a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology. She has been working with children, youth and their families through children's mental health and family service agencies across Southern Ontario for over 17 years. She is currently based in Toronto and works both in private practice and at the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre where she leads their Youth Support Program offering group and individual counselling as well as Leadership Training. She works through an integrated approach of cognitive, behavioural and expressive arts therapies supporting children, youth and their families, including those who have been victims of violent crimes and survivors of trauma.



SARAH WALDMAN, MA, RP

Sarah Waldman is a Registered Psychotherapist with a Masters in Creative Arts Therapies. She is passionate about using the creative process to support children, youth, families and communities that have experienced loss and trauma. She is currently employed as an Education Specialist/Therapist with the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Ontario. Sarah has over 15 years of experience working in the mental health and addiction field in a variety of roles including: counsellor, program developer, project coordinator and educator. Sarah is skillful in supporting community capacity-building and fostering collaborative partnerships among diverse stakeholders. Passionate about diversity, equity and inclusion, she brings these values to all of her work.

NANCY GALWAY, MSW, RSW

Nancy is a clinical and community social worker, grief counsellor and yoga teacher/mindfulness practitioner. She currently works with Carefor Health and Community Services, Eastern Counties. At Carefor she administers the Elder Abuse Prevention Program and is the clinical director for Camp Erin Eastern Ontario. She also has a part time grief counselling business called Dara Counselling. She called her business Dara after a Celtic word that evolved over the years to mean 'oak tree.' The oak tree is a symbol of strength, wisdom and endurance. The oak tree is grounded and tied to the earth with its vast roots that keep it balanced always. Nancy's goal is to bring this feeling of resilience to those living with grief and trauma.

DEANA SLATER, BSW, MEd, RSW

Deana is a registered social worker and has a private practice, Deana Slater Counselling Services, where she provides counselling to youth and adults who are struggling with grief, trauma and other life challenges. She also works at Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre helping patients and their families access prescriptions for treatment. She has worked with children, youth and young adults in a wide range of community and non-profit organizations. Deana has volunteered with Bereaved Families of Ontario – Halton/Peel as a group facilitator, group advisor and is currently a member of the Professional Advisory Committee.

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Marianne is now working as a hospice chaplain for University of Rochester Medicine Home Health Care. Until July 2016 Marianne worked as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in varied community settings in Toronto. Since beginning her own mindfulness practice more than 10 years ago, Marianne has become increasingly interested in sharing mindfulness practices with people of all ages coping with grief or terminal illness within their family.

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Kimberly Blackmore is the H.U.U.G. (Help Us Understand Grief) Counsellor at Heart House Hospice where she provides counselling to children, youth and their families who have a loved one who is dying or has died, as well as providing education to professionals on how to support and communicate with grieving children. Kimberly has a BA in Psychology and Child and Youth Studies, an ECE Diploma, MC in Counselling Psychology and is a Certified Child and Youth Worker and Certified Play Therapist. Kimberly has several years of experience counselling children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties in a variety of therapeutic settings.

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Sara is an Individual, Couple and Family Counsellor. She has a passion for empowering people to live their best life by getting them in touch with what is blocking them - fears, hurts unhelpful thought patterns, emotional wounds and so forth. She has worked with countless individuals and has experience addressing various issues, including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and trauma. Sara regards her work as her calling and is committed to serving those she works with in a manner that facilitates a sense of safety so she can maximize her clients' capacity for personal growth and change.

CHANTAL DOUCET, SSW

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Dr. Bluth received her PhD in Child and Family Studies in 2012 from The University of Tennessee, and is Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the UNC School of Medicine. Dr. Bluth's research focuses on the roles that self-compassion and mindfulness play in promoting well-being in youth, has practiced mindfulness since she was a teen, and teaches Mindful Self-Compassion to adults and teens. Dr. Bluth is author of *The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are*, and is co-developer of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults*.

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A. RAE SIMPSON, PhD

The *Ten Tasks of Adolescent Development* were reproduced with permission. Copyright © 2001 by A. Rae Simpson and the President and Fellows of Harvard College. To learn more visit: <http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/raising-teens/>

LAUREN MUSCARELLA

Lauren graduated from American University with a degree in Journalism. In 2010, Lauren began researching international mourning traditions and theories on grief as well as writing about the loss of her mother. In 2011 Lauren founded Trauma to Art: Turning Grief into Creative Expression. The organization put together a book, *Alice's Law: Finding Deeper Meaning and Honoring Lost Loved Ones*. When Lauren is not working on Trauma to Art, she is a hospice volunteer, an improv comedy student, a movie lover, a dedicated yogi and a person trying to be a respectful sincere friend, daughter, sister, aunt and inhabitant of planet earth mainly by keeping her fist off the horn while driving through the streets of Boston, Mass. and recycling.

THE DOUGY CENTER FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We have received permission from The Dougy Center to adapt two activities - *Question Jar* and *Rock Ceremony* - as well as content regarding important group guidelines from the book, *Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children and Teens* (2012). We are also grateful to have been granted permission to reprint *The Bill of Rights of Grieving Teens*.

HEATHER SNIDER

Heather is an editor and writer based in Guelph, Ontario. Heather works with a wide range of healthcare and public sector clients, and specializes in plain language.

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Dana has a background in sociology, studio art and volunteer management. Personal experience inspires her work in trauma, grief and hospice care.

A special thank you to the youth and young adults whose voices helped to illustrate the concepts addressed in this resource.



christopher mccluskey
illustration



NATASHA MANZONE, BA, BSW, RSW

Natasha is the Family Services Coordinator at the Seasons Centre for Grieving Children in Barrie, ON. Since 1995, Seasons Centre for Grieving Children has been providing peer to peer support for children between the ages of 5 and 24 years who are grieving the death of an immediate family member. The Centre is founded on the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to grieve in a supportive and understanding environment. Seasons Centre for Grieving Children is dedicated in Loving Memory of Samantha & Jessica Ramey.

ORLEY CULVERHOUSE, MTA

Orley is the Caring Hearts Children's Program coordinator at St. Joseph's Hospice in Sarnia, as well as an accredited music therapist. Her work at St. Joseph's Hospice includes supporting children/youth and their families facing a terminal illness or death of a loved one, as well as residents of the hospice and their families. Orley received training on working with grieving children under Andrea Warnick, and is currently completing her Masters degree in Social Work at the University of Windsor.

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to build your confidence as a volunteer and/or professional supporting grieving youth. As a supporter, you play a very important role - the work you do will not only serve youth 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 upon your existing training and knowledge about youth and young adult grief.

This handbook advocates for a person-centred approach through the inclusion of a variety of activities that can be adapted to meet the unique needs, interests and abilities of each youth.

This handbook includes content that is intended to support you in your work with **youth ages 13 – 21**. Use your discretion when introducing activities and make appropriate modifications where necessary.

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

Offer psychoeducational support to caregivers about the unique needs of grieving youth.

Facilitate communication between caregivers and grieving youth by supporting caregivers through difficult conversations.

Provide grieving youth with individual attention. It is not uncommon for youth to be reluctant to reach out to the adults in their lives. Youth 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 youth have the opportunity to ask questions, learn about illness and death, and share their personal experiences.

Normalize grief and reduce feelings of isolation by **connecting youth with peers who have a shared lived experience**.

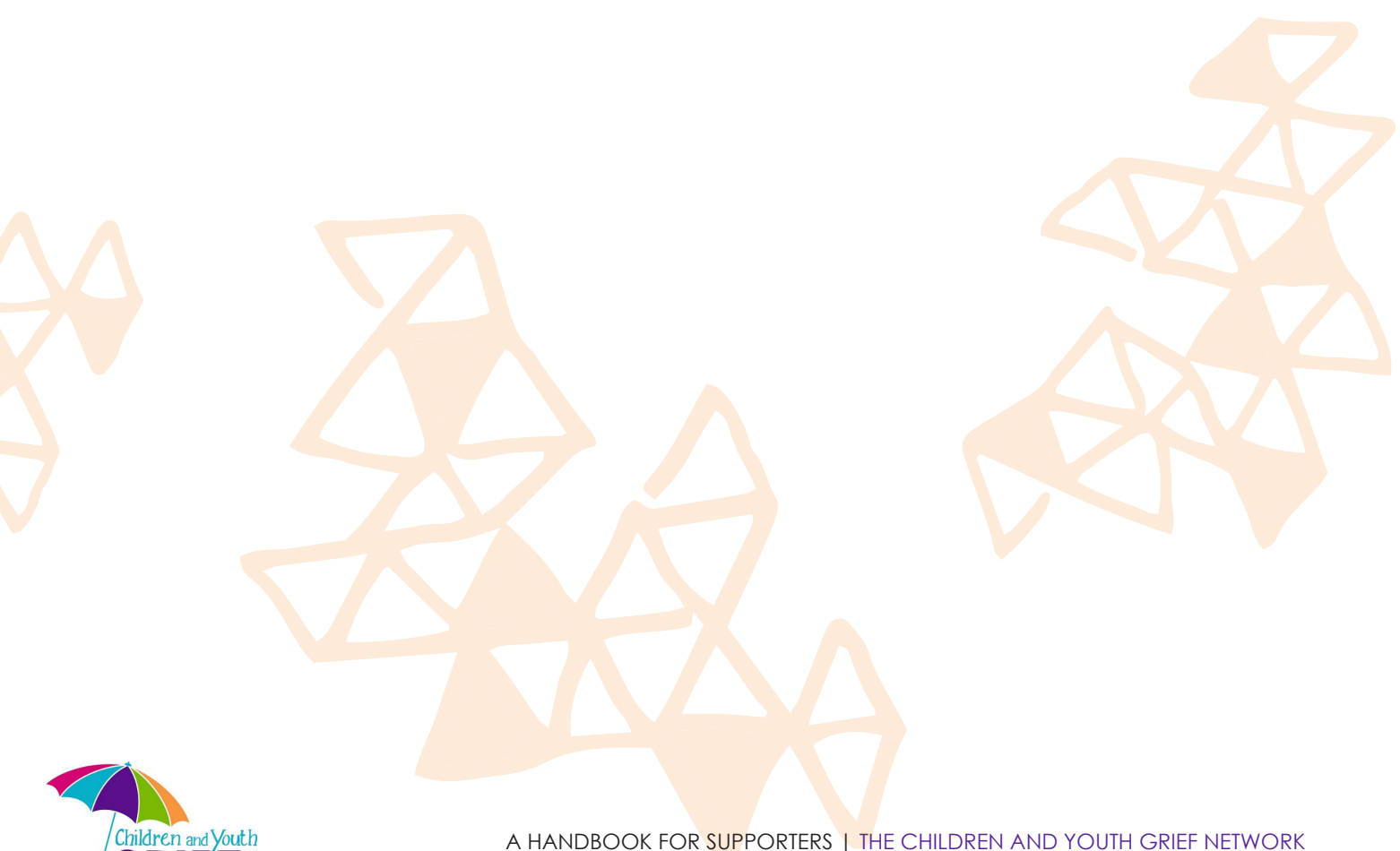
Provide socio-emotional support to grieving youth through the unconditional validation of their feelings, thoughts and experiences.

Build emotional literacy by helping youth to identify emotions and find healthy ways to cope with difficult feelings.

Facilitate emotional expression through the provision of creative outlets and activities.

Provide opportunities for youth to be involved in care in a way that is meaningful and respects their choices.

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



FOREWARD

This handbook is a welcome addition to The Children and Youth Grief Network's original guide, *A Handbook for Volunteers: Supporting Children Grieving the Dying and Death of a Loved One*.

In the two years since it was released, *A Handbook for Volunteers* has helped countless individuals and organizations to support grieving children. The Nanny Angel Network, a charity providing free professional childcare to mothers with cancer, provides the handbook to all of their volunteers and shares their experience:

"A Handbook for Volunteers: Supporting Children Grieving the Dying and Death of a Loved One has been a significant and valuable tool that we provide to our volunteers in order to better support children and families living with illness, grief and death. The professional knowledge and wealth of information the book provides to the Nanny Angel volunteers is immeasurable. It helps empower the Nanny Angels so they are able to support children in recognizing and understanding their feelings. The handbook's acknowledgment of the importance of supporting children in grief and bereavement and the variety of resources (and individualized activities) that encompasses this book is phenomenal."

I'm thrilled that we will now have another resource of this calibre for youth who are grieving the dying or death of someone in their life.

The adolescent years are ones of transition and exploration. Peers take on an increased sense of importance as does group membership. Relationships with those in parenting roles are renegotiated as youth establish a sense of identity independent of their family.

Brain development during this time allows for youth to understand and compose abstract ideas, and to explore the world beyond their previously held boundaries, which can be both exciting and disorienting. The ability to feel empathy and compassion becomes more developed, enabling them to think about human relationships on a new level. This time of life is one of enormous transition and enormous potential.

Experiencing the dying or death of someone during this period of tremendous change can feel destabilizing and emotionally overwhelming. While many youth prefer to receive emotional support in general from peers, they may find when grieving an illness or death in their personal life that their peers are ill equipped to support them on this level. This, coupled with the natural tendency to seek independence from family, can lead to many young people processing much of their grief in isolation.

Supportive relationships are of central importance in the lives of youth. We cannot underestimate the benefit of having even a single adult show up for a grieving youth and being emotionally available to them. Youth don't need supporters to tell them how to grieve nor attempt to fix their grief. What they do need is to have people in their lives who can help them understand their grief as a natural and healthy process and bear witness to it. This exceptional handbook compiled by Dana Bingley will go a long way towards helping adults in the lives of grieving youth to do just that.

Andrea Warnick, RN, MA

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SECTION 1: SUPPORTING GRIEVING YOUTH

GRIEF GLOSSARY

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

Bereavement is the state of having experienced the loss of someone through death.



Grief is the response to loss – the thoughts and emotions that a person experiences as a result of the loss of someone or something that is meaningful to them. 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 feelings and memories, engaging in rituals, etc. Mourning supports the healing process by helping youth to integrate their grief into their lives in a healthy way. Adult supporters can help facilitate mourning amongst grieving youth by providing them with a safe space to talk about and express their feelings in their own unique way.



Attachment refers to an emotional bond or connection between people. People can also have attachments to meaningful items. Youth may find comfort in special items that help them to maintain a connection to the person who is dying/has died. These items, sometimes referred to as '*linking objects*,' might include special gifts, reminders or articles that belonged to the person who is dying/has died.

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

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 person feel very sad, understand that grieving youth may experience a wide range of emotions and behavioural reactions that are individual to them.

Fear & Anxiety	Worry that they/others will become ill & die too Worry about family's financial situation Worry about other family members' emotional wellbeing Sense that the world is no longer a safe place Etc.
Anger	Angry at the person for being sick/dying Angry with adult carer(s) for being too busy with caretaking/consumed with their own grief Angry they have to take on new responsibilities Angry with medical professionals Angry with peers for their lack of empathy Anger towards previously held belief systems Anger towards the media for being intrusive General sense of anger at the world Etc.
Guilt	Regretful for things they had (or had not) said/did Blame self for causing the illness/death Feel as though they could have prevented the illness/death Feel guilty for being angry at or jealous of the person who is ill Remorseful when having fun Etc.
Jealousy	Jealous of other youth who still have a mom/dad/sibling Envious of youth who have a 'normal' childhood Jealous of youth who have less responsibility Jealous of the attention the dying/dead person is getting Etc.
Shame	Embarrassed for being different than their peers Embarrassed to be seen with the person who is ill Shame due to social stigma attached to the circumstances of the illness/death Embarrassed to show emotion Etc.
Shock	Feel emotionally numb Quiet & disconnected Move through the day in a daze or on 'auto pilot' Unable to absorb the reality of the loss Etc.
Avoidance & Denial	Avoid talking or hearing about the person who is dying/has died Avoid doing activities or going to certain places that are a painful reminder Tell themselves it cannot be true Block out the situation by continuing on as normal Etc.
Withdrawal	Noticeably quiet Keep to themselves Doesn't want to go to school/work or engage with peers as usual Disinterest in hobbies they previously enjoyed Spend more time alone in their room Reluctance to reach out for support Etc.
Hyperfocus	Hyperfocus on school, work, sports & household responsibilities Improved academic/workplace performance Self induced pressure to succeed in order to make the person who is ill/has died or other family members proud Etc.
Confusion	Trouble concentrating Difficulty initiating & completing tasks Racing thoughts Forgetfulness Decline in academic/workplace performance Etc.
Personal Care	Changes in eating & sleeping habits Difficulty falling & staying asleep Changes in appearance & personal hygiene Hyperfocused on living a healthy lifestyle for fear of getting ill Etc.
Physical Symptoms	Symptoms mirror those of the person who is dying/has died Headaches & stomach issues Fatigue Frequent colds & flare ups of chronic conditions Etc.

"The first couple of days and weeks are a blur that I barely remember. They were consumed with hospital visits, friends and family all around...I knew I was surrounded and loved and busy but I was on auto-pilot and could not absorb any of it."

"I think it was like shock, because I didn't immediately start crying or bawling or anything like that...it was kind of all a blur."



"In the months/year following my sister's death I felt intense fear. Fear of being alone, of sleeping because of nightmares, of driving and loud noises, of my own emotions. I couldn't stop thinking about my sister and feeling like people I talked to had no clue, no clue how awesome she was or how huge the loss was. The sadness I felt was overwhelming. Feeling inadequate. Feeling as though I were doing a disservice to my sister and family for grieving the way I was. Feeling at fault (even though it was clearly the drunk driver of the truck that hit us). Wishing I had been killed instead. I felt like I was always on the verge of tipping over."

"I wish I could go back and say sorry for all of the terrible things that I said and did."

"After my dad died, I had a really hard time going back to school. I couldn't concentrate at all. It was like my mind was blank. When the teacher spoke, the words didn't even register. One day in history class the teacher said the word 'dead' and it was like she had screamed it right in my ear. All of a sudden I just started to cry. I picked up my books and walked out of the class in front of everybody. I started skipping a lot of classes and began failing. Eventually, I was able to get back on track thanks to two teachers who really took an interest in me and encouraged me to express my grief in my writing assignments."

"When I lost my dad, I went into 'survival mode' and grieving seemed too hard. My friends didn't know what to say to me, my family was hurting, and I didn't want anything else to change. So I pushed all my emotions away. The problem with these emotions is they don't go away, they just marinate, and they become stronger. When I realized I needed to grieve years later, I had developed a new emotion to deal with - bitterness. I also had a lot more people who didn't understand why I was so upset now, when I had been 'fine' for years, even my own mom!"



"The first few days feel like a blur and I felt numb. I'm not sure that I would remember too many details. It feels like time is passing so quickly."

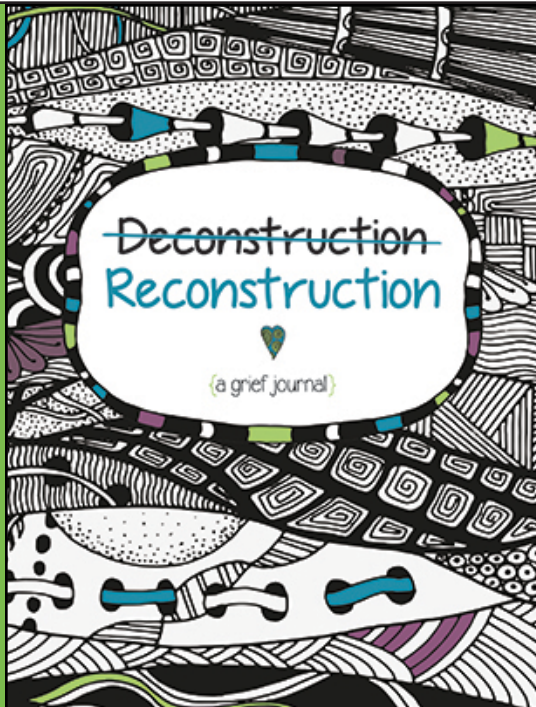
THE BILL OF RIGHTS OF GRIEVING TEENS

Reprinted with permission from **The Dougy Center** - www.dougy.org

A GRIEVING TEEN HAS THE RIGHT:

- ★ To know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances
- ★ To have questions answered honestly
- ★ To be heard with dignity and respect
- ★ To be silent and not tell you their grief emotions and thoughts
- ★ To not agree with your perceptions and conclusions
- ★ To see the person who died and the place of the death
- ★ To grieve any way they want without hurting self or others
- ★ To feel all the feelings and to think all the thoughts of their own unique grief
- ★ To not have to follow the "Stages of Grief" as outlined in a high school health book
- ★ To grieve in one's own unique, individual way without censorship
- ★ To be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at self, and at others
- ★ To have their own theological and philosophical beliefs about life and death
- ★ To be involved in the decisions about the rituals related to the death
- ★ To not be taken advantage of in this vulnerable mourning condition and circumstances
- ★ To have guilt about how they could have intervened to stop the death

This Bill of Rights was developed by participating teens at The Dougy Center and does not represent "official" policies of the Center.



Deconstruction/Reconstruction: A grief journal for teens
The Dougy Center - www.tdcbookstore.org

The Dougy Center's first journal specially created for grieving teens. Whether a teen has experienced the death of a parent, sibling, grandparent, close friend, or other family member, this Deconstruction/Reconstruction journal is an advice-free place where teens can draw, write, paint, and transform whatever they're thinking and feeling.

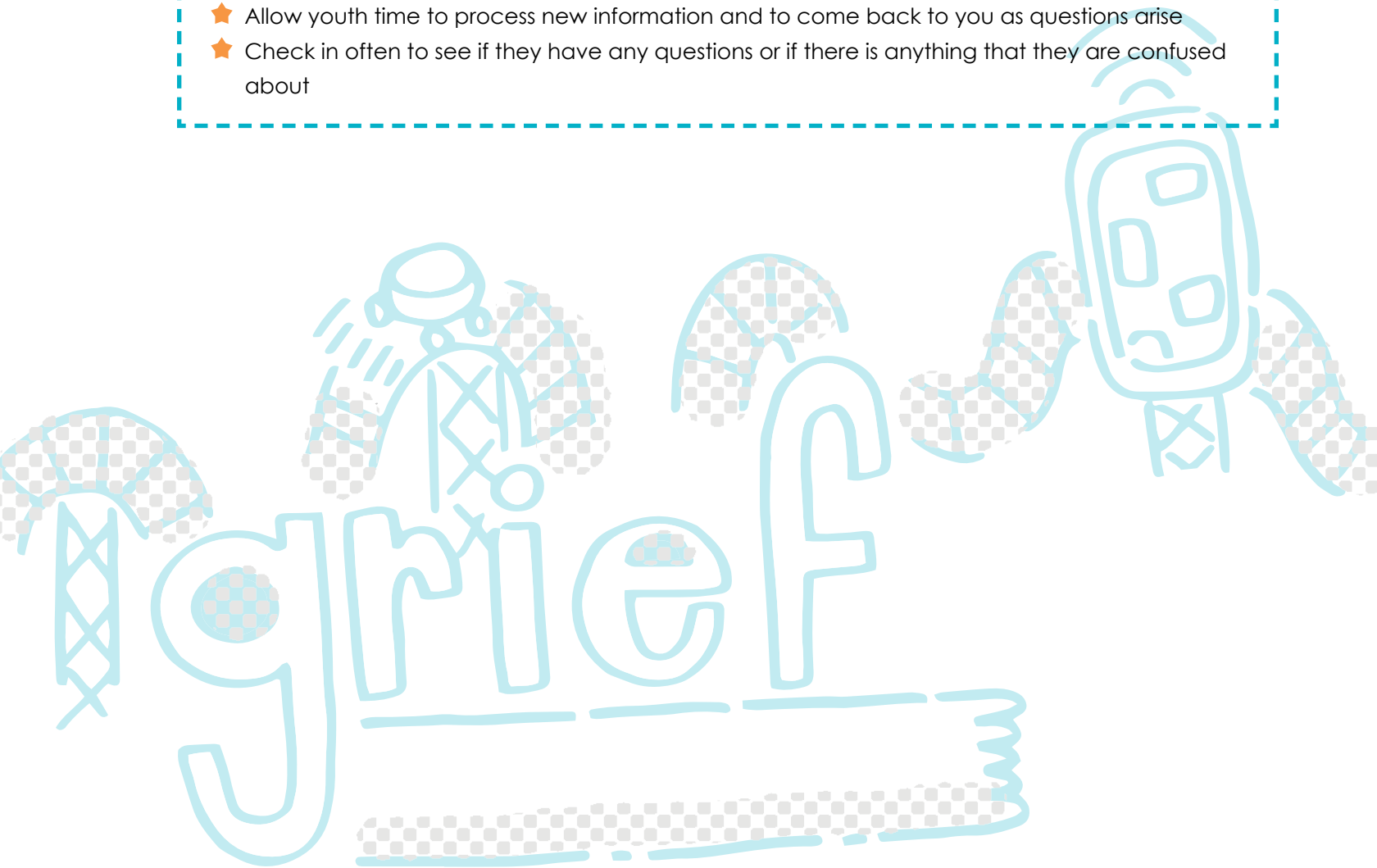


The Dougy Center

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

- ★ Let youth guide the conversation by exploring what they already know or think
- ★ Invite youth to ask questions and welcome their questions with openness and non-judgment
- ★ To avoid making assumptions, clarify what is being asked by posing open ended questions:
 - “So you would like to know _____?”
 - “Can you help me to understand your question better?”
 - “What do you think happens when a person dies?”
- ★ Validate and honour their questions by responding with honesty (*avoiding lies & half-truths*)
- ★ Provide opportunities for youth to opt out of the conversation
 - Remind youth of their right to pass
 - Come up with a signal to indicate they would like to pass or stop the conversation
- ★ Know that it is okay not to have all of the answers and to say, “I don’t know”
- ★ Create space for those ‘unanswerable questions’ by wondering alongside youth
- ★ Provide only as much information as the youth is looking for
- ★ Allow youth time to process new information and to come back to you as questions arise
- ★ Check in often to see if they have any questions or if there is anything that they are confused about



GROWING & GRIEVING: THE IMPACT OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Adolescence is a period of major transition as youth experience rapid physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth. The **Ten Tasks of Adolescent Development**, as identified by the **Raising Teens Project**, have been included in the **purple boxes** below (p. 6 - 9). Each task is accompanied by a **dashed box**, in which we explore the impact of grief on adolescent development and **hear directly from grieving youth**.

1. ADJUST TO SEXUALLY MATURING BODIES AND FEELINGS: Teens are faced with adjusting to growing bodies and newly acquired sexual characteristics. They must learn to manage sexual feelings and to engage in healthy sexual behaviours. This task includes establishing a sexual identity and developing the skills for romantic relationships.

Grieving youth may seek out sexual partners and experiences in order to feel a sense of closeness and connection. Sexual acting out may also provide youth with a temporary distraction from intense feelings. Alternatively, some grieving youth avoid intimate relationships for fear of future losses.

How can you help? Open a dialogue about grief and intimacy. Provide youth with a non-judgmental space where they can explore their feelings and behaviours.

"I did and still do engage in sexual activity to dissociate from my feelings which can leave me feeling like I used my partner."

2. DEVELOP AND APPLY ABSTRACT THINKING SKILLS: Teens typically undergo profound changes in their way of thinking during adolescence, allowing them more effectively to understand and coordinate abstract ideas. They begin to think about possibilities, try out hypotheses, plan ahead, think about thinking, and construct philosophies.

Youth have a greater understanding of the permanence of death and are better able to grasp more abstract concepts, including time, continuing bonds and spirituality. Youth who have experienced a dying process/death may become acutely aware of their own mortality. This may cause them to worry about their own death and how it might impact others.

How can you help? While youth may have a more adult understanding of death, they still need support as they explore difficult feelings and questions (ex. *Why did this happen to me? What is the point of life?*). Despite not having concrete answers for all of their questions, supporters can wonder alongside and hold a compassionate space in which youth can sit with the difficulty of not knowing.

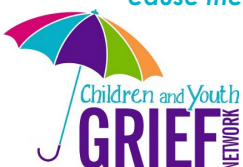
"Let [youth] know you are there to talk, and that you can help them find other people to talk to. It is incredibly hard to bring up feelings but it is really helpful and refreshing to know you aren't alone."

3. DEVELOP AND APPLY A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS: Teens typically acquire a powerful new ability to understand human relationships. Having learned to "put themselves in another person's shoes," they begin to take into account both their perspective and another person's at the same time. They learn to use this new ability to resolve problems and conflicts in relationships.

Many grieving youth report a greater sense of empathy, which can motivate them to extend compassionate care to others. Consequently, grieving youth may avoid expressing their emotions and pretend that everything is okay as not to worry or upset other family members.

How can you help? Celebrate empathy as a strength of character. Emphasize that all grief is valid and support youth to cultivate self-compassion as a means to avoid minimizing their own grief.

"I didn't want my parents to worry about me since they were coping with the loss as well. I did not want to cause them more pain."



4. DEVELOP AND APPLY NEW COPING SKILLS IN AREAS SUCH AS DECISION MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Teens begin to acquire new abilities to think about and plan for the future, to engage in more sophisticated strategies for decision-making, problem solving, and conflict resolution, and to moderate their risk-taking to serve goals rather than jeopardize them.

Grieving youth who are having a difficult time identifying and expressing their feelings may externalize challenging emotions by engaging in risky behaviours or harmful coping strategies (ex. truancy, substance use, fighting, promiscuity, self-harm, isolation, etc.).

How can you help? Support youth to develop healthy coping strategies and to think about the ways in which some coping mechanisms can be harmful to themselves and/or others. Normalize the ebb and flow of grief feelings by helping youth to identify and cope with triggers, special occasions and milestone events, which can bring intense emotions rushing back to the surface like a tidal wave.

"I used to cope with my feelings by binge drinking...I would look for fights to get into, to find a scapegoat to make other people hurt too, which I had never done before."

"I realized I have to adapt to not having my dad there for future events like graduation, when I get married. It's hard but talking about it helps."

5. IDENTIFY MEANINGFUL MORAL STANDARDS, VALUES, AND BELIEF SYSTEMS: Teens typically develop a more complex understanding of moral behaviour and underlying principles of justice and caring for others. They question beliefs from childhood and adopt more personally meaningful values, religious views, and belief systems to guide their decisions and behaviour.

As youth develop a more abstract understanding of death, they begin to formulate and explore existential perspectives and spiritual philosophies. When youth experience the death of someone they care about, it can shake their sense of safety and cause them to re-evaluate the way the world works. While some youth may find comfort in their faith, it is also normal for youth to experience anger towards previously held belief systems. Youth may question the meaning of life while searching for meaning in suffering and in death.

How can you help? Support youth as they explore tough questions, acknowledging the difficult feelings that can come up in knowing that we do not have all of the answers. Gently encourage youth to explore the ways in which hardship can promote personal growth (ex. greater appreciation for life, improved relationships, more empathy for others, etc.).

"I've learned how fragile and temporary life can be, so I use that to propel myself to be kind, focus on relationships and experiences, and live without regrets."

6. UNDERSTAND AND EXPRESS MORE COMPLEX EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES: Teens shift toward an ability to identify and communicate more complex emotions, to understand the emotions of others in more sophisticated ways, and to think about emotions in abstract ways.

As compared to younger children, teens have a greater capacity to sit with intense emotions for a longer period of time. Grief feelings can be overwhelming and confusing. Some youth may wonder if they are going crazy and may keep their feelings to themselves.

How can you help? Let youth know that it is okay to feel what ever it is they are feeling and that emotions are neither 'good' nor 'bad,' but signals that let us know that we are in need of care and support. Role model the healthy expression of emotion and support youth to express their feelings, both verbally and physically (ex. sports, games, music, dance, creating art, etc.).

"I was 13, just barely developing. Even if this event didn't happen it is hard to express emotions, let alone having a bad event happen and trying to express those emotions, it's really hard."

7. FORM FRIENDSHIPS THAT ARE MUTUALLY CLOSE AND SUPPORTIVE: Teens develop peer relationships that play powerful roles in providing support and connection in their lives. They tend to shift from friendships based largely on shared interests and activities to those based on sharing ideas and feelings, mutual trust, and understanding.

Grieving youth may have a difficult time relating to peers and may become frustrated with issues or complaints that seem trivial. Peers may not know how to be supportive and may say something hurtful (*despite best intentions*), or may avoid talking about grief all together, both of which can leave grieving youth feeling disconnected. Alternatively, youth may hide their grief for fear of bringing others down or being different from their peers. Due to this culture of silence, youth may have a hard time identifying peers who have had similar experiences, which can contribute to feelings of isolation.

How can you help? Empower youth to be their own advocates by helping them to tell trusted peers how they can be supportive. Provide opportunities for youth to connect with peers who have shared lived experiences (ex. *support group*). Help peers to better support grieving friends by providing resources and grief education.

"Most of my friends had never experienced a loss like we had so they weren't sure how to be there. And because I wasn't communicating what I needed and thought I was doing fine, when I did need my friends I was angry that they weren't there in the way I wanted. It was a vicious cycle that I didn't feel I had control over. It was such an emotional roller-coaster."

"I started thinking of things, like a problem would happen or people would complain about something, I would be like, 'Screw you, that is not a big deal, get over it!'"

8. ESTABLISH KEY ASPECTS OF IDENTITY: Forming an identity is a lifelong process but crucial aspects of identity are typically forged during adolescence, including developing an identity that reflects a sense of individuality as well as connection to valued people and groups. Another part of this task is developing a positive identity around gender, physical attributes, sexuality, ethnicity, and (if appropriate) having been adopted – as well as sensitivity to the diversity of groups that make up American society.

During a time where young people are already navigating identity, the dying or death of someone they care about can be especially challenging. As sense of self is largely tied to who we are in relation to others, it is normal to explore difficult questions (*Who am I now? Who will I become without this person in my life? What will life be like? How do I want to be remembered? etc.*). Additionally, identity is called into question as grieving youth take on new roles and experience secondary losses due to the illness/death (ex. *loss of lifestyle, loss of hopes and dreams for the future, etc.*).

How can you help? Support youth as they navigate these difficult questions. Provide opportunities to build self-esteem by exploring their positive characteristics, personal value system, skills and strengths. Provide opportunities for youth to maintain an ongoing connection with the person who is dying/has died and discuss ways in which youth can continue to honour the relationship.

"You are still forming your identity, figuring out your life, choosing your peers and the path ahead is not clear. Education is stunted, priorities shift from what they may have been before. Your friends are also forming their lives and all of a sudden yours has taken you an entirely different way."

"Not only was I isolating myself, but for medical reasons [doctors] were like, 'You can't play any sports anymore.' That was my whole social life - that was my identity at the time. So not only was my family dynamic entirely different now, but then I couldn't play hockey anymore because I have the same heart condition that my bro had. Anger was definitely my main emotion."

9. MEET THE DEMANDS OF INCREASINGLY MATURE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Teens gradually take on the roles that will be expected of them in adulthood. They learn to acquire the skills and manage the multiple demands that allow them to move into the labour market as well as meet expectations regarding commitment to family, community, and citizenship.

Grieving teens and young adults may experience internal or external pressures to take on new roles and responsibilities when a person they care about is dying/has died (ex. *caring for younger siblings and/or the person who is dying, providing emotional support to family members, household and financial responsibilities, etc.*). Phrases such as, “You are the man of the house now,” and “Now it is your job to take care of your brothers and sisters,” can inadvertently put pressure on grieving youth. This process of forced maturation – whereby youth feel as though they have had to grow up faster than their peers – can contribute to feelings of resentment and emotional overwhelm.

How can you help? Support youth by checking in often to see how they feel about their new tasks and how the changes are impacting their life. Find ways to relieve youth of roles and responsibilities that are causing stress and reassure them that it is okay to be a teenager!

“I think by losing someone so close that you depended on, and much sooner than you would have ever anticipated makes you grow up a little quicker. I became more independent and knew when to ask for help but always tried my best to figure out my situation.”

10. RENEGOTIATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS IN PARENTING ROLES: Although the task of adolescence has sometimes been described as ‘separating’ from parents and other caregivers, it is more widely seen now as adults and teens working together to negotiate change in the relationship that balances autonomy and ongoing connection. The emphasis on each depends in part on the family’s ethnic background.

Grieving youth may be reluctant to reach out to adult caregivers and may attempt to cope with their grief independently; however, without the resources and life experience that comes with adulthood, youth may be left feeling isolated. Alternatively, youth may feel invisible and unsupported in cases where the adults in their life are consumed with caregiving/their own grief. Some youth may withdraw from the adults in their life in favour of spending time with peers, which may lead caregivers to assume that youth are ‘okay’ because they are having fun with friends. While it is normal for grieving youth to continue engaging in typical teen activities (ex. *sports teams, prom, dating, college applications, etc.*), it does not mean that they are not grieving profoundly.

How can you help? Give youth permission to have alone time, to hang out with friends, and to participate in other typical teen activities. Check in often to provide youth with opportunities to ask questions and to remind them that there are caring adults in their lives. Empower youth to expand their support network by helping them to identify and reach out to community resources.

“I felt that because I wasn’t at home, it was hard to communicate with my mom. She was very isolated and I was feeling that she still should have been there for my sister and I even though she was in pain. We would go weeks without talking unless I would call and it was lonely.”

The **Ten Tasks of Adolescent Development** were reproduced with permission.

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To learn more about the **Raising Teens Project** visit: <http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/raising-teens/>

For more information about brain changes in adolescence, visit the **Young Adult Development Project** website: <http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/youngadult/index.html>

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DYING & GRIEF

MYTH # 1 - YOUTH ARE RESILIENT

Yes, some youth are very resilient and safely cope with their grief with very little outside help; however, not all youth have the innate ability to cope with difficult situations and naturally 'bounce back.' Even the most resilient youth 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 youth can benefit from trusting relationships, socio-emotional support, and opportunities to build self-esteem and learn new skills that promote healthy coping and communication.

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

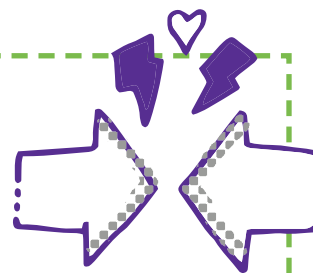
MYTH # 2 - YOUTH SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN THE DYING PROCESS

Many caregivers avoid talking to youth about the illness and impending death, often due to a desire to protect them from the pain of grief. However, without opportunities to ask questions, talk about death and share their feelings, youth are left alone with their thoughts and fears, which can leave them feeling helpless and isolated from the family.

Youth can also benefit from their involvement in caretaking and from being with someone who is dying. Youth can participate in 'caretaking by creating,' which might include making something for or with the person who is dying (Eaton Russell, 2007). This type of involvement honours the desire to help out and provides opportunities to engage with the person who is dying in a meaningful way. When youth create things with or for the person who is dying (*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. Sometimes families and youth struggle with knowing how to be with a person who is dying.

BEING WITH & CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS DYING:

- ★ Decorate the dying person's room
- ★ Decorate blankets or pillow cases
- ★ Choose music to listen to together
- ★ Share stories or read to the person who is dying
- ★ Watch TV/movies in the person's room
- ★ Help the person to put on moisturizer and/or practise mouth care
- ★ Give a hand massage and/or paint the person's nails
- ★ Make a HUG (see p. 96 - 97)



MYTH # 3 - SUPPORT SHOULD COME FROM PRIMARY CAREGIVERS AND 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 youth experience major disruption in their daily routine. During a time where youth need 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 caregivers 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 caregivers are ideally the best source of support for their children, outside support may be necessary during such difficult times.

Just as caregivers want to protect their children, youth often try to protect their caregivers. They may avoid asking questions, talking about the illness, or sharing memories about the person who is dying in fear of upsetting others. It can be helpful to connect youth with a support person outside of the family as they may be more willing to open up. Qualified professionals and trained volunteer supporters can provide youth with individual support and attention that is sensitive to their unique needs.

MYTH # 4 - KNOWING THE PERSON IS GOING TO DIE PROVIDES AN ADVANTAGE

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). Anticipatory grief does not mitigate or minimize one’s grief experiences after the death occurs (Karns, 2002).

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 can be very misleading, as in the literal sense it suggests that the grief experience is centred 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 person 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.*).

MYTH # 5 - YOUTH SHOULD NOT BE AT THE BEDSIDE OF THE DYING

Excerpt from **'Don't Use the 'D' Word: Exploring Myths About Children and Death,'** by **Andrea Warnick (2013)**. Published by the **Canadian Virtual Hospice** (www.virtualhospice.ca). *Important Note:* Although this excerpt uses the word ‘children’ it is also applicable to youth.

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.

SUPPORTING YOUTH EXPERIENCING A DEATH THROUGH MAID

This section contains information from the slides and audio recording from the webinar, 'Talking with Children & Youth about Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID),' by Andrea Warnick (2017). Extracted and adapted with permission.

WHAT IS MAID (MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING)?

In June 2016, the Canadian Criminal Code was amended and a federal framework for Medical Assistance in Dying was established. There are two types of MAID available to Canadians who meet the pre-determined eligibility criteria:

1. **Clinician-assisted medical assistance in dying** - Where a drug is administered by a physician (or in some provinces, a nurse practitioner) to help a person's body die.
2. **Self-administered medical assistance in dying** - Where the person self-administers a prescribed drug which will help their body die.

Communicate openly about what is happening and be honest. As adults, we sometimes try to protect the young people in our lives by withholding information, but the best way that we can prepare youth for the hard things in life is by providing them with **honest information**. Trust is a critical factor when it comes to building resiliency in youth, and when important information about illness, dying and death is withheld, it can undermine that trust.

Explore the child or youth's understanding of the illness, death and MAID. Open conversations by gently asking youth to share their understanding of what is happening. Let youth take the lead in how much information they want by opening conversations and gently asking questions as you wonder alongside them.

"I'm wondering if you could tell me what you understand about what is happening with [your dad]?"

"I'm wondering if there is anything that you have overheard that you don't understand?"

"I'm wondering about your thoughts as to why a person might choose to have their body die through MAID?"

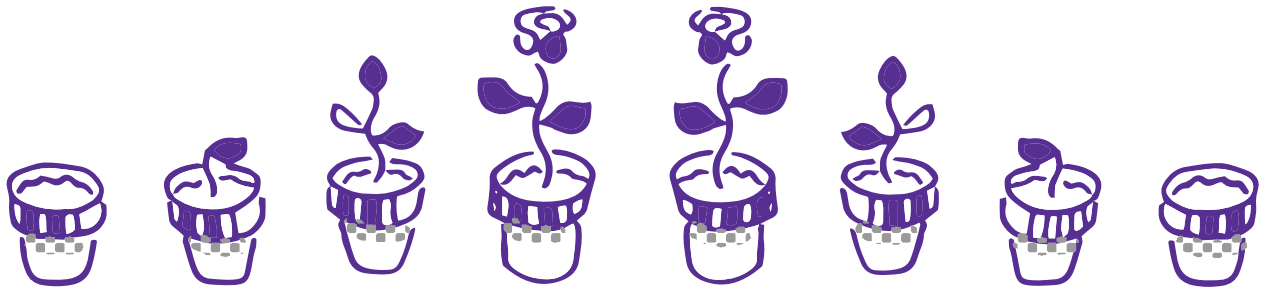
Engage in conversations with youth and hold space for all of the thoughts, questions and feelings that come up for them. Avoid shutting down conversations by providing reassurance that all questions are welcome. As a supporter, sometimes we are faced with the task of sitting with our own discomfort in knowing that we may not be able to answer all of their questions. In those moments, **be willing to wonder alongside them and to say, "I don't know."** Keep in mind that it will not be a one-time conversation, rather an open dialogue which allows youth to process the information at their own pace and come back to you when they have more questions.

Name and explain the illness, death and MAID. Call the illness by its name (ex. cancer, ALS, etc.) and explain any treatment options that have been explored. It is important to emphasize that the disease will eventually cause the person's body to die and that the person is not choosing death over life, but rather how to die. While older youth are able to integrate abstract concepts relating to spirituality into their grieving process, it is still beneficial to start with the physical aspect of death.

"When someone dies, their body stops working and will never work again. Their body cannot move, breathe, think, feel, see, smell, talk...Their body does not feel pain or hunger or fear."

"In Canada, when someone has an illness that their body will die from, they can either let their body die from the illness or they can ask a doctor to help their body die."





“We are doing more harm than good by not giving kids the option to be at the bedside. Youth really benefit from being included as someone is dying, regardless of whether the person is dying from the disease process or MAID. The important thing is to know that it is absolutely okay for youth to witness a dying process as long as they are well prepared and supported.” Andrea Warnick

Prepare youth by explaining the dying process. Without open and honest information, youth might formulate their own understanding using their imagination. If youth want to know, you might explain who will be present and what medical equipment will be used. You might also talk to youth about the medications that will be administered and how they will affect the person's body. It would also be important to let youth know that the person may die before all of the medications have been administered.

Ask youth if they want to be there at the time of death. If the family or the person choosing MAID does not want them to be present, support youth to find ways to be involved and stay connected leading up to and beyond the death.

Support youth to develop a narrative and give them permission to talk about or not talk about MAID. Reassure youth that it is okay if they choose to say that their dad died of cancer, and if they want to share that it happened through medical assistance, that is okay too. Support youth to assert their boundaries and care for themselves in moments where others are asking questions that they are not comfortable answering at the time.

“I do not feel like talking about it, thank you.”

IMPORTANT NOTE: Although this content speaks specifically to supporting youth to navigate a death through MAID and integrate it into their grieving process in a healthy way, the communication strategies provided are applicable to all grieving youth. **See p. 5 for a summary of tips for communicating with grieving youth.**

THE TOP TEN: HOW TO BE HELPFUL, NOT HARMFUL

1. SAFETY IS YOUR TOP PRIORITY

Creating physical, socio-emotional and cultural safety is your most important role.

- ★ Ensure that the physical environment is safe and free of hazards
- ★ Establish and uphold boundaries that promote healthy relationships
- ★ Take the time to get to know youth and help them to get to know you
- ★ Build relationships that are founded on empathy, authenticity and respect
- ★ Promptly report suspected abuse, neglect and/or exploitation to the proper authorities
- ★ Respect your limits as a supporter and know when to access your supervisor/make a referral
- ★ Honour diversity and approach every family with the same level of compassionate care

It can be difficult to bear witness to the pain and suffering of others. Sometimes, our first instinct is 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 youth. You must also consider that any form of touch could potentially re-traumatize youth who have been physically or sexually victimized, no matter how harmless the gesture. ALWAYS ask youth for permission before engaging in comforting touch (ex. a hand on the shoulder, a gentle pat on the back, a 'side hug').

2. INVOLVE CAREGIVERS

Ask caregivers 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 youth knows about the illness/death. If caregivers do not want the youth to know certain information, take the time to listen to their concerns. Gently provide them with information about the unique needs of grieving teens and young adults as well as the benefits of open and honest communication about dying and death. If it is okay with the youth, invite caregivers to participate in activities and discussions.

3. USE A YOUTH-CENTRED APPROACH

Honour each youth as the expert of their own grief and invite them to teach you what they know, think and feel. By doing away with your own personal agenda and allowing youth to take the lead you can better understand what their needs are and how best you can support them. Empower youth to set the pace by asking them what they want to talk about and what they prefer to do, while respecting their decision to opt out of an activity or discussion. Provide opportunities for youth to safely manage difficult feelings in ways that take into account their unique needs, interests and coping style.

4. NORMALIZE QUESTIONS, THOUGHTS & EMOTIONS

Every youth has the right for their voice to be heard and respected. Honour their questions by responding with honesty, warmth and non-judgment. Remember, it is okay to say, 'I don't know,' when asked a question that you are unable to answer. You can help to create a safe space for youth to express uncomfortable thoughts by reassuring them that emotions are neither good nor bad and that they have a right to feel however it is they are feeling in any given moment.

5. DEVELOP GUIDELINES

Whether you are providing one-on-one support or facilitating a group, it is important to set boundaries that serve to create structure, clarify expectations and empower youth. Establish guidelines alongside youth by talking about confidentiality and its limitations and the ways in which everyone can help to create a safe and non-judgmental space (see p. 20 - 21 for a sample dialogue about confidentiality and p. 35 - 36 for more information about 'Comfort Guidelines').



6. PRACTISE MINDFUL COMMUNICATION

Your interactions with youth 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. Youth can pick up on anxious energy, which can cause them to feel anxious as well.

7. REDEFINE SUCCESS

Do you ever wonder if you are doing enough? Do you ever wish that you could rescue youth from their pain or find a solution that will help to ease their suffering? While it is completely normal to feel this way, it is important to take a step back and contemplate what success as a supporter looks like for you. Not every conversation has to be steeped in dying, death and grief! Success is not defined by the ability to adhere to the curriculum; rather, it is about moving away from 'doing' and into a space of 'being.' Focus your energy on providing a compassionate presence and creating a safe environment in which youth can express their emotions and engage in activities on their own terms.

8. CONSIDER YOUR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

If you have experienced the death of someone you care about, consider where you are in your own personal grief journey. Working with grieving youth can be triggering, and while your grief is valid too, it is important to be in a place where you are able to maintain a compassionate and supportive presence for youth as they navigate their grief.

9. APPROPRIATE SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-disclosure can serve as a powerful tool if and when used appropriately. The authentic sharing of your experiences and emotions can help to normalize grief and role model healthy mourning. Hearing other people's stories emphasizes that everyone's grief is unique, but also highlights commonalities, which can be helpful in reducing feelings of shame and isolation. If you do share your story, be mindful of what, when and how much you share, always ensuring that the focus remains on the needs of the youth at all times. Before you share, it might be helpful to **WAIT**, and ask yourself, "**Why Am I Talking?**"

10. RESPECT YOUR COMMITMENT

Honour the commitment you make by attending scheduled support sessions and being prepared and fully present during your time with grieving youth. Be mindful when scheduling support sessions, taking commute time and road conditions into consideration. In the event that a session goes over the allotted time, you do not want to be rushing to get to your next scheduled appointment.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

By Chantal Doucet, SSW

WHAT IS IT?

The National Association of School Psychologists defines cultural competency as “the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.” Essentially, cultural competency is utilizing skills, knowledge, and resources to ensure that youth feel comfortable, safe, understood, and listened to, despite any cultural differences between the supporter and the youth.

HOW DO WE ATTAIN IT?

Cultural competency is a life-long learning process that can never be fully completed as there are so many cultures and subcultures that it would be impossible to ever learn all there is to know – especially since they are constantly adapting and changing. Many texts will try and teach cultural competency through basics about religions or geographical region; however, the problem with this is that it naturally leads to assumptions. Although religion and where we grow up is often a guiding force in people’s beliefs about death and dying, making an assumption about someone’s belief systems based on either of those facts can become a huge problem!

Here are two examples based on those assumptions:

1. **Religion:** Most religions, at some point, have espoused that there are negative ramifications that come with dying by suicide. However, to make the assumption that a young person ascribes to these beliefs could be extremely harmful and hurtful to someone who identifies as being a part of that religious community but does not believe in that facet of their religion. People’s families, experiences, cultures, personal belief systems, the specific religious house they attend, and a plethora of other factors all shape a person’s beliefs and cannot be assumed only by what a blanket amount of information about that religion states.
2. **Region:** Take Canada as a great example! Canada is wonderfully wide and diverse, with many belief systems! You could not write a text that said that most Canadians believed in one belief system as it would be entirely untrue. Each province, community, sub-community, institution, and even family may have a different belief system. The same can be said of all regions of the world – it would be dangerous and irresponsible to suggest that Indians, Croatians, Chinese, or any other country had a singular belief about anything.

These problems make cultural competency extremely challenging. Having knowledge about various cultural belief systems is a good way to be more informed and to see how others view the world; however, it is very important to make sure that we do not make any assumptions based on things we have learned previously – each person’s grief is individual, as are their beliefs.



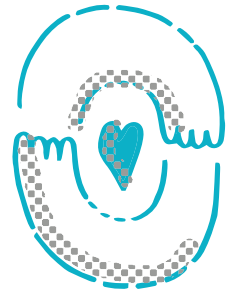
THE 3 A'S

Here are some basic tips on how to become more culturally competent:

Ask: Investigate! Find out more. The best way to do this is to ASK. If there is something you don't know or don't understand – find out from the source and others.

Adapt: Be ADAPTABLE. Don't be afraid to change your approach or to try new methods of doing things.

Affect: Watch your facial expressions and body language. Even if you disagree or find something odd, make sure it doesn't show.



Finally, start asking yourself some questions to better understand your own beliefs and biases:

- ★ What do I believe about death, dying and grief?
- ★ Where have my belief systems come from – family, religion, culture, experiences?
- ★ What cultural practices do I find odd or difficult to understand and why?
- ★ Try asking others about their beliefs, their experiences, what funerals are like in their families, what the dying process looks like, what they talk about around death, etc. – you might be surprised and learn something new.

HELPFUL RESOURCE:

- <http://www.livingmyculture.ca/>

A SUPPORTER SHOULD...

BE PREPARED

Lack of preparation before using an activity with youth can bring up feelings of anxiety, both for yourself as well as the youth you are supporting. Being well-prepared can help to cultivate a safe and trusting environment where youth feel comfortable exploring and expressing their grief.

- ★ Try the activity yourself before implementing it in a support session
- ★ Consider ways in which you might modify the activity to meet the unique needs of each youth
- ★ Review the activity guide until you feel comfortable with the steps and materials
- ★ Gather the materials well in advance and ensure you have extra supplies on hand

BE FLEXIBLE

There may be times when the activity that you prepared does not unfold as expected – and that is okay! Perhaps the youth isn't comfortable with the materials or they decided to take the activity in a whole different direction. In some cases, the activity might ask youth to go to a place in their grief that they are just not ready to explore at the moment. Be prepared to modify or discard your plans in order to respond to the immediate needs of grieving youth.

BE CASUAL

Sometimes the way that we dress, the words that we use, and the gestures that we make can create a power differential that undermines the fact that youth are the experts of their own grief.

- ★ Swap formal dress and heavy jargon for casual attire and youth friendly language
- ★ Familiarize yourself with the latest trends and expressions
- ★ Be silly and use humour (*when appropriate*) to show youth that it is okay to laugh and have fun

BE PATIENT

Some youth may trust easily and feel comfortable enough to express themselves verbally. Others may be reluctant to share their thoughts and emotions, or may have difficulty doing so. A number of factors influence a young person's ability and willingness to express their grief experiences: cultural background, familial upbringing, social norms, emotional development, self-esteem, sense of security, etc. Remember that every youth is different. Meet them where they are at and avoid pressuring youth to share if they are not doing so; rather, be patient, remain available and provide youth with many opportunities to share when they feel ready and able.

BE CONSISTENT

The changes that occur and feelings that come up due to the dying or death of someone they care about can cause chaos and uncertainty in a young person's life. You can help to create a sense of security by letting youth know what to expect in a support session and what is expected of them.

- ★ Follow a similar structure for each support session (*see p. 24 - 27*)
- ★ Do your best to start and finish each session on time
- ★ Communicate boundaries in a clear, consistent and caring way



BE SILENT

Silence can bring up uncomfortable feelings. While it is completely normal to feel anxious in these moments, it is important to be aware of the power of compassionate silence and witnessing. Try not to give into the discomfort and resist the urge to fill moments of silence with questions, chatter and comments. When you allow for silence, you give youth the opportunity to process information and find the language (*verbal or non-verbal*) to express themselves. While some youth respond well when prompted by questions and actively engage in discussion during an activity, others might prefer to sit in silence.

BE A ROLE MODEL

As a supporter, you can help to normalize grief and mourning by serving as a role model for storytelling and emotional expression. Your willingness to be vulnerable and participate in activities that may be perceived as childish can help to create an environment where youth can express themselves in an authentic and meaningful way.

- ★ Be honest and use '*I statements*' to talk about your own feelings (*when appropriate*)
- ★ Demonstrate a willingness to be silly and try new things
- ★ Assert and maintain your own personal boundaries in a calm and caring way
- ★ Admit if you've made a mistake and acknowledge that you do not have all of the answers

BE PRESENT

Supporting grieving youth can be an emotionally, mentally and physically draining task. When you extend compassionate care to others without taking the time to replenish yourself, you risk running on empty, which can have a profound effect on your wellbeing and your ability to be fully present in your role as a supporter. It is important to honour your own personal limitations and establish a regular self-care practise that helps to relieve stress and cultivate self-compassion. Before you go into a session, it might be helpful to engage in a short mindfulness meditation to help quiet busy thoughts and call your attention to the present moment.

Helpful Resources:

- ▶ www.centerformsc.org
- ▶ www.self-compassion.org
- ▶ www.compassionfatigue.org

SUPPORTING GRIEVING YOUTH WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

By Colleen Mousseau, MEd, RP - Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre

Young people in their teenaged years (13 -19) are often stereotyped as apathetic, challenging to engage and resistant to any attempts of wisdom sharing from adults. On the contrary, those who make the effort to connect can discover that youth are highly contemplative, curious and value feeling connected to their peers. Unfortunately this age group is currently among those most at-risk of experiencing critical mental health needs that are often overlooked and underserved. Volunteers, mentors and adult peers can be a lifeline for many youth as someone to confide in and look to for support. **It is important for anyone in these roles to know the red flags to watch for and the resources to connect with when more support is needed.**

START WITH RAPPORT

Good rapport and a respectful relationship are the foundation that any helper can create in order to be able to offer any positive influence on youth. For volunteers and professionals alike this may develop gently and slowly, while eventually moving toward clarifying your role so it is understood what you can, and cannot, offer. You may consider offering this in the form of outlining confidentiality, and the limits of it. Youth respond well to knowing there is someone who is prepared to hear about the harder parts of life, while ensuring that their needs will be taken care of if those needs require further professional attention. This conversation can help to provide a sense of safety and respect.

- S** - "Hey Jane, my name is Sam and I'm a volunteer at the Centre here. I'm glad you came today. I'm curious – what is it that made you interested in coming here?"
- J** - "I dunno."
- S** - "Lots of people say that! Lots of people also say that someone else suggested it. There's a couple things I want you to know about being here – and the first thing is that if someone else has made you come here today, no one here is going to make you do or say anything that you don't want to. Got it?"
- J** - "Yeah sure."
- S** - "Something else I want to make sure you know about is confidentiality around here. Have you heard that term before? Any idea what it means?"
- J** - "I think so yeah – isn't it like privacy and stuff?"
- S** - "You got it! It means that anything we talk about here is kept private, or confidential. It means that anything we might end up chatting about, I'm not going to talk about it with other people, including my own friends and family. I'm wondering if you know why that's important around here?"
- J** - "Um, I guess so people don't feel like they're gonna be judged or gossiped about?"
- S** - "Totally! It can feel really helpful to some people to know that they've got someone they can talk to about whatever is on their mind, knowing that they're not going to be judged or talked about poorly for it. There are some times that I would need to make sure I'd be sharing things with my supervisor here – and that's if I was worried about your safety, or the safety of someone in your life. Do you know what I mean by that?"
- J** - "Like if I was going to hurt myself or something? Cuz I'm not. That's not why I'm here."

Sample dialogue continued on next page



- S** - "Totally, and sorry if it feels awkward that I'm saying all this – but you got it right. If you DID tell me something about someone threatening to hurt you, or if I had a feeling that you were at risk of hurting yourself – I would just want to make sure the right people were involved to keep you safe and get you the help you need. So please don't let that stop you from talking about whatever is going on for you. Lots of people who come here find it helpful to talk with people who aren't their parents or friends at school who can listen and relate to what's going on in their life, no matter how hard it may seem. Does that make sense?"
- J** - "Yeah. My mom gets super awkward whenever I bring up stuff like how I'm feeling so I just try to avoid it. And my friends at school try but they don't really know what it's like to have a parent die so that gets weird too."
- S** - "Well then I'm so glad you came. There are lots of other people here who I know feel those very same things, and they'd be relieved to know they aren't the only ones either!"

This is an important conversation to have at the start of any therapeutic relationship, whether you are a seasoned professional or a new volunteer – for many people you will be supporting, you can have this conversation once then move on to much more exciting things. And for those who do end up needing more support, being able to refer back to this initial conversation about confidentiality helps to maintain trust and respect in your relationship. **It also helps to maintain your boundaries.** Beyond this conversation, depending on the role of the volunteer, the rapport and relationship will build in its own unique way. **Some youth are super chatty** and process their experiences by saying them out loud, sharing details of their day/week/month/life with the people around them. **Others will benefit from being present and hearing the stories and experiences of their peers.** Some youth may only speak up about their personal experiences once in a while, so keep a keen look-out for these moments and be sure to acknowledge and validate when they do occur.

Developmentally, youth are generally in a stage of life where it becomes quite natural to feel the need to disconnect or branch out from their family of origin. It becomes increasingly common for teenaged youth to turn to their peers, or explore their independence when trying to cope or problem solve. This is particularly where creating communities with the intention of having a positive, healthy outlet for support is important.



NON-SUICIDAL SELF HARM (SELF INJURIOUS BEHAVIOUR)

A helpful lens to understand any behaviour is one which views the behaviour as an attempt to respond to something in the best way we know how; some of these responses are healthy and adaptive (ex. taking a few deep breaths before responding or stepping away from conflict can be helpful to manage stress or aggression), and some of these responses are less healthy and may be considered maladaptive, causing more harm than help (ex. drinking alcohol excessively to numb the intensity of thoughts and feelings when experiencing emotional distress). Self-harm can include cutting, burning or bruising the skin, pulling hair and persistently picking at scabs to prevent healing. Self-harm can be seen as a response to emotional distress and is engaged in as a way of managing intense emotional pain. It is thought that physical pain can be felt and managed in a way that emotional pain cannot, as emotional pain may feel more abstract and harder to control or regulate.

DISMISS THE MYTHS

There is a lot of shame and blame connected to self-harming, with some misunderstandings around the underlying causes.

Talking about self-harm and suicide does NOT encourage copy-cat behaviour. Someone who is self-harming may in fact be attracting some attention whether it is talked about or not. A person who is self-harming may garner a sense of mystery that can be intriguing to their peers. Peers may explore self-harm temporarily themselves – but if someone continues to hurt their own body on purpose there is an underlying problem that needs care and attention. By talking about it, we help reduce the shame, blame and stigma and open up the doors to accessing help and support.

Self-harm is generally not a function of attention seeking. However, youth do benefit from receiving attention in the form of being acknowledged, validated, connected and valued by others.

Self-harm does not necessarily indicate suicidality. Intentionally injuring the body is not the same thing as wanting to stop living. Self-harm can be used as a way to distract from emotional pain, or externalize internal turmoil. Some people who self-harm are also struggling with suicidal thoughts and intense, unpleasant feelings. They may feel confused about ways to help ease these feelings and can benefit from strategies that engage in alternative ways of coping.

HELPFUL RESPONSES

- ★ Do not blame, shame or punish
- ★ Do express concern and care for the person
- ★ Do assure they aren't alone and that they are okay
- ★ Do share your care by offering to help link them with people you know can support them (ex. your supervisor, a doctor, a therapist)
- ★ Be patient - self-harm reduction is a slow process

If you are at all concerned about someone you are supporting, try saying something like this:

“I’m worried about you and I’m wondering if there might be stuff on your mind that is getting in the way of you being able to enjoy yourself. I know some people who are great at helping to work through these kinds of things – would it be okay with you if I connected you with them?”

“Can I follow up with you or would you like it better if we call together?”

It is quite common for helpers to hesitate when it comes to asking for additional support for fear of rupturing their rapport with the people they are supporting. Just like your initial conversation about boundaries and confidentiality, these conversations can be had in a way that continues to communicate your care and concern for the youth. If ever you are unsure, talk it through with your supervisor. Nobody in a helping role is meant to manage these complexities alone.



RED FLAGS

Any sign of self-harming is an indication of underlying issues that can benefit from professional care. First and foremost, physical safety and health needs to be considered. Cuts and burns are at risk of infection or scarring. Beyond wound care, alternative and adaptive coping strategies for healthy emotional regulation can be explored and established with the help of trained clinical professionals. Strong volunteers in helping roles can make a big difference by identifying when someone could benefit from additional care of a professional. **Here are some general Red Flags that may signal the need for referring to increased support.**

- ★ Not showing up or not wanting to leave
- ★ Showing up, but not fully present, not connecting with peers
- ★ Flat affect, seeming dazed and not responding to things the rest of the group does
- ★ Making statements like *'what's the point?'* or *'it doesn't matter'*
- ★ Isolation, frequently needing to be alone
- ★ Wearing long sleeves, long pants even when the weather is hot
- ★ Lots of bracelets or cuffs worn along arms or wrists
- ★ Frequent, unexplained injuries, or explained by stories of bizarre clumsiness or accidents
- ★ An overall lack of willingness or ability to display intense emotion

If you are supporting a youth who may be in immediate danger of suicide stay with them, call 911 or bring them to the closest ER. To learn more about having open and direct conversations about suicide visit:

www.suicideprevention.ca/need-help/im-concerned-about-someone/

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/suicide/Pages/default.aspx
- www.livingworks.net

SECTION 2: PLANNING YOUR APPROACH

On pages 24 - 27 you will find an outline of the 5-step format implemented by the Youth & Young Adult Program at Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel. Please note that we have included this sessional format as a sample as we acknowledge that agencies have different ways of organizing sessions. What we are advocating for here is consistency and predictability as a means of fostering a sense of safety.

STRUCTURE: A SOURCE OF SAFETY AND STABILIZATION

Adolescence and young adulthood are periods of significant transition, often marked by major physical, cognitive and socio-emotional growth. It can be a turbulent time, as youth learn to navigate changing bodies, new roles and responsibilities, and new relationships with themselves and others. The 'storm and stress' of adolescent development, coupled with personal experiences with dying, death and grief, can contribute to intense feelings of powerlessness and uncertainty. On top of that, some youth may experience additional discomfort when seeking out and accepting support. The thought of attending a grief support session can be very intimidating and it is natural for youth to feel anxious about sharing their emotional pain and personal experiences with new people.

As a supporter, you can help cultivate safety and support emotional regulation by following the same format for each support session. The application of a consistent format – marked by a clear beginning, middle and end – provides a container for discussions and the creative exploration of grief. Over time, as they become familiar with the flow and pattern of support sessions, youth may find comfort in the stability of the structure. This element of predictability can help youth to regain a sense of control over their environment, something that might be lacking in the home setting.

Support sessions for youth generally run between 60 – 90 minutes in length, depending on the age and needs of the young people that you are serving. While time management is crucial when planning and implementing support sessions, a balance between preparedness and flexibility is key. Be mindful of the time and adjust your plans as necessary in order to meet the needs of the young person(s) that you are supporting, while upholding the format that you use to organize your support sessions. The sample format below can be used for both one-on-one support and/or group sessions:

1. OPENING RITUAL

A simple exercise that signals the beginning of a session. Opening rituals help to anchor youth in the present moment as they transition from the chaos of daily life into a safe and supportive space. The ritual generally takes less than five minutes and should remain the same each session for consistency.

Share a Reading: Select a quote, poem or song lyric to read as your opening ritual. Perhaps a reading that relates to the topic of discussion planned for the session. Alternatively, youth may wish to bring in their own readings to share with supporters and/or their peers.

Deep Breathing: Invite youth to sit in a relaxed position (*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 invite youth to simply breathe and listen to the chime with their full attention. Listen with their ears, mind, heart, and 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 your location allows for open flames, light a true candle. Otherwise, you can use a flameless candle. Ask youth if they would like to take turns lighting the candle each session. **Note:** You might ask whether or not they would like to extinguish the candle at the end of the support session. A lit candle can symbolize hope or life, and the act of blowing out a candle, loss and death. Although a seemingly innocent action, it may not sit well with some youth. For whatever reasons, they might decide they would prefer the facilitator 'blow out' the candle once everyone has left.



2. CHECK-IN

An opportunity to find out how youth are feeling as they come into the support session. The check-in can provide insight by giving you a sense of how youth might be feeling about the topic you have planned for the session and inform your decision to go in a different direction in order to meet the immediate needs of the youth. The check-in process usually takes about 10 minutes.

Your Day/Week: Provide youth with the opportunity to share a little bit about their day or week. Perhaps you might provide youth with one minute to share whatever they would like, or you might provide a prompt to facilitate sharing (*How has your week been? What is one thing that happened this week that you would like to share?*).

Tune In: Invite youth to tune in to their emotional awareness and share – in one sentence or less – how they are feeling coming into the support session.

Symbolic Release: Lead youth through a short writing exercise that invites them to express and symbolically release their thoughts and feelings. For some ideas, check out 'Tear It Up' and 'Worry Box.'

Reading Reflection: If you share a reading as your opening ritual, you might invite youth to reflect on the selection.

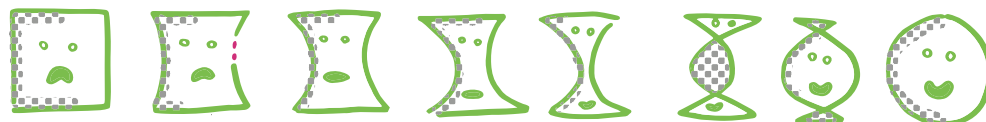
TEAR IT UP!

*Exercise provided by Allison Gorloff
Heart House Hospice – H.U.U.G. Counsellor*

Journaling can be a powerful means of expression. While many youth enjoy and benefit from journaling activities, some may be uncomfortable sharing their writing or may fear that others might find and read their private thoughts. This simple exercise provides youth with an opportunity to express themselves, while honouring their privacy and providing a physical release. All that is required is a piece of paper, a writing utensil and a small bag.

1. Explain to the youth that they will have the opportunity to participate in a writing activity and that it is up to them if they would like to:
 - Share their writing with you/the group
 - Tear their writing up into pieces once they are done
2. Provide youth with free time to write whatever they want
3. Once they have finished writing, the youth can decide whether or not they would like to share it with you/the group before tearing it into pieces
4. Inform the youth that the tearing process can symbolize different things (*ex. the release of difficult or uncomfortable feelings, a sign of respect for privacy, etc.*)
5. Allow the youth to decide what they would like to do with the torn pieces (*ex. throw them away, collect them in a bag which they can add to each week, etc.*)
6. Invite the youth to share what the experience was like for them

Check out p. 69 - 71 for a creative way to use the torn up journaling pieces!



WORRY BOX

Exercise provided by Sara Notenboom, MA, RP

1. Ask the youth if there is anything that they would like to 'release' before you move in to the activity – it could be a worry, a task that has been preoccupying their mind, or perhaps a difficult thought that they would like to set aside for the moment
2. Invite them to write the thought, feeling or worry on a small strip of paper, allowing them to decide whether or not they would like to share it with you/the group
3. Pass around a small box, in which youth are welcome to place their worries
4. Explain that the box will hold their worries for them, and at the end of the session, they can decide if they'd like to take them back or leave their worries behind

Important note: Some youth might like to take their worries back at the end of the session, which is okay. In this case, be sure to remind youth in a group setting to write their name on the back.

3. ACTIVITY

The activity (*and the discussion that occurs during and/or after the activity*) should make up the majority of each support session. Consider the interests and abilities of the youth as well as the length of your support sessions when selecting an activity to ensure that you have enough time to complete the exercise and bring the session to a close. After you have completed an activity, invite the youth to share their creation and/or reflect on the experience, always respecting their right to pass (*see p. 28 for more information about implementing activities*).

4. CHECK-OUT

Provides an idea of how youth are feeling as the session comes to a close and how the activity and/or discussion may have impacted them.

Reflection: Allow youth time to reflect on the support session, perhaps sharing something that they learned and/or how they are feeling.

Tear It Up and Worry Box: These two exercises, described as check-in ideas, can also be used as a check-out. Worry Box can be adapted by inviting youth to leave a worry behind as they exit the session, or by providing youth with an opportunity to share a comment or question for you to read after they have departed. Explain that it is up to them whether they would like to include their name or submit an anonymous comment.

Tune In: Another check-in exercise that can be used as a check-out. You might consider expanding on this emotional awareness exercise by inviting tech-savvy youth to contemplate which 'emoji' best describes how they are feeling in the moment. Youth can share their **emoji report** in words or by drawing the emoji that best represents how they are feeling after the activity/discussion.

Self-Care: Invite youth to share one thing that they will do to relax and/or care for themselves after the support session.



5. CLOSING RITUAL

Marks the end of the session and supports youth as they shift back in to everyday life. Like compassionate bookends, opening and closing rituals honour the time shared together.

Pass around an **affirmations box** and invite youth to select a supportive phrase to read aloud if they are comfortable doing so.

Deep Breathing and **Listening Practice**: These exercises, described under opening rituals, can also be used as closing rituals.

Saying Farewell: In addition to your regular closing ritual, you may want to plan a special closing for your final session with the youth/group.

- Provide each youth with a **small token** that serves as a reminder that they possess the tools to cope with difficult feelings and acknowledges their courage to express their thoughts and feelings (*ex. a worry stone, a quote printed on a wallet sized card, etc.*).
- See **Weaving Hearts** on p. 106 - 107. This activity can serve as a powerful final closing exercise.

AFFIRMATIONS BOX

Affirmations are positive statements that can help to cultivate a greater sense of self-love and self-compassion. The simple act of reading supportive phrases characterized by warmth and encouragement can have a powerful effect. Affirmations can:

- Instill a sense of hope
 - Inspire the courage to be vulnerable
 - Support personal growth and healing
 - Empower a person to cope with hardship
 - Create space to explore forgiveness of oneself and others
 - Serve as a loving reminder of one's strengths and successes
 - Give a person permission to feel whatever it is they are feeling
 - Help to combat difficult thoughts of self-doubt and self-criticism
1. Discuss affirmations as a coping tool that can help to build a positive sense of self
 2. Pass around an affirmation box
 3. Invite youth to select one to read aloud (*if they are comfortable doing so*)
 4. If in the group setting, suggest that they take turns reading their affirmations aloud, suspending all comments and judgment. Invite youth to imagine each phrase floating by – with the words that they connect with sticking to them while those that do not serve them in this moment pass them by.

There are tons of free affirmation samples that can be found online! **Create an affirmations box** by writing out different phrases on small strips of paper and placing them into a container. Alternatively, you can invite youth to create their own.



IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES

The term **Creative Activity** will be used to describe a variety of exercises, tools and activities that engage youth in the creative exploration and expression of their personal grief experiences. A creative activity might include drawing, painting, colouring, sculpting, collage, photography, video, writing, dance, music, guided visualization, or creative meditation techniques.

THE BENEFITS OF A CREATIVE APPROACH

SAFETY: 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. Activities can help youth to regain a sense of control by giving them the freedom to make their own choices and take creative risks in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

Expression: Creative activities can facilitate mourning by providing opportunities for youth to grieve from the inside out and express things that might be too difficult for words.

Coping: Activities can help to introduce youth to creative coping strategies or serve as a means to explore and discuss other healthy coping mechanisms. Creative activities can result in a cathartic experience as youth tap into and release powerful emotions in a safe manner.

Connection: Activities can create space for youth to share and record memories, to explore personal symbols, and provide opportunities to maintain a meaningful connection with the person who is dying/has died.

Community: Collaborative activities, completed among family members or peers, can help to nurture interpersonal relationships and prosocial behaviours, such as empathy, compassion and gratitude. Creating side-by-side, even in silence, can foster a sense of community connection.

Growth: Activities can promote healing and personal growth by supporting youth to explore the ways in which grief has transformed their personal value system. Activities can empower youth through the journey of 'self-rediscovery' by supporting them to identify new ways of doing things and contemplate their life's legacy.

A COUPLE OF KEY POINTS

Honour the right to opt out of an activity and/or discussion. Each youth has the right to share their thoughts, emotions and experiences on their own terms and at their own pace. In some cases, youth may not resonate with an activity or they may not be ready to engage with a certain theme or concept. Regardless of reason, respect the right to pass.

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

It is not about aesthetics. Avoid commenting on how a creation looks or how well the youth is doing. Instead, make comments and ask questions that relate to the process (*I see that you have left some blank space on your page. Can you tell me about it?*).

Refrain from interpreting and making assumptions. Always invite the youth to tell you about their creation rather than making your own assumptions about what you think you see or what you think it means (*Would you like to share a little bit about your creation?*).

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



CREATIVE MODALITIES

Drawing - Encourages youth to use symbols, colour, line, pattern and shape as a means to engage in non-verbal storytelling and self-expression. With relatively few materials, youth can be engaged in drawing activities to explore beliefs, dreams, memories, emotions, support system, etc.

Painting - Provides endless opportunities for expression as different paints and applicators have various properties and effects. In addition to line, colour and shape, paint also allows for expression via texture. Youth can create a variety of textures by using thick brushstrokes, splattering paint and scraping patterns or words into wet paint.

Colouring - The act of colouring premade images and designs can be considered a meditative practice. Colouring invites youth to slow down and focus their attention on the present moment. While the repetitive motion of colouring can have a calming effect, colour can be used as a powerful vehicle for self-expression.

Collage - The term collage comes from the French word, *coller*, which means 'to glue.' It is an art form based on the practice of assembling various print materials and pre-existing images onto a support surface to create a new image. Collage can be used as an alternative for youth who are intimidated by the idea of drawing or painting their own images.

Scrapbooking - A creative way to document and preserve personal history, typically in the form of an album. Scrapbooking may support youth to maintain a connection with the person who is dying/has died through the collection and meaningful arrangement of photographs, images, quotes, written memories, mementos and keepsakes. Scrapbooking may also help youth to cope with the fear of forgetting by providing a creative way to record their memories.

Sculpture - Invites youth to model, carve or assemble three dimensional creations. A piece of clay can help youth to self-regulate and provide a cathartic experience as they hold, roll, squeeze and knead it in their hand. Youth can also create sculptures by carving soft materials, such as soap or wax, or by assembling craft materials and found objects to form their creation.

Craft Making - Craft creations can help youth to maintain an ongoing relationship with the person who is dying/has died and provide them with tools for emotional self-regulation. Memory beads (p. 98 - 99) provide youth with a meaningful item to carry with them and connect them to the person who is dying/has died.

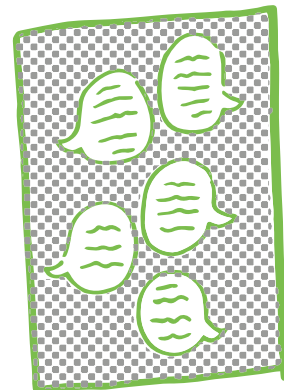
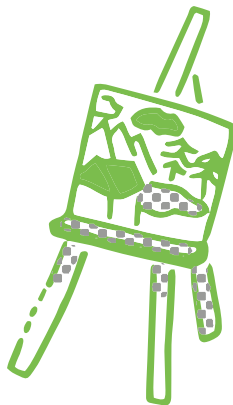
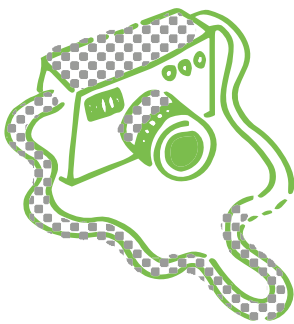
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Movement - Various forms of bodily movement – such as dance, physical activity, and yoga can help to release energy, express emotion and explore the mind/body connection. Expressive movement, such as dance, can serve as a tool for storytelling. Activities, such as shooting hoops or playing frisbee, can give youth permission to have fun and take a break from grief talk. Youth can also engage their bodies to safely cope with intense emotions by smashing ice on the pavement.

Music - For many youth, music plays an important role in the formation and expression of identity. Music can help youth to externalize emotions and relate their personal experiences to the wider world around them. During a time where it is normal to renegotiate relationships with adult caregivers and peers may not know how to be supportive, it is not uncommon for youth to turn to music for validation and support. As a powerful tool for coping, connection and emotional expression, there are countless ways in which music-centred activities can be integrated into a support session. Youth may wish to create a soundtrack to their grief – compiling a list of songs with lyrics and/or instrumentals that help youth to convey and connect with their emotions and memories. The banging of a drum can provide a sense of release and an opportunity for youth to use rhythm and beat to express their grief (see p. 63 - 64).

Writing - Writing can be used as a means to express one's inner thoughts, to cope with difficult feelings and to record memories and experiences. There are many ways in which youth can integrate writing into their grief journey – writing poetry, song lyrics, letters, a personal narrative, etc. Free writing can provide a cathartic release, a chance to vent by writing freely without concern for structure, spelling or grammar. Letter writing can also be an effective outlet or source of connection as youth can write a letter to the person who is dying/has died, other family members, or even a compassionate letter to themselves. Habitual journaling can help youth to identify patterns and reflect on past experiences by looking back on previous journal entries.



WHAT SHOULD I KEEP IN MY TOOLBOX?

While some activities require special materials, it is helpful to have a variety of games, craft supplies, and educational materials in your toolbox in order to:

- ★ Encourage youth to approach the activity in their own unique way
- ★ Allow for the modification or substitution of an activity
- ★ Provide youth with opportunities for unstructured creation

Every supporter's toolbox will be different depending on role, facilitation style, budget and availability of materials. Here are some ideas as to what you might keep in your toolbox:

<p>EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information for peers/adult caregivers ■ Books for youth about death & grief ■ Books & magazines for youth (<i>not grief related</i>) ■ <i>Mixed Emotion®</i> card deck 	<p>GAMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Jenga® ■ Suspend game ■ Playing cards, puzzles, dice ■ Board games, bingo ■ Crosswords, find-a-word
<p>PAINTING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Paints (<i>acrylic, watercolour</i>) ■ Brushes & sponge applicators ■ Straws & droppers ■ Palette knives ■ Water containers ■ Mixed media paper ■ Canvas boards or paper 	<p>CRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coloured sand ■ Clay, plasticine ■ Scissors & stapler ■ Glue (<i>Mod Podge®, white glue, glue sticks, glue gun</i>) ■ Tape (<i>masking tape, duct tape, clear tape</i>) ■ Stamps & ink, stencils, stickers ■ Beads, buttons, string, ribbon, glitter ■ Old comic books, magazines, sports cards, etc.
<p>DRAWING, WRITING & COLOURING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Journals / sketchbooks ■ Variety of paper (<i>blank, lined, coloured, cardstock, scrapbooking, etc.</i>) ■ Pens & pencils ■ Sharpeners & erasers ■ Pencil crayons ■ Markers (<i>washable and permanent</i>) ■ Pastels (<i>chalk and/or oil</i>) ■ Adult colouring books/pages 	<p>OTHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Meditation bells ■ Tissues & paper towel ■ Tablecloths/drop sheets ■ Aprons or painting smocks ■ Large paper/plastic plates ■ Cleaning wipes ■ First aid kit

OTHER USEFUL TOOLS

WORRY STONES

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



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



Step 2: Mush 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.

Putting Feelings into Words

Study after study shows that the simple act of "affect labeling," or putting feelings into words, brings relief.*

The Mixed Emotions® card deck helps people identify how they feel. It also helps them make decisions, solve problems, resolve conflicts, communicate with each other, and more. **

By using Mixed Emotions cards with grieving teens, you can help them befriend their emotions and trust the guidance they provide.

*Access studies at mixed-emotions.com/research

**Access card uses at mixed-emotions.com/card-uses



The following activity in this handbook uses Mixed Emotions cards:

- Grief Gallery (pages 67 - 68)

SECTION 3: ACTIVITIES FOR GRIEVING YOUTH

The activities in this handbook have been categorized by **key themes** that have been ordered in a way that supports the development of programs that cultivate safety, promote self-expression, build healthy coping skills and provide a positive termination experience as youth transition out of the program.

⚠ Use your discretion when selecting and adapting activities in order to best meet the unique needs of the grieving youth you are working with.

CREATING SAFETY		
Comfort Guidelines	p. 35	★
Here-and-Now Stone	p. 37	
I Didn't Know That!	p. 39	**
Coloured Candy Go Around	p. 41	**
Be The Tree	p. 43	
Gong Meditation	p. 45	

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF		
Mourning Through Soccer	p. 47	**
Questions Jar	p. 50	**
Timeline	p. 52	
Mourning Online	p. 54	
My Ecomap	p. 57	
Comfort Card	p. 59	

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS		
Blackout Poem	p. 61	
Drumming Through Grief	p. 63	
Grief Stack	p. 65	
Grief Gallery	p. 67	**
Picking Up The Pieces	p. 69	
Listening to our Bodies	p. 72	

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF		
Self-Care Spinner	p. 75	
Say Whaaat?!	p. 78	
Grief Trivia	p. 81	**
Coping Toolbox	p. 83	
Balancing Grief	p. 85	
Compassionate Friend	p. 87	
Calming Music Meditation	p. 89	

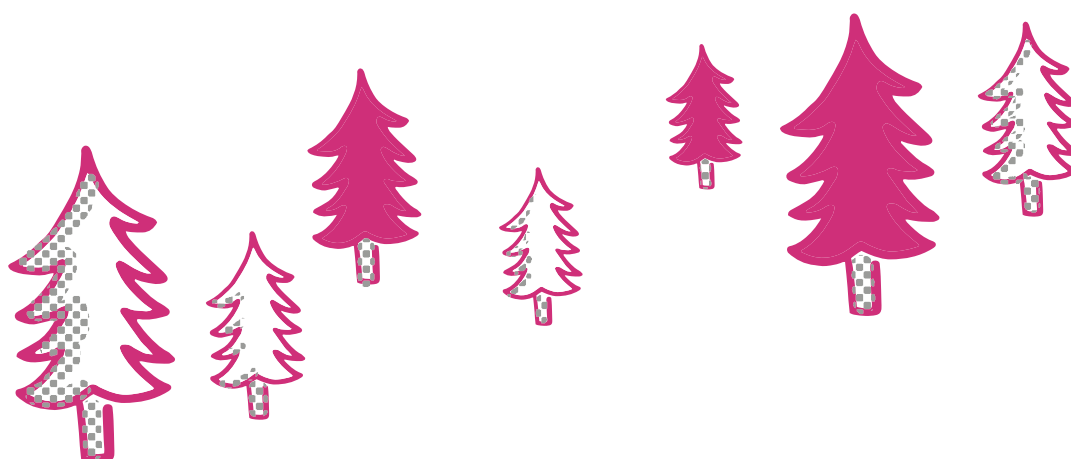
STAYING CONNECTED		
Memory Calendar	p. 90	
Honour Wall	p. 92	**
Memorial Rocks	p. 94	
HUG	p. 96	⊙
Memory Beads	p. 98	

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF		
Rock Ceremony	p. 100	**
Feel Good Messages	p. 101	
What I Value Most	p. 103	
Weaving Hearts	p. 106	**

★ Critical Activity
 ** Group Activity
 ⊙ Legacy Project

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

- The activities in this handbook are best suited for grieving youth ages 13 - 21; 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.
- The majority of activities can be used in individual support sessions and in the group setting, as well as with youth 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 provide youth with the freedom to express themselves using the materials provided. It is important to have supplies in your toolbox that allow for unstructured creative expression.
- There are different ways that you can approach activities with youth. You can serve as a silent observer, create your own piece side-by-side or introduce collaborative activities to make a shared creation.
- Dying and death is a sensitive topic - it is essential that you take the time to build rapport before engaging youth in activities that invite them to do any serious emotional exploration and expression.
- 'Comfort Guidelines' are the guidelines that you and the youth agree to follow in order to ensure that everyone feels safe together. Developing guidelines during your first session is essential to creating safety (see p. 35 - 36).
- As you near the end of your program, sessions should begin to prepare youth for termination by:
 - Continuing the conversation about coping and support systems
 - Supporting youth as they navigate their relationship with the person who is dying/has died
 - Building self-esteem by focusing on the youth's strengths, abilities and goals for the future
- One or two sessions before your last meeting, inform youth that you are nearing the end of your time together. The termination of a support program can cause anxiety and feelings of grief. The conclusion of a program can be another loss as the sessions may be the only place the young person feels truly understood and comfortable sharing their grief.



AGES 13+

CREATING SAFETY

COMFORT GUIDELINES



Key Learning

To create a safe space and establish boundaries.

What You Need

- Flip chart paper
- Wide tip markers

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

How to Play

1. Explain that during our time together, we will have the opportunity to engage in different activities designed to help us explore and express our grief in a healthy way. Emphasize the importance of creating a space in which everyone feels safe asking questions, sharing feelings, and talking about the tough stuff if they want to. In order to make this space safe for everyone we are going to create some guidelines.
2. Write 'Comfort Guidelines' at the top of the flip chart paper.
3. Engage youth in the development of the guidelines:
 - What can we do to make this a safe space where you feel comfortable sharing your feelings and asking difficult 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 show respect?
 - What does the word 'empathy' mean to you?

⚠ Turn to p. 20 - 21 to see a sample dialogue about confidentiality.
4. Record the guidelines as they are developed.
5. Display the guidelines in a visible location.



Discussion

Reflect

How did it feel to have an open conversation about the guidelines?

Connect

How do you imagine it might feel if someone were to interrupt you while you were sharing your feelings?

Apply

Where else in your life might it be helpful to establish guidelines or boundaries?

The guidelines that you create with each youth/group may look different and that is okay! However, it is important to explain and include the following guidelines:

Confidentiality and its Limitations: Explain to the youth that what they share in a support session will stay between you/the group. Clearly explain that you will have to tell someone if you are concerned about their safety and/or the safety of others.

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

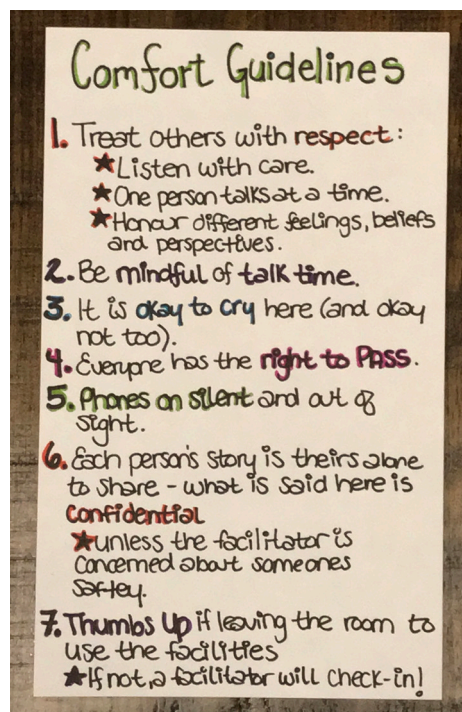
Adapted with permission from *Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens* (p. 2).
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COMFORT GUIDELINES CONTINUED



Variations

1. Invite youth to take turns recording each guideline.
2. Invite youth to decorate the guidelines with symbols and drawings that represent trust, safety and empathy.
3. Invite youth to initial/sign the guidelines once they have been completed to demonstrate their commitment to creating a safe and non-judgmental space in which everyone's grief is valid.
4. Invite youth to draw, paint or sculpt what a safe space looks like.



AGES 13+

CREATING SAFETY

HERE-AND-NOW STONE



Key Learning

To create a safe space and support healthy self-regulation strategies through mindfulness meditation.

What You Need

- Assortment of polished stones

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

Adapted with permission from Karen Bluth, PhD, and Lorraine Hobbs, MA.

Dr. Karen Bluth received her PhD in Child and Family Studies in 2012 from The University of Tennessee, and is Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the UNC School of Medicine. Dr. Bluth's research focuses on the roles that self-compassion and mindfulness play in promoting well-being in youth, has practiced mindfulness since she was a teen, and teaches Mindful Self-Compassion to adults and teens. Dr. Bluth is author of *The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are*, and is co-developer of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults*.

Lorraine Hobbs is the Director of Family Programs at the University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness. She is a family therapist and former clinical director of adolescent treatment programs. Lorraine is certified in MBSR, MSC (Mindful Self-Compassion) and CCARE (Compassion Cultivation, Altruism, Research & Education), Stanford University. Lorraine offers mindfulness and compassion-based programs through the Department of Integrative Medicine in community hospitals and wellness centers in Indiana & Ohio. During her tenure at the Center for Mindfulness, she developed and implemented curricula in mindfulness-based interventions for multiple age groups. She is a pioneer in self-compassion training for parents and teens and is co-author of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults* and more recently, has co-created a program in Mindful Self-Compassion for Parents, both adapted from the adult MSC curriculum. Lorraine teaches and trains in MFY internationally. She is Director of the Adolescent Mindfulness Certification Program and a Mentor in MBSR certification program, UCSD Center for Mindfulness Professional Training Institute.

Preparation Activities

1. Lay out a collection of polished stones that vary in shape, size, weight, texture and colour.

How to Play

1. As they enter the space, invite youth to select a stone to bring to their seat.
2. Explain that we will be engaging in a mindfulness exercise that can help us to center ourselves and cope with troublesome thoughts by anchoring our attention to a focal object as a way of staying in the present moment (*the here-and-now*).

Continues on the next page

HERE-AND-NOW STONE *CONTINUED*



How to Play *continued*

3. Invite youth to take out the stone that they chose as they entered the space and guide them through the exercise:
 - Let's start by carefully examining our stones. Noticing the colours, the angles, and the way the light plays on the curves of the stone. Letting yourself enjoy the sight of the stone.
 - Now, closing your eyes and exploring it with your sense of touch. What does it feel like? Is it smooth? What is its temperature?
 - Opening your eyes and letting yourself become absorbed in your stone.
 - Allowing yourself to appreciate the age of your stone. Some may be almost as old as the Earth itself!
 - Noticing that when you are focused on your stone, with appreciation, there is no regret or worry in this moment.
4. Inform youth that they may keep their stone and use it as a friendly reminder to come back to the present moment.



Discussion

Reflect

What did you notice when you anchored your awareness on your stone?

Was it hard to focus your awareness on your stone?

What types of thoughts entered your mind in moments where you noticed your awareness wandering from the stone?

Do you notice a change in how you feel as compared to when you first walked into the session?

Connect

What does it feel like in your body when you are stressed or anxious?

Apply

Can you think of a time where this type of mindfulness exercise might be helpful?



Variations

1. Provide mini flashlights and darken the room to explore stones as a way of adding a dramatic effect.
2. Head outside and invite youth to collect their own stone from nature.

AGES 13 - 16

CREATING SAFETY

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!



Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- Dice
- Scissors
- Plastic bag
- 'I Didn't Know That' question cards

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity, by Sally Loughrin, has been adapted with permission from *Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families Volume Three: Practitioners Share Their Most Effective Techniques*. Edited by Liana Lowenstein, 2011. Visit her website at www.lianalowenstein.com.

Preparation Activities

1. Copy each question from the 'I Didn't Know That!' question cards (p. 40) onto separate strips of paper, or photocopy the question cards and cut out each question.
2. Fold each question strip and place the strips in a bag.

How to Play

1. Explain that while we all have unique qualities, perspectives and experiences, we can still share a lot in common and connect in a meaningful and supportive way. In order to help create a safe and comfortable space, we are going to play a game that will help us to get to know each other.
2. Pass around the bag and ask each group member to take one of the folded papers.
3. To determine who will begin, roll the die - the person who rolls the highest number goes first.
 - The first person rolls the die, and if it is an even number, that player reads and responds to the question.
 - If it is an odd number, that player will read the question and can choose to respond or can ask another player to respond to the question.
4. If the player learns something new after a response is given, they will say, "I didn't know that!"
5. The game continues in this manner until all of the folded papers are read.



Discussion

Reflect

What was it like to get to know your fellow group members?

Was there anything you were surprised to learn about/share with others?

Connect

What are some of the things that you share in common with your fellow group members?

Apply

It is important to me that you feel comfortable and supported during our time together. What can we do to create a safe space where people can be themselves and share their thoughts, feelings and experiences?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT! *CONTINUED*

I Didn't Know That!

Question Cards

 One of my favorite things to do is...

 One of my proudest moments was when I...

 If I'm feeling sad, someone/something that comforts me is...

 One of my favourite sports is...

 My best time with *(person who died)* is when we...

 One of the things you can't tell by looking at me is...

 If I could change my name I would want to be named...

 Something I really miss most about *(person who died)* is...

 One of the best things I ever did was when...



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AGES 13 - 16

CREATING SAFETY

COLOURED CANDY GO AROUND



Key Learning

To learn about each other and develop rapport.

What You Need

- Skittles® Candy
- 'How to Play' guide

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity, by Katherine Arkell, has been adapted with permission from *Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families Volume Two: Practitioners Share Their Most Effective Techniques*. Edited by Liana Lowenstein, 2010. Visit her website at www.lianalowenstein.com.

Preparation Activities

1. Photocopy the 'How to Play' guide (p. 42) for group members to reference.

How to Play

1. Explain that while we all have unique qualities, perspectives and experiences, we can still share a lot in common and connect in a meaningful and supportive way. In order to help create a safe and comfortable space, we are going to play a game that will help us to get to know each other.
2. Distribute five candies to each group member.
3. Have each group member sort their candies by colour with instructions not to eat them.
4. Explain that each colour will correspond to a different question.
5. Ask one member to pick a colour and indicate how many they have (ex. two green candies).
6. Invite them to respond to the question that corresponds with the colour they have selected, providing the same number of answers as they have candies (ex. **two green candies** = share **two words that describe yourself**).

Green Words that describe yourself

Purple Ways you have fun

Orange Things you'd like to change/improve about yourself or family

Red Things you worry about

Yellow Memories you have about the person who died

⚠ Remind youth of their right to pass as they may not be comfortable taking about their grief and/or the person who died just yet.

7. After one person has answered a question, have them choose the next person to answer the same question based on the number of candies that person has.
8. Go around the circle, answering each of the colour coded questions.
9. The activity is complete when each person has answered all of the questions.
10. If a person does not have a particular colour candy, they use the number of candies the person who went before them had.
11. Candies can be eaten after a question is answered.

COLOURED CANDY GO AROUND CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What was it like to get to know your fellow group members?

Was there anything you were surprised to learn about/share with others?

Connect

What are some things you share in common with other group members?

Apply

It is important to me that you feel comfortable and supported during our time together. What can we do to create a safe space where people can be themselves and share their thoughts, feelings and experiences?

COLOURED CANDY GO AROUND HOW TO PLAY

- Green** Words that describe yourself
- Purple** Ways you have fun
- Orange** Things you'd like to change/improve about yourself or family
- Red** Things you worry about
- Yellow** Memories you have about the person who died

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AGES 13+

CREATING SAFETY

BE THE TREE

**Key Learning**

To create a safe space and support healthy self-regulation strategies through mindfulness meditation.

What You Need

- Calming music
- Yoga mats
- Pillows
- Blankets

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Nancy Galway, MSW, RSW. Nancy is a social worker, grief counsellor, yoga teacher and mindfulness practitioner. She currently works with Carefor Health and Community Services, Eastern Counties where she administers the Elder Abuse Prevention Program and serves as the clinical director for Camp Erin Eastern Ontario. Nancy also has a private practice with specialization in trauma, grief and bereavement.

Preparation Activities

1. Arrange the yoga mats in a circle formation. If yoga mats are not available, lay out blankets instead.

How to Play

1. Invite the youth to face each other as they sit cross-legged in a circle on the floor. If working one-on-one, sit across from one another.
2. Explain that when we are grieving, it is normal to feel disconnected from ourselves and others.
 - What does 'feeling disconnected' look like for you?
 - What are some other words that we could use to describe feelings of disconnection?
 - *Numb, frozen, zombie mode, autopilot, withdrawn, etc.*
3. Introduce the tree as a symbol of strength and connection – with roots that grow deep into the soil, keeping it balanced and connected to the Earth and all of nature.
4. Explain that we will be engaging in a grounding activity that draws upon the symbolism of the tree. A grounding activity is an exercise that can help people to feel calm and bring their attention to the present moment by connecting both mind and body to the Earth.
5. Explore breathing as a way to help ourselves to feel relaxed and centered in our bodies and our minds. Explain that we often breathe backwards when we are stressed, by sucking in our stomachs and puffing out our chest as we inhale.
 - Invite youth to inhale and exhale normally.
 - After a few breaths, ask youth to place a hand over their diaphragm (where the belly and ribcage meet) and allow their hand to rise as they inhale and lower as they exhale.
 - Gently remind youth to breathe slowly and smoothly.
 - Demonstrate to help them to establish a rhythm.
6. Invite youth to remove their shoes (*and socks if they are comfortable doing so*) and stand on their mat, feet shoulder width apart. Give youth the option of closing their eyes if they would like to.
7. Ask youth to focus their attention on the smooth rhythm of their breath as it can help to balance both mind and body.
8. Invite youth to envision themselves as a tree – tall and strong with roots beneath their feet that grow deep into the soil, anchoring them to the Earth.

BE THE TREE CONTINUED



How to Play continued

9. Support youth to lean in to the visualization by gently guiding the process with a calm and soothing voice:
 - Imagine your torso is the trunk of your tree, with branches reaching into the sky as your leaves unfold to meet the warm and loving sun. As your roots grow deeper into the ground, imagine your worries flowing through your roots until they are released into the Earth.
10. After a few minutes have passed, invite youth to slowly transition back into their own bodies, carrying with them the safety and the wisdom of the tree. When everyone has brought their attention back to the space, invite youth to lay comfortably on their back, providing a pillow and a blanket should they choose to use it.
11. Play soft instrumental music to help youth enter a relaxing state as they continue to focus on the breath. Allow youth to continue to relax for up to 20 minutes before gently welcoming them back to the space.
12. Invite youth to share what their tree looked like if they are comfortable doing so.
13. Engage youth in a discussion about the experience.



Discussion

Reflect

How did you feel as you were visualizing yourself as a tree?

Do you notice a change in how you feel in this moment as compared to when you first walked into the session?

Connect

Have you had times when you felt alone, disconnected or sad even when there were others around you?

What does the word '*strength*' mean to you? What might '*strength*' look like in this space? How might that be different from society's idea of '*strength*'?

Apply

Can you think of a time when you could use this grounding technique?

When worry and anxiety start to creep in, what are some other things that you can do to safely cope with those uncomfortable feelings?



Variations

1. Facilitate the activity outdoors.
2. Invite youth to draw, paint or sculpt their tree.

AGES 13+

CREATING SAFETY

GONG MEDITATION



Key Learning

To create a safe space and support healthy self-regulation strategies through mindfulness meditation.

What You Need

- Gong (or recording)
- Yoga mat (or a blanket)

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Nancy Galway, MSW, RSW. Nancy is a social worker, grief counsellor, yoga teacher and mindfulness practitioner. She currently works with Carefor Health and Community Services, Eastern Counties where she administers the Elder Abuse Prevention Program and serves as the clinical director for Camp Erin Eastern Ontario. Nancy also has a private practice with specialization in trauma, grief and bereavement.

Preparation Activities

1. Arrange the yoga mats in a circle formation. If yoga mats are not available, lay out blankets instead.

How to Play

1. Speak to the role of the gong in promoting deep relaxation:
 - The vibration of the gong stimulates and rejuvenates the body by tapping into our parasympathetic system which controls the body's fight or flight impulse. The sound of the gong penetrates the body and helps it to relax and manage stress in a healthy way. It is a great way to refresh and connect our mind and our body.
 - The gong can also help release other emotions, such as sadness and anger, and help us to cope with them by allowing us to feel, acknowledge and release them.
2. Explain that we will be engaging in a mindfulness meditation where the sound and vibration of the gong will be felt in our bodies as we lie on the floor.
3. Invite youth to lay in a comfortable position. For maximum impact of the vibration and sound, do not use a pillow.
4. Ask youth to close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so.
5. Invite youth to empty their mind. Youth who have difficulty clearing their mind may choose to focus on releasing something that has been bothering them.
6. Lightly tap the gong with the mallet until the desired volume is achieved. Gentle, rhythmic strokes work best.

⚠ Looking for a gong? Consider forming a community partnership! Perhaps there is a yoga studio where you could conduct the support session, or a gong that could be borrowed from a local music program. If you are in a pinch, try searching for an audio recording that suits your needs online.

7. Continue playing the gong for six to ten minutes, allowing the sound to fade into silence.
8. Allow youth to lie quietly for three to six minutes before calling their attention back to the room.
9. Engage youth in a discussion about the experience.

AGES 13+

CREATING SAFETY

GONG MEDITATION *CONTINUED*



Discussion

Reflect

Were you able to feel the vibration of the gong? Where did you feel it in your body?

How did this exercise make you feel?

Connect

When have you had these feelings before? Were you able to feel, acknowledge and release them?

If you found the meditation relaxing, how else might you achieve the feeling you had during the exercise?

Apply

When was a time in your life that you felt supported?

Friends, families and professionals can be a part of your support network and help you to cope with difficult and uncomfortable emotions. How can you continue to build your support network? How can your support network be there for you? How can you be an active member of your support network?

What was it like to be a part of this shared experience? Did you feel as though you were a part of a compassionate community? What was that like for you?

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MOURNING THROUGH SOCCER



Key Learning

Support communication and foster connections amongst the group.

What You Need

- Soccer ball
- Permanent marker

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity was provided by Natasha Manzone, BA, BSW, RSW. Natasha is the Family Services Coordinator at the Seasons Centre for Grieving Children in Barrie, Ontario. In addition to being a Social Worker, Natasha also holds a degree in psychology.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare the soccer ball in advance by writing a different question on each white panel (see p. 49).

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about grief and mourning:
 - In our society, many people are uncomfortable with grief and the expression of difficult emotions.
 - Have you ever experienced this?
 - Have you ever gotten the impression that people would prefer if you 'got over it' or 'moved on'?
 - Has there ever been a time where you wanted to talk about your grief, or the person who is dying/has died, but held back?
 - What stopped you from sharing?
 - One of the ways that we can honour and care for our grief is to acknowledge our feelings and experiences (both pleasant and uncomfortable). In this group, you are welcome to explore and express your grief in whatever way feels right for you.
2. Explain that we will be doing an activity that will help us to connect as a group and learn about each other's unique experiences. Because it can be difficult to know where to begin and what to say, we are going to play a game that will help us to start conversations about grief.
3. Invite youth to sit in a circle facing one another.
4. Demonstrate how to play:
 - Ask if someone would like to volunteer to go first.
 - Toss/roll them the ball as you say their name.
 - When the person catches the ball, invite them to answer the question underneath their right thumb.
 - Help youth to regulate emotions by providing choices:
 - If the youth is not comfortable with the question, let them know that they can choose to respond to the prompt under their left thumb instead.
 - If their thumb lands on an empty panel, invite them to answer any question they'd like.
 - If you notice that a group member is struggling with a question, remind them of their right to pass.
 - After the person has given their answer, open the question up to the rest of the group to see if anyone else would like to share their response.
 - Once everyone has had a chance to respond to the question, direct the person to continue the cycle by rolling/tossing the ball to another group member.

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MOURNING THROUGH SOCCER CONTINUED 2/3



How to Play continued

- Continue this process until everyone in the group has had a chance to catch the ball and answer a question.
- Ask the group if there is anything else they would like to share or a question that they would like to answer before you shift into a discussion about the activity.

Discussion

Reflect

What was it like to share your feelings and experiences with the group?

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

Connect

What are some of the things that you share in common with your fellow group members?

What are some questions or worries that other youth might have about grief?

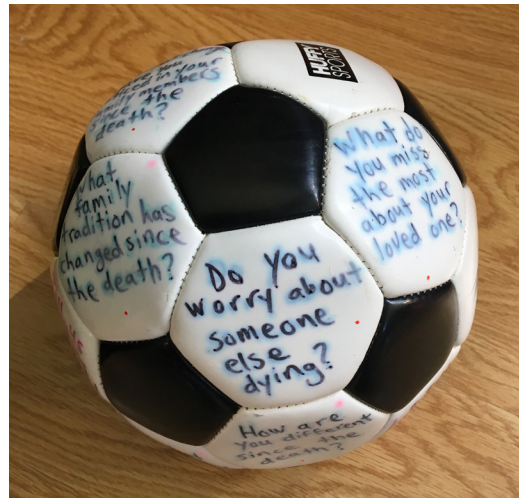
Apply

Who can you go to if you have questions or worries about the illness/death?

Who can you go to in your life to share memories and talk about the person who is dying/has died?

Variations

- Invite youth to brainstorm questions that can be used to create their own 'mourning ball.'
- This activity can be adapted for various topics/themes:
 - Ice Breaker Ball:** Include fun questions that help youth get to know each other outside of their grief.
 - Memorial Ball:** Provide prompts that invite youth to share memories of/with the person who is dying/has died.
 - Emotions Ball:** Write a different emotion on each panel and invite youth to share a time when they felt that way and how that emotion shows up in their body.
 - Coping Skills Ball:** Include different coping strategies and invite youth to contemplate the circumstances under which it might be helpful and/or harmful.



AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MOURNING THROUGH SOCCER *CONTINUED 3/3***Mourning Through Soccer**
Sample Questions

Who told you that the person you care about was dying/has died?

What I need most now is _____.

What have you discovered about grief since the death?

If you could leave a special item in the casket, what would it be?

Tell us something that you are proud of about the person who is dying/has died.

In what ways are you like the person who is dying/has died?

How are you different since the illness/death?

Do you worry about someone else dying?

What do you miss most about the person who is dying/has died?

Do you think others treat you differently now that the person is sick/has died?

I wish I had _____.

I miss _____.

What scares me the most is _____.

The last thing I remember doing with the person who is dying/died was _____.

What change have you noticed in your family members since the illness/death?

What family tradition has changed since the illness/death?

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

QUESTION JAR



Key Learning

Support communication and foster connections amongst the group.

What You Need

- Small pieces of paper
- Pens or pencils (*all the same colour*)
- Jar (*or box*)
- Optional: materials to decorate the jar (*ribbons, beads, glue, etc.*)

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity has been adapted with permission from Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens (p. 13). © 2012 by **The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families**. Visit their website at www.dougy.org.

Preparation Activities

1. Find a wide mouth jar (large enough to accommodate a hand).
2. Prepare small slips of paper cut into rectangles (~4"x2").

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about grief and mourning:
 - What comes to mind when you think of the word 'grief?' What about the word 'mourning?' Have you heard of this term before?
 - It can be hard to start a conversation or ask questions about grief. Lots of teens and young adults keep their feelings and questions to themselves because they do not want to bring it up in front of their peers or family members.
 - What are some reasons that youth might grieve in silence?
 - *Peers just don't understand*
 - *Do not want to make other people sad*
2. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that provides everyone with an opportunity to ask anonymous questions, especially questions that might be too difficult to say out loud.
3. Distribute three to four slips of paper to each group member (including yourself and other adult helpers) along with pens and/or pencils.
4. Invite group members to write down any questions that they would like to ask you/the rest of the group.
 - Who is dying/has died in your life? What has school been like for you since the person got sick/died? Is it normal to feel empty and numb?
5. Encourage youth to come up with questions about grief, loss, and the person who died. Assure youth that the questions are anonymous.
6. When finished, invite youth to fold their slips and place them in the jar.
7. Ask the group if anyone would like to go first and explain how to play:
 - Select a slip of paper from the jar.
 - If you do not like the question, you can keep selecting until you find one that you want to use or answer.
 - Read the question aloud to the group before sharing your response.
 - Pass the jar to the person on your right so they may select the next question.
8. Observe reactions in the group and help youth to identify commonalities and make connections.
 - I see a couple of people nodding, is this something that anyone can relate to?
9. Continue this process until everyone has had a chance to select a question.
10. Ask the group if there is a question that they would like to go back to before you shift into a discussion about the activity.



AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

QUESTION JAR *CONTINUED*
 **Discussion**
Reflect

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

What was it like to share your feelings and experiences with the group?

What was it like to hear your fellow group members' questions and experiences?

Connect

What are some of the things that you share in common with your fellow group members?

Have you ever wondered about any of the questions that came up yourself?

Apply

Who can you go to if you have questions or worries about the illness/death?

Where else could you go to learn about grief?

- *Online, library, grief support organization, etc.*

Who can you go to in your life to share memories and talk about the person who is dying/has died?

 **Variations**

1. One person picks a question at the beginning of each session that the entire group takes turns answering.
2. Divide the group into pairs or groups of three and have each dyad/triad pick one question to talk about with each other.
3. Invite youth to decorate the questions jar.
4. Populate the jar in advance with questions that youth have voiced in previous groups/support sessions.



AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

TIMELINE

**Key Learning**

Identify and explore life changes that have occurred both before and after the illness/death.

What You Need

- Legal size paper (8.5" x 14")
- Pens/pencils
- Optional: markers, pencil crayons, rulers, etc.

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Orley Culverhouse, MTA. Orley is a music therapist and is currently completing her Masters of Social Work. She is the Caring Hearts Children's Program Coordinator at St. Joseph's Hospice in Sarnia, Ontario. Her work includes supporting children, youth and families facing a terminal illness or death.

How to Play

1. Provide youth with a sheet of paper and writing utensils.
2. Engage youth in a conversation about the different changes/major events that a person might experience in their lifetime. Brainstorm and create a list together.

• Death or illness	• Divorce
• New home/city	• Sibling heads off to college
• Changing schools	• Friendships
• Accident or injury	• Break up
• New pet or baby	• Graduation
• Family structure	• Roles & responsibilities
• New hobby/activity	• Achievements
3. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that invites us to think about the changes that we have experienced, both before and after the illness/death, and the ways in which these changes have impacted our lives.
4. Encourage youth to identify and record the changes (both empowering and challenging) that have happened over their lifetime by creating a personal timeline.
 - On one end of the timeline, write the day you were born, and on the other end, write today's date.
 - For each event, add a line on the timeline.
 - Consider using colours and/or lines to signpost major events (ex. thick coloured lines for big changes).
 - Create a legend to describe what the symbols represent.
 - Add the age or year that the change occurred.
5. Invite youth to share their timeline with you/the group if they are comfortable doing so.

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

TIMELINE CONTINUED
Discussion
Reflect

When you were finished, what was it like looking at the changes that have happened in your life?

Were you surprised by how many there were?

Connect

What are some examples of changes you can/cannot control?

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with family or friends since the illness/death?

Have you ever experienced growth and positive change from a difficult experience?

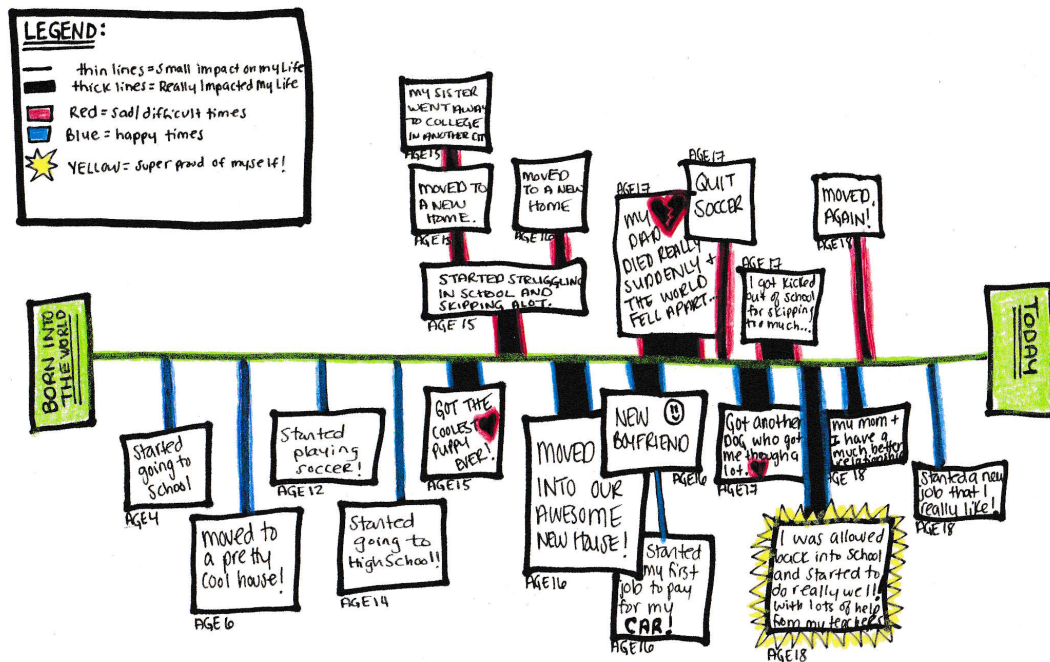
Apply

How have you coped with past challenges and changes?

Would any of the coping strategies that you have used in the past be helpful along your grief journey?

Variations

1. Create a **Memorial Timeline** where youth record special memories of/ with the person who is dying/has died.



AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MOURNING ONLINE



Key Learning

Explore the ways in which technology can impact grief and mourning.

What You Need

- Laptops, tablets or mobile phones (*one per youth*)
- List of grief websites

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Lauren Muscarella. Lauren graduated from American University with a degree in Journalism. In 2010, Lauren began researching international mourning traditions and theories on grief as well as writing about the loss of her mother. In 2015, Lauren's book *Alice's Law: Honoring Lost Loved Ones and Finding Deeper Meaning* was published by Wyatt MacKenzie Publishing.

Preparation Activities

1. Generate a list of grief support sites for youth to give as a handout.
2. If youth are required to bring their own device for this exercise, be sure to provide advanced notice.

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about the risks and benefits of mourning online:
 - How can the internet be a helpful tool for a grieving person?
 - Seek out **information** about grief and loss.
 - Read blog posts by others with personal lived experience.
 - Create an online **memorial page** for the person who died.
 - Connect with others on social media or discussion boards.
 - Connect with reputable online **support** groups or chat services.
 - Provide a **distraction**.
 - Can you tell me of a time where you felt supported by a comment that someone posted on social media?
 - Can you tell me of a time where you were hurt or disappointed by a comment that someone made on social media?
 - Have you ever misinterpreted the tone or emotions behind a text message or online post? What was that like for you?
 - Have you ever posted something online in the heat of the moment and regretted it later? What was that like for you?
 - Do you find it easier to share your feelings online than in person?
2. Read the message written by Lauren Muscarella (see p. 56) and invite youth to reflect on her words.
3. Emphasize that while the internet can be a great source of support, it is important that we stay safe and carefully consider what and when we post online. It is important to ensure that the information we are seeking out is coming from a reputable source, and that we take the time to consider how we use our voice online. It is easy to get caught up in the online world. Sometimes it is important to schedule time to 'go offline' and reconnect our minds and bodies so that we are better able to respond rather than react to our emotions.
4. Explain that we will be engaging in a short exercise where we will spend time both online and offline before reflecting on the experience.
5. Provide youth with 15 minutes of free time with their device. Give youth permission to search to their hearts content. Remind youth that it is their decision whether or not they would like to search grief websites.
6. Once 15 minutes is up, invite youth to sit in a comfortable position, hands resting on our knees with palms facing upwards.



AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MOURNING ONLINE *CONTINUED 2/3***How to Play** *continued*

7. Inform youth that we will engage in a light meditation, where we will simply focus on the breath without trying to change it. If thoughts come up, acknowledge them and let them pass by.
 8. Once about five minutes have passed, invite youth to return to the space.
 9. Facilitate a conversation about the online/offline experience using the discussion questions below.
- ⚠️** Provide youth with the list of grief support websites for future reference.

"Adolescents go online for information and utilize a variety of forms of social media for support and opportunities to memorialize. While good information and social support can be found online, adolescents also need to be reminded that the information may not be accurate, and that the anonymity of the Internet may expose them to cruel comments or even online predators." (Doka, 2014).


Discussion
Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you while you were online?

What did you choose to spend your time doing online?

If you did search for grief sites, what did you find? Did you find the information to be helpful? In what ways?

How did it feel when you transitioned from being online into the meditation?
Did you notice a difference?

Connect

What is the difference between complaining and sharing our experiences?

Since the illness/death, do you find your peers' issues to be trivial or silly?

Where else could we go to find information about grief?

Who do you feel comfortable with when sharing your feelings in person?

Apply

How might this activity change the way you engage with the online world?

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MOURNING ONLINE *CONTINUED 3/3***A MESSAGE FROM LAUREN MUSCARELLA:**

Last weekend, I went to a barbeque to spend time with my family. Quickly after arriving, a friend's 10-year-old daughter befriended me in order to find out what it's like to be an adult. I listened to her perspective on life, which included an "irritating" little brother, newly divorced parents, and a penchant to be all grown up. Then she asked me, "Do adults ever get bored?"

I shot her a sly look because it's a question I'd never been asked. I explained to her that time is different for kids than it is for adults. People experience the passing of time based on how many years they've been alive. Since kids haven't been alive as long, time feels slower to them. She didn't like my answer, but I liked her question. It inspired me. Truthfully I rarely get bored and part of the reason is because of these modern times: social media and a worldwide web of searches to keep my curiosity endlessly occupied.

Social media to the extent of its current pervasiveness is relatively new to me. Facebook started my second year of college. Now, against my better judgment, I find time slipping through my fingers while I stare at my laptop and my phone searching, but for what?

Now that we can search for so much, grieving has gone online. I frequently look at Facebook groups and other forums to see what people are saying online as they make their way through a difficult loss. I see people sharing their experiences and their stories, which is wonderful. The ability to express one's point of view and receive support is wonderful.

I also see that people are complaining. Venting and complaining has a truly important part in life. You need to just get it out there and let it go. But online, when you get it out there, it stays suspended in anger forever fueling others' anger. Is it right or wrong? I'm not sure. Is it good that we have an outlet to zone out or not?

I don't think that we should dictate what can be said but it's worth thinking about how we want to communicate about our grief online, if at all.



AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

MY ECOMAP

**Key Learning**

Support youth to examine the impact of the various relationships in their lives.

What You Need

- Legal size paper (8.5"x14")
- Scrap paper
- Writing utensils
- Rulers

No. of Youth

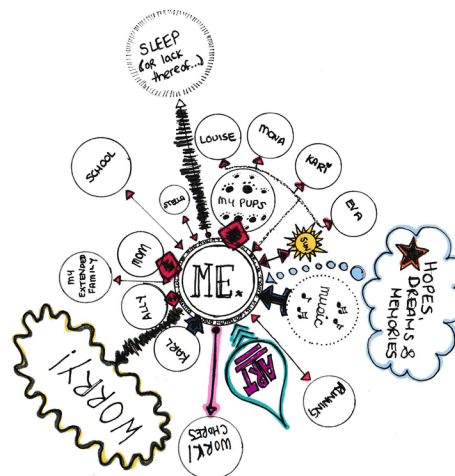
- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Chantal Doucet, SSW.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be creating individual Ecomaps.
 - An Ecomap is a visual representation of all of the elements and relationships that exist in our lives. This activity encourages us to take a step back and examine the way in which we connect to different people, places, supports and emotions that are a part of our lives.
2. Provide each youth with a piece of scrap paper and a blank page (8.5"x14") on which they can draw their Ecomap.
3. Support youth to brainstorm various aspects of their life on scrap paper:
 - **People** - ex. family, friends, peers, pets, teachers, counsellor, etc.
 - **Places** - ex. home, school, work, gym, community centre, etc.
 - **Objects** - ex. meaningful possessions, cell phone, car, photos, etc.
 - **Interests** - ex. art, sports, music, performing, woodworking, etc.
 - **Emotions** - ex. sadness, anger, guilt, numbness, joy, etc.
 - **Self Care** - ex. eating, sleeping, exercise, meditation, talking, etc.
 - **High Risk Behaviours** - ex. substance use, theft, self-harm, etc.

⚠️ Remind youth that they can also include things on their Ecomap that are no longer a part of their life since the illness/death.
4. As youth record the various elements of their life, invite them to consider the nature of their relationship to each aspect:
 - How prominent is it in your life?
 - Does this activity/relationship nurture you? Cause you harm or stress?
 - Is the relationship reciprocal? Is it one sided? In what way?
5. Demonstrate and explain how to create an Ecomap:
 - Begin by writing your name in the centre of your page.
 - Referring to the list you created, place each aspect of your life on your Ecomap by situating elements that are:
 - Prominent and/or meaningful = **closer** to your name.
 - Harmful, draining, or no longer present = **further** from your name.



MY ECOMAP CONTINUED



How to Play continued

6. Invite youth to draw lines that connect each element on their Ecomap to themselves using arrows to indicate whether they **give** or **receive** energy from the relationship:
 - Arrow pointing to them = they receive support/energy
 - Arrow pointing away from them = they give energy or are depleted by the person/place/thing.
 - Double sided arrow = reciprocal relationship
7. Invite youth to use different colours, lines, shapes and symbols to further describe the nature of each relationship. Youth might ask themselves:
 - Is it a harmful association? Is it a positive association?
 - Do I rely on it often or very little?

⚠ Reassure youth that there is no wrong way to complete the activity. Have some samples available to help youth formulate ideas.
8. Once completed, invite youth to share their Ecomap if they feel comfortable doing so.

Discussion

Reflect

How do you view yourself now compared to before the activity? Did you learn anything new about yourself during the process?

Can you think of anything that you did not put on your map that you might want to explore?

Did you discover any strengths about yourself that you had not recognized before doing this activity?

Connect

What are some of the most important relationships in your life?

Do you have any relationships that you feel you put more into than you receive back?

What areas of your life are fun? What areas are challenging at this time?

If you were to do this activity six months ago, what would be different about your Ecomap?

What areas of your life have changed since the illness/death? In what ways?

What coping strategies do you currently use? What other strategies have you tried before?

Apply

Are there any supportive people, coping strategies, interests or places that you do not use as much as you could?

How might it be helpful for a person to repeat this activity every month/year?

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

COMFORT CARD

**Key Learning**

Empower youth to identify their comfort needs and to practise self-compassion.

What You Need

- Sympathy Card samples (*store bought or handmade*)
- Cardstock paper (*various colours*)
- Pencil & erasers
- Drawing materials (*markers, pastels, coloured pencils, stamps, etc.*)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks


No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Dana Bingley. Personal lived experience inspired Dana to pursue a career in grief and bereavement. Dana first implemented this activity with bereaved teens while facilitating peer support groups at Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel.

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about grief and empathy:
 - We are a part of a culture in which mourning - the public expression of grief - is oftentimes a source of anxiety for family members, friends, peers and co-workers.
 - This discomfort can lead people to offer words of condolence that can be hurtful or upsetting, despite best intentions.
 - As grief is a highly personal experience, it makes sense that words that bring comfort to one person can be offensive to another.
 - What was the most comforting thing that a person said to you?
 - What words were not very helpful? How did they make you feel?
 - It is common for people to offer their condolences by giving a card.
 - What is it about sympathy cards that bring comfort?
 - Is there anything that frustrates you about sympathy cards?
 - What is the difference between sympathy and empathy?

 Consider screening the short animated video, 'Brené Brown on Empathy' by The RSA (2013).

 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evvwgu369Jw>
2. Explain that we will be creating condolence cards for ourselves.
 - It might be the card you wish you had received after the death, or a compassionate gesture you'd like to extend to yourself in this moment.
3. Pass around the sample cards to help youth generate some ideas.
4. Invite youth to create their card using the creative materials provided.
5. Reassure youth that there is no right or wrong way to do the activity.
 - The card can be any size, shape or colour.
 - It can be folded or postcard style.
 - It can contain images, symbols, quotes, lyrics, poems, etc.
6. Once completed, invite youth to share their card if they are comfortable doing so.

AGES 13+

TALKING ABOUT DYING, DEATH & GRIEF

COMFORT CARD CONTINUED
 **Discussion**
Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you as you were creating your card?

What was it like to create a card for yourself?

Was it easy to extend compassion to yourself? Was it difficult? How so?

Connect

What are some of the things that prevent people from being kind to themselves?

What makes it difficult for us to tell other people what we need from them to feel supported?

Apply

Has your experience changed the way you offer support to other grieving people? In what ways?

How can this activity be helpful in other situations or areas of your life?

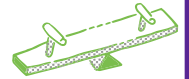
How can this activity help you to advocate for your unique grief needs?



AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

BLACKOUT POEM

**Key Learning**

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

What You Need


- Newspapers (and/or other texts including magazines, books, comics, etc.)
- Permanent markers
- Fine tip markers
- Coloured cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Mary C. Kraft, CCLS, MHPS. Mary is a Certified Child Life Specialist and holds a Masters degree in Hospice and Palliative Studies. Mary spent the last 17 years at Children's Hospital of Michigan working with grieving children and families before taking on the role of Program Director at New Hope Center for Grief Support in Northville, Michigan.

How to Play

1. Lay out a selection of old newspapers.
2. Facilitate a discussion about grief and expression:
 - What are some of the different feelings that a person might experience along their grief journey? Brainstorm a list together.
 - Can you describe a time when a grieving person might feel _____?
 - Relief | Guilt | Jealousy | Joy | Etc.
 - There are many different emotions associated with grief and many different ways to express those feelings. Writing can be a very powerful tool for self-expression. How might writing be helpful for a person who is grieving?
 - Help to express feelings.
 - Promote self-reflection.
 - Record memories and experiences.
3. Explain that we will be engaging in a poetry activity that doesn't actually involve any writing. Instead, we will be using other writers' words/texts to create our own poems. This type of poetry, called Blackout Poetry, was developed by Austin Kleon, a contemporary artist from Texas. We will be making poems about our grief experiences by using existing text that we connect with to express ourselves.
4. Demonstrate how to create a Blackout Poem.
 -  Consider screening the video, *How to Make a Newspaper Blackout Poem (2015)*, by Austin Kleon: www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=38&v=wKpVgoGr6kE
5. Invite youth to browse through old newspapers.
6. Encourage youth to look for an article that contains words and phrases that relate to their personal grief experience.
7. Instruct youth to cut/tear out the article once they have found the text that they would like to use as the foundation for their poem.
8. Invite youth to create a poem by circling/boxing off the words that hold meaning to them, and blacking out the remaining text.
9. Allow time for youth to paste their completed poem to a piece of coloured cardstock and decorate it how they like.
10. Provide an opportunity for youth to share their poem if they are comfortable doing so.

⚠ If in a group setting, consider a pair-share or triad-share to help make youth feel more comfortable.

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

BLACKOUT POEM *CONTINUED* **Discussion****Reflect**

What drew you to the article that you selected as your starting point?

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Were there times that you felt 'stuck' while creating your poem? How did you push through that feeling?

What is your favourite part of your poem and why?

If you were to select one word or feeling to describe your poem, what would it be? How does this word relate to your grief?

Connect

What can happen when someone keeps all of their emotions bottled up inside? Has this ever happened to you?

Sometimes when a feeling causes us a lot of discomfort we try to ignore, avoid or push it away. Are there any feelings that cause you discomfort? How do you manage those uncomfortable feelings?

Apply

Poetry and other forms of creative writing can provide a safe outlet to express our feelings and share our experiences. What are some other ways that we can express grief?

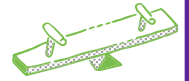
 **Variations**

1. Pick an emotion and create a poem that expresses that chosen feeling.
2. Create a poem that explores a memory (cherished or difficult).
3. Write an 'About Me' blackout poem to help get to know each other.
4. Use the technique to write a message to the person who died.
5. Work collaboratively to create a group blackout poem.

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

DRUMMING THROUGH GRIEF

**Key Learning**

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

What You Need

- 5 gallon bucket
(one bucket for each youth)
- Clear packing tape
- Decorative duct tape
- Pliers
- Scissors

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Mary C. Kraft, CCLS, MHPS. Mary is a Certified Child Life Specialist and holds a Masters degree in Hospice and Palliative Studies. Mary spent the last 17 years at Children's Hospital of Michigan working with grieving children and families before taking on the role of Program Director at New Hope Center for Grief Support in Northville, Michigan.

Preparation Activities

1. Use the pliers to remove the handle from each bucket in advance.

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about grief, validating that it is okay to feel however it is they are feeling in any given moment:
 - We can experience many different emotions in grief. Feelings can change from moment to moment. We can feel different emotions all at the same time. Some emotions may last for a fleeting moment, while others might feel like they are going to last forever.
 - What are some of the different feelings that a person might experience along their grief journey? Brainstorm a list together.
 - Can you describe a time when a grieving person might feel _____?
 - Relief | Guilt | Jealousy | Joy | Etc.
 - Do you turn to music to cope with or express your grief?
 - How might drumming be helpful for a grieving person?
 - Help to express emotions.
 - Provide a physical release.
 - Connect mind and body.
2. Explain that we will be creating our own drums, which will later be used to creatively express and release our emotions.
3. Provide each youth with a bucket.
4. Create and secure the drum skin (photos on p. 64):
 - Cover the open end of the drum with packing tape.
 - Once the mouth of the drum has been covered with packing tape, follow the same steps using decorative duct tape.
 - Secure the drum skin by placing duct tape around the rim.
5. Decorate the body of the drum with duct tape.
6. Encourage youth to experiment with sound and rhythm using different techniques by hitting the drum:
 - With the entire hand, fingertips only, or the butt of the palm.
 - In the centre vs. at the edge closer to the rim.
 - With a firm hand vs. with a relaxed hand.
 - Gently vs intensely.
7. Select emotions from the list generated during the brainstorming session and invite youth to create a unique sound or beat for each feeling.
8. Ask youth if they have ever felt two seemingly conflicting emotions at the same time (ex. proud/sad, happy/guilty, etc.). Drum out two or more emotions at the same time to represent this experience.

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

DRUMMING THROUGH GRIEF *CONTINUED*
 **Discussion**
Reflect

How did you find the experience?

What thoughts and feelings came up for you as you played the drum?

How would you describe the energy of the room while we were drumming?

Where in your body did you feel the vibrations of the drum?

Connect

How can the drum help us to express and release emotions?

Apply

What are some of the ways you might use your drum in the future?

What other types of expression (musical or otherwise) might help you to express and release your emotions?

How can you involve other people in musical expressions?

 **Variations**

1. Use the drum as an icebreaker activity where youth drum out their name.
2. Play along to a song.
3. Play follow the leader, where one person establishes the beat while others play along to the same rhythm.
4. Create an 'echo' where one person starts by playing a beat and others take turns repeating the rhythm one at a time.
5. Invite youth to drum freely.



1. Start by stretching a piece of packing tape taught across the mouth of the drum.



2. Overlap each strip of tape (~ 2 inches) using a crossover pattern until the top is completely covered.



3. Once the opening is covered, place duct tape on top of the packing tape in the same manner.



4. Decorate the drum with decorative duct tape.

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

GRIEF STACK

**Key Learning**

To cultivate emotional literacy and facilitate sharing.

What You Need

- Jenga®
- Permanent markers (various colours)
- 'How to Play' guide

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Allison Gorloff, RECE, MEd, CCLS. Allison is a Children's Grief Counsellor with Heart House Hospice in the H.U.U.G. (Help Us Understand Grief) program. She is a Certified Child Life Specialist, Early Childhood Educator and holds a Master's in Education.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare the blocks in advance:
 - Divide the blocks into four piles.
 - Colour code each pile by marking a coloured dot on both ends of each block (see photos on p. 66).
2. Print off a copy of the 'How to Play' guide (p. 66) for reference.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be playing a game that will help us to start a conversation about grief.
2. Build the Jenga® tower.
3. Play the game:
 - Remove a block from the tower.
 - Answer the question that corresponds with the colour of the block.
 - If a red block is selected, the youth would share a time when they felt angry.

⚠ Facilitate discussion as youth share their experiences:

 - What did you do in the moment you felt that way?
 - Did you do anything to help yourself feel better?
 - Remind youth of their right to pass.
 - Place the block on top of the tower.
 - Take turns removing blocks, answering questions and building up the tower until it falls.

 **Discussion**
Reflect

What was it like to share your feelings and memories? Was it easy? Hard?

Did you find yourself trying to pick certain colours from the tower? Did you find yourself avoiding certain colours?

Connect

It can be really difficult to talk about grief. How can games like this help us talk about our feelings and experiences?

Apply

Can you think of another time that this activity might be helpful?

 **Variations**

1. Youth may wish to create their own colour coded categories.
2. This game can be modified to suit any theme (ex. icebreaker, memories, coping strategies, etc.).

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IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

GRIEF STACK *CONTINUED***GRIEF STACK**
HOW TO PLAY**BLUE**

A time you felt sad

RED

A time you felt angry

YELLOW

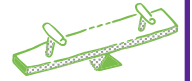
A time you felt happy

PURPLEA memory you have with the person who died
or something you will miss about the person

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

GRIEF GALLERY

**Key Learning**

To cultivate emotional literacy and facilitate sharing.

What You Need

- Mixed Emotions® card deck
- Sheets of paper
- Painter's tape
- Wall space for the 'Grief Gallery'

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity has been adapted from an exercise by Rex Allen found on the **Mixed Emotions® website**. For more ideas on how to use the Mixed Emotions® card deck visit: www.mixed-emotions.com/card-uses/.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare small paper pockets to hold the Mixed Emotions® card deck (see photos on p. 68).
2. Insert each card into its own pocket, ensuring that the words are covered, and lay them out on a table.

How to Play

1. One at a time, invite each youth to select a Mixed Emotions® card that resonates with them and tape it to the wall as if they are hanging a painting in a gallery.
2. Once everyone (including adult supporters) have had a chance to select and mount a card, rotate around the 'Grief Gallery' as a group.
3. Engage the group in a discussion about each image:
 - What comes to mind when you look at this image?
 - What words would you associate with this image?
 - What feelings come up for you?
 - Where do those feelings come up in your body?
 - How does this image speak to your grieving heart?
4. Invite the person who chose the card to share their response:
 - What was it that drew you to this image?
 - In what way (if any) does this image relate to your grief experience?
5. Once the entire group has had a chance to share their thoughts, invite the youth who selected the card to pull it from the pocket and reveal the words printed on the image.
 - Do the words align with your initial response?


Discussion
Reflect

What was it like to see, reflect on and discuss other people's chosen cards?

What was it like hearing people discuss your chosen card?

What is one thing that you learned about grief from this activity?


Did any of the cards take you by surprise? In what way?

Connect

Why might someone keep their grief to themselves?

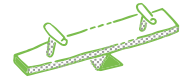
Apply

How can we teach the people in our lives about grief and how we want to be supported?

 The Mixed Emotions® card deck can be purchased at: www.mixed-emotions.com

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

GRIEF GALLERY *CONTINUED*

Variations

- If you do not have access to a Mixed Emotions® card deck, you can make your own feeling cards by:
 - Printing images that illustrate various emotions.
 - Writing a feeling word on the back of the printed image.
- ⚠ Be sure to obtain proper permissions when using online images.
 ⚠ Youth may prefer to print or draw their own images.

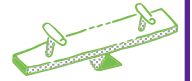


Create pockets to hold the Mixed Emotions® cards using small pieces of paper (3" x 6"). Simply fold a small flap (~0.5") of paper over the top and bottom of the card to cover the words. Secure the flaps with clear tape.

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IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

PICKING UP THE PIECES

**Key Learning**

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

What You Need

- Canvas boards (8"x 10" or 5"x7")
- Lightweight coloured paper
- Permanent markers
- Foam brushes
- Mod Podge® (preferably matte)
- Small plates

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Dana Bingley. Personal lived experience inspired Dana to pursue a career in grief and bereavement. Dana first implemented this activity with bereaved teens while facilitating peer support groups at Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel.

Preparation Activities

1. Youth should be seated at a table to complete this activity.
2. Provide each youth with a canvas board, foam brush and a plate. Do not pour out the Mod Podge® in advance – it dries very quickly! Arrange the permanent markers and stacks of coloured paper in the middle of the table.

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about grief and mourning:
 - What comes to mind when you think of the word 'grief?' What about the word 'mourning?' Have you heard of this term before?
 - What are some reasons that youth might grieve in silence?
 - Peers don't understand.
 - Do not want to make other people sad.
 - What can happen if we keep our feelings bottled up inside?
 - Do you think that a person can grow from a very difficult and painful experience, like grief? What are some of the ways that a person might change in a positive way? Brainstorm a list together.
 - Appreciate the small things.
 - New perspective on life.
 - Empathy for others.
 - Stronger relationships.
 - Desire to give back.
2. Explain that we will be engaging in a writing activity that will allow us to express our thoughts and feelings – both comforting and uncomfortable – in a unique way. This activity involves tearing up our written words. While the action of tearing up paper can provide a physical release, it can also help us to maintain our privacy by destroying the thoughts and feelings that we would rather keep to ourselves.
3. Invite youth to select one or more pieces of paper to use for the activity.
4. Encourage youth to fill the entire page by writing down what comes to mind when they think about the person who died. This could be:
 - Difficult emotions, such as anger, abandonment, regret, fear, etc.
 - Meaningful or comforting words, such as special memories, special qualities of the person who died and the lessons they taught you, ways in which you have grown as you journey through grief, etc.

⚠ Give youth permission to write about something that they wish had been different about their relationship with the person who is dying/ has died. Create space for youth to address anger, regret and other feelings associated with difficult or ambiguous relationships.

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IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

PICKING UP THE PIECES *CONTINUED 2/3***How to Play** *continued*

5. Remind youth that they can:
 - Write in any colour, font, size, or language.
 - Write in all different directions (vertical, horizontal, backwards, etc.).
 - Include numbers, dates, quotes, lyrics, and/or symbols.
 - Do anything they would like!
6. Once youth have finished writing, invite them to tear up their text.
 - One way of approaching this activity is to tear the tough stuff into pieces while ripping around the special memories and meaningful words (keeping them intact).
7. Demonstrate the process of adhering the strips of paper to the canvas:
 - Pour some glue (Mod Podge®) onto your plate.
 - Using your foam brush, apply a thin layer of glue to the section of canvas you are working on.
 - Press the strip of paper into place and hold for five seconds.
 - Continue to paste your pieces until you have covered the canvas.
 - To firmly secure the pieces, apply a thin layer of glue on top.
8. Invite youth to share their finished work if they are comfortable doing so.

 **Discussion**
Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up as you completed the activity?

What was it like for you while you were tearing up the paper? Were you hesitant in any way?

Connect

This activity involves taking a whole piece of paper and tearing it up into pieces. From there, those pieces are arranged and pasted in such a way to create something new but different. In what ways might this process represent grief?

What does the word 'hope' mean for you at this moment?

Apply

Can you think of another time that this activity might be helpful?

What are some other things that we can do to express our emotions in a safe way?

 **Variations**

1. Youth may consider colour coding their work (ex. tough stuff in one colour and empowering words in another).

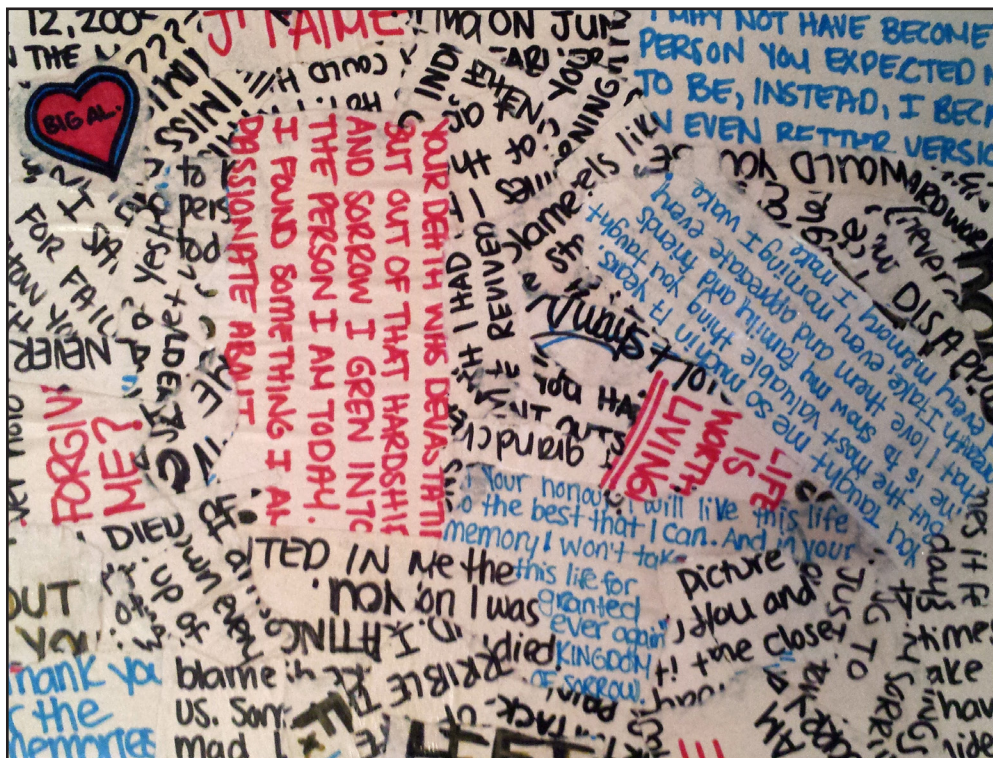
AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

PICKING UP THE PIECES CONTINUED 3/3

1. Fill the entire page with words, dates and symbols.

2. Tear up the text!



3. Create a new image by pasting the pieces to the canvas board.

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

LISTENING TO OUR BODIES

**Key Learning**

To develop emotional awareness and cultivate self-regulation skills.

What You Need

- Optional: Yoga Mats (or blankets)

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Marianne Gocker, MD, FRCP(C). Marianne is now working as a hospice chaplain for University of Rochester Medicine Home Health Care. Until July 2016 Marianne worked as a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in varied community settings in Toronto. Since beginning her own mindfulness practice more than 10 years ago, Marianne has become increasingly interested in sharing mindfulness practices with people of all ages coping with grief or terminal illness within their family.

Preparation Activities

1. Lay out yoga mats (or blankets) for those who wish to complete the practice lying down.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be engaging in a mindfulness exercise that will help to connect mind and body.
2. Lead youth through a mindful body scan using the script provided by Marianne Gocker (p. 73 -74).

**Discussion****Reflect**

What feelings did you notice during the body scan?

Where did those emotions show up for you in your body?

Was there anything that you were surprised to learn about yourself?

Was it difficult to focus your attention on the sensations in your body?

If your attention wandered from your body, what thoughts came to mind in those moments?

Connect

How does _____ show up in your body?

- Anger | Jealousy | Guilt | Worry | Sadness | Etc.

Apply

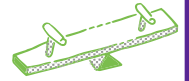
How might this activity be helpful in other areas of your life?

**Variations**

1. Invite youth to create an art piece (ex. drawing, painting, sculpture, photography) that represents the emotions they noticed during the exercise.

AGES 13+

IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

LISTENING TO OUR BODIES CONTINUED 2/3

The following exercise leads people through a body scan. Please use the words below as a guide. Feel free to adapt this practice using your own words. Ideally the body scan might just take 5 minutes. The overarching idea is to take time to breath into and out of various parts of one's body while noticing any sensations that are present. Some groups might be willing to engage in a longer scan. If that is the case, just add more breaths for each body area. While some may find this practice relaxing, the purpose is just to notice what feelings are present. *This practice can be triggering for people who have experienced physical trauma, so it would be helpful to know a little about the background of participants before beginning. That being said, leaders might preface the practice with letting people know that if they find the exercise is beginning to be upsetting each person should feel free to stop the practice.

MINDFUL BODY SCAN

by Marianne Gocker

Our bodies send us signals non-stop. Our bodies let us know when we are hungry, when we are tired, when we are anxious, when we are angry and when we are sad. Our bodies also express happiness, excitement and contentment. We are not always listening to our bodies and then we may forget to eat or postpone resting. If we don't listen to the physical signals about our emotions such as anger, anxiety and sadness, these feelings might intensify until we can no longer ignore their demands for attention.

Why might this be important? Perhaps if we recognized early signals of anger arising we could attend to it sooner and have time to develop a thoughtful response. If we knew sadness was showing up as exhaustion and a feeling of heaviness, we might think of ways to make space for this sadness. We might reach out to our friends for support before we are overwhelmed. If we noticed tension in our shoulders we might ask ourselves if it could be due to stress. Just noticing what is happening in our bodies offers an opportunity to be curious about the reasons for discomfort and offers a chance to consider a response. Do I need to do something? Do I need to remember to breathe deeply? Would it help to lower my shoulders? If I rested for a while would I be better able to cope with what is happening? The following exercise is an invitation to be curious about what feelings are present in different parts of your body. The purpose of this brief scan of your body isn't necessarily to relax; rather the purpose is to practice noticing what your body might be saying to you. So here we go.

This exercise/practice can be done sitting in a chair or lying on your back in a comfortable place. It can be tempting to fall asleep, especially if you are lying down. If that happens, your body might be telling you that you need to rest. However, if possible, think of this time as a time to be curious and to be awake. Time to pay attention to your body. If you are comfortable doing so allow your eyes to gently close. If you prefer to have your eyes open keep your gaze soft and unfocused.

Begin by taking three belly breaths, (imagine with each inbreath that you are filling a balloon in your abdomen). On the next breath imagine the breath traveling all the way to your feet. What do you notice? Is there any tension in your feet? Do you notice any sensation of warmth? Coolness? Tingling? Just notice what feelings are present in your feet.

(Pause...)

With the next inbreath, let your attention shift to your legs. On the inbreath imagine that you are breathing into your legs. What do you notice?

(Pause...)

**Continued on the next page*

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IDENTIFYING & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

LISTENING TO OUR BODIES *CONTINUED 3/3***MINDFUL BODY SCAN** *continued**by Marianne Gocker*

On the next inbreath let your attention move to the area of your abdomen and lower back. We often carry tension in our bellies or our backs. Is there any tension present for you? Any other sensations? If you notice your attention drifting to thoughts about the future or worries, just notice where your attention has wandered and gently escort it back to your body. These wanderings are normal and just what our minds tend to do when we are quiet. Now on the next inbreath let your attention shift to your entire back. What do you notice about the sensations in your upper back, or where your back is in contact with the floor or the chair?

(Pause...)

On the next inbreath, let your attention move to your chest. Perhaps you are aware of your heart beating. Breathe into your chest area just being curious about whatever you are feeling there. Now gathering your attention, let it shift to your arms and hands. Imagine your breath traveling into your fingertips. What sensations are present in your hands? Moisture? Warmth?

(Pause...)

Breathing in, let your attention move to your shoulders and your neck. Our shoulders and necks are another area where we often hold tension. Just check in with your shoulders and your neck to see if there is any tension present. On the next inbreath, let your attention shift to your face: your mouth, your cheeks, your nose, your eyes and forehead. Does your face feel relaxed? Are you aware of any sensations in your face? As we draw this practice to a close imagine taking a deep breath all the way from the crown of your head through your chest, your abdomen and into your toes. Imagine breathing out from your toes. Take a moment to be aware of your body as a whole.

(Pause...)

Remember that even when we don't have time to check in with all the parts of our body or space to lie down, we can pause wherever we are to take a few deep breaths allowing us time to notice any messages from our bodies. Being more aware of how we are feeling physically will help us be in touch with our emotions as well. This information may help us in managing stressful emotions before our emotions have become overwhelming. Pausing to listen to our bodies may also help us weather the rough waters of distressing emotions when they arise. Just remember to be curious and kind to yourself.



AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

SELF-CARE SPINNER

**Key Learning**

To promote healthy coping strategies and encourage self-care.

What You Need

- Ruler
- Scissors
- Coloured pencils
- Single hole punch
- Split-pins
- Cardstock paper (white and an assortment of colours)
- 'Self-Care Ideas' handout

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Deana Slater, BSW, MEd, RSW. Deana has a private practice - Deana Slater Counselling Services - where she provides counselling to youth and adults who are struggling with grief, trauma and other life challenges. She also works at Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre helping patients and their families access prescriptions for treatment.

Preparation Activities

1. Prepare the materials in advance.
 - Using the white cardstock paper, cut a circle (approximately 20 cm in diameter) for each person.
 - Draw lines that divide each circle into six equal segments.
 - Poke a hole in the center of each circle.
 - Cut out a number of arrows in various colours.
 - Photocopy the *Self-Care Ideas* handout (see p. 77).

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about coping strategies:
 - A coping strategy is something that we do to help manage stress and deal with difficult feelings. For example, a person might listen to music for comfort and relaxation. Just as everyone's grief is unique, each person may have their own unique ways of coping with different stressors and situations. In grief, as well as in daily life, it is important to find ways to manage difficult emotions and care for ourselves.
 - What are some healthy ways that a person can cope with difficult feelings?
 - What would be an example of a harmful coping strategy? What makes this activity harmful?
 - What do you think a person might find appealing about _____? (*name a harmful coping strategy*)
 - Can you think of any coping strategies that can be both healthy and harmful? In what circumstances would this strategy be helpful? When would it be considered harmful?
2. Distribute the *Self-Care Ideas* handout and ask youth if any of the strategies on the list jump out for them.
3. Explain that there are many different ways of coping and caring for ourselves. Different coping strategies can help in different ways:
 - Provide temporary **distraction**.
 - Provide opportunities to **connect** with others/community.
 - Help to feel more **centred** within ourselves.
 - Facilitate self-expression and **emotional release**.
 - Help to soothe, **relax** and rejuvenate.
 - Cultivate **self-compassion**.
4. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that will encourage us to identify the healthy coping and self-care strategies that we already use, as well as explore new ways of caring for ourselves.

AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

SELF-CARE SPINNER CONTINUED 2/3



How to Play continued

5. Show youth a sample spinner and explain how the tool can be helpful.
6. Provide each youth with a circle and invite them to fill each section with words and/or drawings that represent a different self-care strategy.
7. Remind youth that they can refer back to the handout for ideas.
8. Encourage youth to include self-care strategies that they already use and find helpful, as well as some new strategies they might like to try.
9. Invite youth to select an arrow in the colour of their preference.
10. Provide youth with a split pin to affix the arrow to the centre of their spinner.

⚠ Be sure that the split pin is not pressed down too flat, as it might affect the arrow's ability to spin freely.

11. Invite youth to share their spinner if they are comfortable doing so.

Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Was this activity difficult for you in any way?

Were you surprised by any of the healthy self-care activities?

Connect

Has a friend/family member ever suggested a coping strategy to you?
Did you find it helpful? In what ways?

Apply

When might you do a self-care activity?

Is there a self-care activity that was new to you that you want to try?

When do you see yourself using this tool? Can you think of a time when something like this would have been helpful to use?

In what ways might this tool be able to help a person replace harmful ways of coping with healthy strategies?



AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

SELF-CARE SPINNER *CONTINUED 3/3***SELF-CARE IDEAS***by Deana Slater*

- Dance
- Eat something healthy
- Go for a bike ride
- Try yoga or Pilates
- Play a game
- Draw
- Wrap up in a blanket
- Exercise
- Sing
- Call a friend
- Drink tea/warm drink
- Go swimming
- Aromatherapy
- Breathe deeply
- Create a morning or evening routine
- Go to church
- Jump in puddles
- Eat a meal you enjoy
- Sleep in
- Walk on the beach
- Watch a movie
- Journal
- Go for a hike
- Bake
- Delete items from your to-do list
- Do a random act of kindness
- Have a picnic
- Take a walk
- Look at the clouds
- Go to bed early
- Volunteer
- Be alone
- Take a shower and enjoy it
- Call someone who makes you feel good
- Go away for the night
- Look at the stars
- Try guided imagery (YouTube has great options)
- Colour
- Go for a drive
- Meditate
- Make a doctor's appointment
- Cook a meal
- Be kind to someone else
- De-clutter
- Light a candle
- Read a magazine
- Go out with friends
- Smile (and hold it for 30 seconds)
- Turn your phone off
- Be crafty
- Garden
- Get some pampering done: a manicure or massage
- Create a mission statement
- Go to the park
- Find an inspiring quote and repeat it daily
- Indulge in a treat
- Paint (try a painting class)
- Look at old photos
- Take a bath
- Think positively
- Listen to an audio book
- Pet an animal
- Laugh
- Go out on a date
- Write a letter
- Visit a dog park and watch the dogs play
- Listen to rain
- Start a gratitude journal
- Read a blog on self-compassion
- Organize your day
- Go to the zoo
- Sit outside
- Snuggle with someone
- Listen to music
- Stretch
- Watch home movies
- Take some photos of things that make you smile
- Watch TV
- Write down your negative thoughts and throw them away or burn them
- Sit quietly at home
- Watch baby animal videos
- Write down 3 things you're thankful for
- Meet a friend for coffee
- Watch a show on Netflix
- Pray
- Read a book
- Stop what you're doing and simply breathe
- Sit and listen to the sounds of nature
- Talk about your feelings with someone who will listen
- Plant something
- Have dinner with your friends
- Stay off of social media for an hour (or more!)
- Watch the sunset (or sunrise)
- Wear something that makes you feel good
- Visit the library

AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

SAY WHAAAT?!



Key Learning

To promote communication and support youth to develop healthy personal boundaries.

What You Need

- Pens/pencils
- 'Say Whaaat?!' activity page

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Deana Slater, BSW, MEd, RSW. Deana has a private practice - Deana Slater Counselling Services - where she provides counselling to youth and adults who are struggling with grief, trauma and other life challenges. She also works at Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre helping patients and their families access prescriptions for treatment.

Preparation Activities

1. Photocopy the 'Say Whaaat?!' activity page (see p. 80).

How to Play

1. Facilitate a conversation about difficult questions:
 - Sometimes, after we have experienced a major life event, like the dying or death of someone we care about, it can be difficult to answer questions and talk to people about the things that are going on in our lives. When we have been away from school or work for a period of time, people may ask questions. The sense of not knowing what to say to other people can be awkward and uncomfortable.
 - Have you ever had an experience where you didn't know how/ didn't want to answer a question? How did you handle the situation?
 - Have you ever disclosed personal information to someone but were disappointed by their reaction?
 - Have you ever disclosed personal information and felt badly about it afterwards?
 - What does it mean to have personal boundaries?
 - What is an example of a personal boundary?
 - How can healthy personal boundaries be helpful?
2. Explain that personal boundaries are the limits that we put into place that guide how we want to be treated by others. Healthy boundaries are those that honour our own personal values and communicate our needs. Healthy boundaries help us to determine who we can be vulnerable with, and when to say no. Each relationship will have its own unique set of boundaries.
3. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that will help us to identify the supportive people in our lives who make us feel secure and emotionally safe. This activity can also help to build our confidence in asserting our boundaries and dealing with difficult questions and conversations with friends, peers and acquaintances.
4. Distribute the 'Say Whaaat?!' activity page and show a sample.

AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

SAY WHAAAT?! CONTINUED**How to Play** *continued*

5. Engage youth in a discussion that will help them to complete the sheet:
 - Has someone ever said anything about the illness/death or your time away that made you feel bad? What was it? How did you respond? Thinking back to the situation, if you could press rewind would you still respond that way?
 - What was the most helpful thing that someone has said to you? How did the person make you feel?
 - If you were to think about the people in your life (ex. peers at school, colleagues, teammates, neighbours, etc.) where would they fall in the different categories? Who falls into the green category? Orange? Red?
6. Invite youth to complete the activity sheet by including the names of people in their life under the category that feels right for them. They can also include how that person/group of people make them feel, and phrases that they might use to respond to difficult questions or comments.

⚠️ Ask youth to hold off on completing the final two questions at the bottom of the sheet.
7. Remind youth that there is no right or wrong way to do this activity. If they find that they have a lot of people in one category and fewer in another, that is okay.
8. Invite youth to share their experience

Discussion
Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Was this activity difficult for you in any way?

What was most surprising for you about this activity?

Connect

Invite youth to complete the two question at the bottom of the activity page.

What did you learn about yourself or the people around you?

Was there anything that a fellow group member said that could be helpful for you?


Apply

In what ways might this activity be helpful to you in the future?

Can you think of a time when something like this would have been helpful to use?

SAY WHAAAT?!

Thinking about the different people in your life, what are some things you could say to them if they ask you questions about your absence or the person who has died?

	Who	Emotion	Ideas of what to say
			
			
			

What did you learn about yourself or the people around you?

What did other group members say that could be helpful for you?

AGES 13 +

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

GRIEF TRIVIA

**Key Learning**

To normalize grief and promote healthy coping strategies.

What You Need

- Tri-fold display board
- 25 small envelopes
- Cue cards
- Markers/pens
- Buzzers/bells (x2)

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity was provided by Natasha Manzone, BA, BSW, RSW. Natasha is the Family Services Coordinator at the Seasons Centre for Grieving Children in Barrie, Ontario. In addition to being a Social Worker, Natasha also holds a degree in psychology.

Preparation Activities

1. Create the trivia board (see photos below):
 - Write each trivia question (see p. 82) onto a separate cue card.
 - Create a header for each of the five trivia categories.
 - Paste five envelopes under each of the categories.
 - Place cue cards in the envelopes under the appropriate category.

How to Play

1. Divide the group into two teams.
2. Each team will take turns selecting a question from one of the categories (ex. coping for \$200), to be read aloud by the facilitator.
3. The first team to buzz in will have a chance to answer the question.
 - If the answer suits the question, the value of the question will go towards the team's score.
 - If the answer does not suit the question, the other team is given an opportunity to answer.
4. When an answer is given, facilitate a discussion amongst the group.

**Discussion****Reflect**

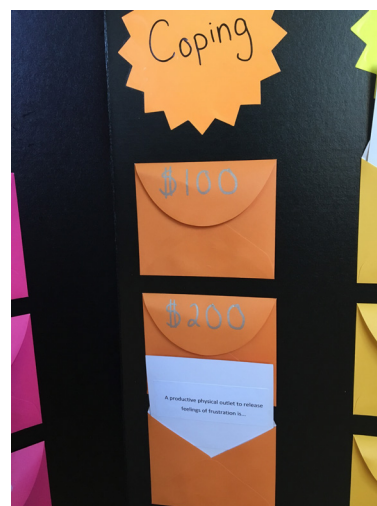
Did you learn anything new about yourself, or grief, during this game?

Connect

If you were to make up your own categories, what would they be?

Apply

Where or who can you go to if you have any questions about grief?



GRIEF TRIVIA *CONTINUED***GRIEF TRIVIA QUESTIONS****GRIEF 101**

\$100 - The thoughts and feelings we have after someone we care about dies is called...

\$200 - True or **False**: Everyone grieves the same.

\$300 - **True** or False: You don't get over grief, you journey through it.

\$400 - True or **False**: By the second anniversary of the death, healing should be complete.

\$500 - True or **False**: Normal grief lasts six days to two weeks.

COPING

\$100 - Name two things we can do when we are feeling sad.

\$200 - A safe and healthy way to express anger is...

\$300 - A safe and healthy physical outlet to release feelings of frustration is...

\$400 - What are two ways we can cope with anxiety?

\$500 - Do you find music helpful in terms of working through grief? How so?

FEELINGS

\$100 - What is something that a grieving person might worry about?

\$200 - **True** or False: All grief feelings are OK, it is what you do with them is what matters.

\$300 - Name a feeling you have felt that we have not talked about in group.

\$400 - True or **False**: We should ignore feelings of regret and guilt because they are too hurtful.

\$500 - Sometimes we protect ourselves by distracting or distancing from our feelings. Is this coping strategy helpful, harmful or both? Explain.

TEENS & GRIEF

\$100 - True or **False**: It is not okay to spend time alone when grieving.

\$200 - **True** or False: Our grief process is influenced by many things.

\$300 - True or **False**: Being strong when grieving means remaining composed.

\$400 - What is a physical way that grief shows up in our bodies?

\$500 - What do you need from the adults in your life as you grieve?

ACTIVITIES

\$100 - One way I like to commemorate the person who died in my life is...

\$200 - _____ helps me when I am missing the person who died.

\$300 - A good activity to share memories about the person who died is...

\$400 - Talk about one activity that we have done during group and how it has helped you.

\$500 - Suggest an activity we have not done that might be helpful.

AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

COPING TOOLBOX

**Key Learning**

Promote self-awareness and healthy coping strategies.

What You Need

- Cardboard box with lid (*to hold items*)
- Assortment of craft supplies (*magazines, scissors, Mod Podge®, acrylic paint, paintbrushes, markers, glitter, buttons, sequins, washi tape, etc.*)
- Variety of coping items (*for youth to choose from*)

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Kimberly Blackmore, MC, CPT, RP. Kimberly is the H.U.U.G. (Help Us Understand Grief) Counsellor at Heart House Hospice in Mississauga, ON. She provides counselling to children, youth and families who have a loved one who is dying or has died as well as education to professionals on how to support and communicate with grieving children.

Preparation Activities

1. Inform youth of the activity in advance with a reminder to bring copies of photographs and/or other small items from home that provide comfort when they are experiencing difficult or uncomfortable feelings.
2. Lay out an assortment of small items that youth might select for their coping toolbox.

⚠ Many of the activities included in this resource provide youth with tangible tools which they might like to include in their coping toolbox.

How to Play

1. Explain to youth that we will be creating our own coping boxes. Once we have had a chance to decorate our boxes, we will fill it with a variety of items to use when difficult feelings come up. Just as each person's grief is unique, each of our coping boxes will be different and that is okay.
2. Invite youth to choose a box to decorate using the craft materials provided.
3. Support youth to identify and select items to include in their toolbox:
 - Looking at the objects before you, are there any items that you could see yourself using in times of emotional stress?
 - Do you see any items that might serve as a helpful or comforting reminder when you are feeling overwhelmed with emotion?
 - Are there any tools that you have never used, but would like to try?
4. Encourage youth to try various tools before placing them in their box.
5. Invite youth to share the items they selected for their coping toolbox if they are comfortable doing so.

TOOLBOX IDEAS

- Tissues
- Chocolate
- Photograph(s)
- Playing cards
- Magazines or books
- Journal
- Worry stones
- Affirmations (see p. 27)
- Comfort Card (see p. 59)
- Music (*or printed lyrics*)
- Calming essential oils
- Mindful meditation script
- Self-compassion exercise
- Colouring page & markers
- Stress balls (*or modelling clay*)
- Favourite tea/hot chocolate
- Puzzle book (Sudoku, crossword, etc.)

AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

COPING TOOLBOX CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

How can each item be used to help you when you are grieving or going through other stressful situations?

Are there any missing items that you would like to include in your toolbox?

Connect

What warning signs do you get in your body that would remind you to use the items in your coping toolbox?

Apply

What are some other ways in which you can safely cope with your feelings?



AGES 13 - 16

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

BALANCING GRIEF**Key Learning**

Promote healthy coping strategies.

What You Need

- Suspend game
- 'How to Play' guide

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Kimberly Blackmore, MC, CPT, RP. Kimberly is the H.U.U.G. (Help Us Understand Grief) Counsellor at Heart House Hospice in Mississauga, ON. She provides counselling to children, youth and families who have a loved one who is dying or has died as well as education to professionals on how to support and communicate with grieving children.

Preparation Activities

1. Photocopy the 'How to Play' guide to have on hand for reference.
2. Set up the game by putting together the wooden base (as per instructions included with the game).

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be playing a game that will help us to talk about our grief experiences.
2. Play the game:
 - Take turns rolling the colour coded die (included with the game).
 - Answer the question that corresponds with the colour that was rolled.
 - If the youth rolled 'red' on the die, they would share a coping strategy that they have used or would like to try.
 - Select a rod of the same colour as rolled on the die and add it to the structure, trying not to knock down the other hanging rods.
 - The game comes to an end when one player has managed to hang all of their rods on the structure.
3. Facilitate a discussion about the experience once the game is over.

**Discussion****Reflect**

What feeling did you experience as you were trying to hang your rod on the structure?

What does this feeling look like in your body?

Connect

The structure swung and swayed as more rods were added. In what way does this represent grief?

What can happen when a person keeps all of their feelings bottled up inside?

Apply

What are some of the signals that your body gives you indicating that it is time to care for yourself?

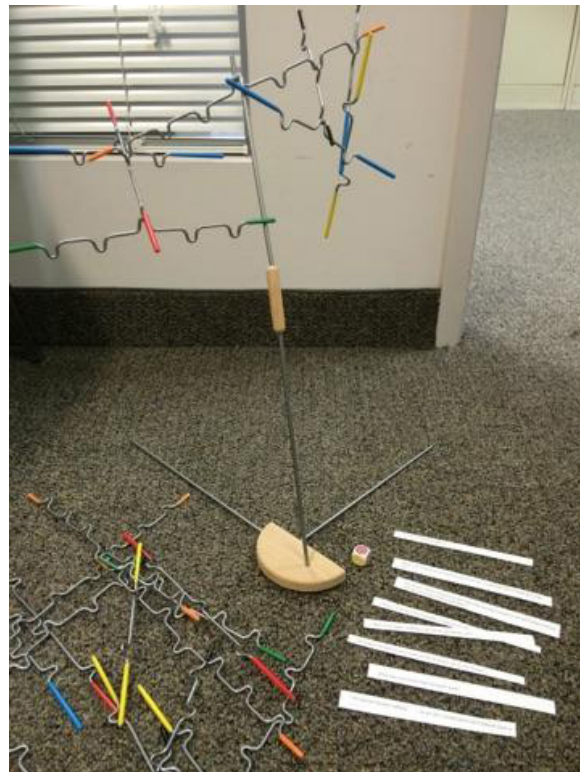
AGES 13 - 16

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

BALANCING GRIEF *CONTINUED*

BALANCING GRIEF HOW TO PLAY

- RED** Identify a coping strategy
- GREEN** Share a grief feeling you have experienced
- YELLOW** Share a memory of the person who died
- BLUE** Share an activity that you enjoy
- BLACK** Name a person who you can go to for support
- ORANGE** What are your hopes and wishes for the future



AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

COMPASSIONATE FRIEND



Key Learning

Support youth to cultivate and practise self-compassion.

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

Adapted with permission from Karen Bluth, PhD, and Lorraine Hobbs, MA.

Dr. Karen Bluth received her PhD in Child and Family Studies in 2012 from The University of Tennessee, and is Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the UNC School of Medicine. Dr. Bluth's research focuses on the roles that self-compassion and mindfulness play in promoting well-being in youth, has practiced mindfulness since she was a teen, and teaches Mindful Self-Compassion to adults and teens. Dr. Bluth is author of *The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are*, and is co-developer of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults*.

Lorraine Hobbs is the Director of Family Programs at the University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness. She is a family therapist and former clinical director of adolescent treatment programs. Lorraine is certified in MBSR, MSC (Mindful Self-Compassion) and CCARE (Compassion Cultivation, Altruism, Research & Education), Stanford University. Lorraine offers mindfulness and compassion-based programs through the Department of Integrative Medicine in community hospitals and wellness centers in Indiana & Ohio. During her tenure at the Center for Mindfulness, she developed and implemented curricula in mindfulness-based interventions for multiple age groups. She is a pioneer in self-compassion training for parents and teens and is co-author of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults* and more recently, has co-created a program in Mindful Self-Compassion for Parents, both adapted from the adult MSC curriculum. Lorraine teaches and trains in MFY internationally. She is Director of the Adolescent Mindfulness Certification Program and a Mentor in MBSR certification program, UCSD Center for Mindfulness Professional Training Institute.

How to Play

1. Guide youth through the meditation exercise outlined on p. 88.



Discussion

Reflect

Were you able to find a place that felt safe and comfortable?

Did you identify a compassionate friend?

Did anyone hear any words?

Connect

What makes it difficult to extend compassion to ourselves?

Apply

Can you think of a situation where this exercise might be helpful?

There are some teens who will not be able to think of a compassionate and understanding person in their life. For this reason, it is important to give them the option of creating an imaginary person (or someone from a book, movie, or comic book). Make sure that you include this option when conducting this guided meditation.

COMPASSIONATE FRIEND CONTINUED



MEDITATION: COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

by Karen Bluth & Lorraine Hobbs *(Adapted from Paul Gilbert, 2010)*

- Allowing your eyes to close, begin by taking a few deep inhalations and just allow your shoulders to relax away from your ears.
- Take a few moments to allow yourself to imagine a place that you feel safe, comfortable, and relaxed - this can be a real or imagined place - but a place that allows you to breathe comfortably and let go of any worry. Perhaps, this place is in nature - a beach, a place in the woods near a brook - or maybe it's a corner of your bedroom or the comfort of a good friend's house. It might even be an imaginary place, like floating on a cloud. Imagine this place in as much detail as you can - the sounds, the smells, and most of all what you feel like in this place.
- Now soon you'll receive a visitor...a warm and kind friend. This is someone who loves you completely and accepts you exactly for who you are. This can be a real person like a friend of yours, a beloved grandparent, or a favorite teacher, or it can be a character from a book you've read, a pet, or even a hero or heroine from a comic book or a movie. Or it can be some being that you create from your imagination.
- Imagine this being in as much detail as possible, especially how it feels to be in his or her presence.
- Your compassionate friend cares deeply about you and just wants you to be happy.
- Soon you will be greeting your compassionate friend.
- You have a choice - you can either go out from your safe place to meet your friend or you can invite them in. So imagine that you are doing that now.
- Allow yourself to sit with the person at just the right distance...feeling completely comfortable and safe - completely accepted and loved.
- Take a moment to enjoy how you feel in the presence of your compassionate friend.
- This being is here with you now and can understand exactly what it's like to be you, exactly where you are in your life right now, and understands precisely what you struggle with.
- And this person or being accepts and understands you completely for who you are, perhaps better than anyone else.
- This being has something important to say to you, something which is just what you need to hear right now.
- See if you can listen closely for the words they want to share, words that are comforting and supportive.
- And if no words come, that's ok too. Just enjoy being in the presence of your compassionate friend.
- And now, maybe you have something to say to this friend. This friend is a very good listener, and completely understands you. Is there anything you'd like to say?
- Enjoy your friend's good company for a few last moments, and wave goodbye to your friend, knowing that you can invite them back whenever you need to.
- You are now alone in your safe place again. Let yourself savor what just happened, perhaps reflecting on the words you heard.
- Before this meditation ends, please remember that this compassionate friend is a part of you. The presence you felt and the words you heard are a deep part of yourself. The comfort and safety that you may be feeling is there within you at all times. Know that you can return to this safe place and to this compassionate friend whenever you need to (pause).
- Bringing your attention back to your breath, gently open your eyes.

AGES 13+

COPING WITH THE TOUGH STUFF

CALMING MUSIC MEDITATION

**Key Learning**

Support healthy self-regulation strategies through mindfulness meditation.

What You Need

- Instrumental music (ex. *Silk Road* by Kitaro)

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

Adapted with permission from Karen Bluth, PhD, and Lorraine Hobbs, MA.

Dr. Karen Bluth received her PhD in Child and Family Studies in 2012 from The University of Tennessee, and is Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the UNC School of Medicine. Dr. Bluth's research focuses on the roles that self-compassion and mindfulness play in promoting well-being in youth, has practiced mindfulness since she was a teen, and teaches Mindful Self-Compassion to adults and teens. Dr. Bluth is author of *The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are*, and is co-developer of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults*.

Lorraine Hobbs is the Director of Family Programs at the University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness. She is a family therapist and former clinical director of adolescent treatment programs. Lorraine is certified in MBSR, MSC (Mindful Self-Compassion) and CCARE (Compassion Cultivation, Altruism, Research & Education), Stanford University. Lorraine offers mindfulness and compassion-based programs through the Department of Integrative Medicine in community hospitals and wellness centers in Indiana & Ohio. During her tenure at the Center for Mindfulness, she developed and implemented curricula in mindfulness-based interventions for multiple age groups. She is a pioneer in self-compassion training for parents and teens and is co-author of *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults* and more recently, has co-created a program in Mindful Self-Compassion for Parents, both adapted from the adult MSC curriculum. Lorraine teaches and trains in MFY internationally. She is Director of the Adolescent Mindfulness Certification Program and a Mentor in MBSR certification program, UCSD Center for Mindfulness Professional Training Institute.

How to Play

1. Invite teens to find a comfortable seat or lie on their backs.
2. Begin to play a piece of instrumental music. Music should be soothing with long, simple notes (for example, *Silk Road* by Kitaro).
3. Guide them through the exercise:
 - Paying attention to the tones and sounds of the music, noticing the individual instruments. When your mind begins to wander, bring your attention back to the tones of the music. *Remind teens of this periodically throughout the song.*

**Discussion****Reflect**

What was this like for you? How does your body feel after the meditation?

Did you notice your mind wandering? Were you able to bring it back?

Did you notice any self-judgment when you noticed your mind wandering?

Did you notice any reactions to the music - pleasant or unpleasant?

Connect

What are some of the other ways people might use music to cope with grief?

Apply

Can you think of a time where this exercise might be helpful?

AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY CALENDAR



Key Learning

To facilitate ongoing memory making and support continuing bonds with the person who is dying/has died.

What You Need

- Blank calendar
- Photographs
- Markers
- Stickers
- Tape

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Mary C. Kraft, CCLS, MHPS. Mary is a Certified Child Life Specialist and holds a Masters degree in Hospice and Palliative Studies. Mary spent the last 17 years at Children's Hospital of Michigan working with grieving children and families before taking on the role of Program Director at New Hope Center for Grief Support in Northville, Michigan.

Preparation Activities

1. Print a blank 12-month calendar for each youth, starting with the current month.

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about memories and commemorative activities:
 - Even though a person has died, we can still have a meaningful relationship with them. There are things that we can do to stay connected with a person who has died. Sharing special memories with others is one way we can maintain a relationship with and honour the memory of a person who has died in our lives.
 - What are some ways that you have done this in the past?
 - Brainstorm activities that can be placed on the memory calendar:
 - Eat favourite foods.
 - Play favourite games.
 - Watch favourite TV show/movie.
 - Listen to favourite music.
 - Read favourite book.
 - Wear favourite colour.
 - Enjoy one of their hobbies.
 - Plant something in a memory garden.
 - Chose a special plant or stone to put in the garden (see p. 94).
 - Write a letter to the person who has died, filling them in on the new things in your life.
 - Pick a photo and talk about a memory.
 - Light a candle.
2. Explain that we will be making memory calendars that will help us to schedule meaningful monthly activities that connect us with the person who is dying/has died in our lives.
3. Provide each youth with a blank calendar.
4. Invite them to choose a date each month on which they would like to honour and connect with the person who has died. The date might be:
 - The date the person died (ex. on the 7th of each month).
 - The person's favourite number.
 - Whatever date they would like to choose.
5. Support youth to choose a monthly activity to include in their calendar.
6. Provide youth with the opportunity to personalize their calendar by choosing items to decorate the front cover and monthly pages. Remind youth that they can use words, symbols, photos and/or drawings to decorate their calendars.
7. Invite youth to share their memory calendar.



AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY CALENDAR CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Connect

What activities seem like they might be the most fun?

What activities seem like they might be the most difficult?

Where do you think you might keep your memory calendar?

Do you think that your family members/friends might want to add to the calendar and participate in the activities?

Apply

Is there anything you would like to do to prepare yourself for your commemorative activity?

How might this activity help you to remember and honour the person who died?

When we are engaging in memorial activities, it is normal for difficult feelings to come up. How might you support yourself through those moments?

Variations

1. If the youth is interested, they may consider completing this activity with their family members. Each member of the family might choose a month and decide what the activity may be. On the one year anniversary, the whole family might decide to plan a special day to remember the person who has died.
2. If supporting a youth from the time of death, start with the month that the person died and continue through to the one year anniversary.
3. Invite youth to complete a digital calendar on the computer and/or set 'memory dates' in their phone.

AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

HONOUR WALL



Key Learning

To facilitate ongoing connection with the person who has died.

What You Need

- Large board
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes
- Coloured cardstock
- Scissors
- Push pins
- Markers, coloured pencils, pastels, etc.

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity was provided by Lauren Muscarella. Lauren graduated from American University with a degree in Journalism. In 2010, Lauren began researching international mourning traditions and theories on grief as well as writing about the loss of her mother. In 2015, Lauren's book *Alice's Law: Honoring Lost Loved Ones and Finding Deeper Meaning* was published by Wyatt MacKenzie Publishing.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be engaging in a memorial ceremony. Together, we will create an Honour Wall, followed by a ritual inspired by the Hawaiian tradition, Ho'oponopono. Combined, these activities will help to put us into a state of meditative creation.
2. Invite youth to paint a tree on a large board, focusing on the trunk and branches, as the leaves will be added later.
3. As the tree is drying, ask youth to select a piece of coloured cardstock to create their own leaf using scissors to cut out their desired shape. As youth are cutting their leaves, engage them in a discussion about grief:
 - What do you notice about everyone's leaf?
 - Everyone's leaf is different, just as each person's grief is unique. Although we all have our own unique grief experiences, we can still share things in common with one another. Those connections can help us to feel less isolated in our grief.
4. Once youth have finished cutting out their leaves, invite them to write one thing that they wish to do in honour of the person who died. Remind youth that there are no rules for coming up with ways to commemorate the person. They may choose something that makes them feel inspired and happy, or perhaps something they were once scared to do (ex. volunteering, learning a new language, taking on a new hobby, etc.).

⚠ Give youth permission to write about something they wish had been different about their relationship.
5. Allow time for youth to decorate their leaf.
6. Support youth to participate in the Ho'oponopono Ceremony:
 - Create a circle around the Honour Wall.
 - Take a push pin and place their leaf on the wall.
 - As the leaf is placed say:
 - "Thank you (*name of person who died*)."
 - "Thank you (*name of person who died*) for _____."
 - "I am sorry that we are not together."
 - "I love you. And this year I promise to (*read promise from leaf*)."

"When my mother died, our relationship did not die. I have fond memories of her. I also remember the times where we did not agree, especially when I was a rebellious teenager wanting to break out on my own. She died when I was 20 years old. From there, I was left to figure out a way to cherish our relationship and to make sense of the good and the bad. In reading about the Ho'oponopono I saw a way to do that." - Lauren Muscarella

AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

HONOUR WALL CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

What was it like to share in this ritual with other grieving youth?

Does the word 'promise' bring up any uncomfortable feelings for you?

Connect

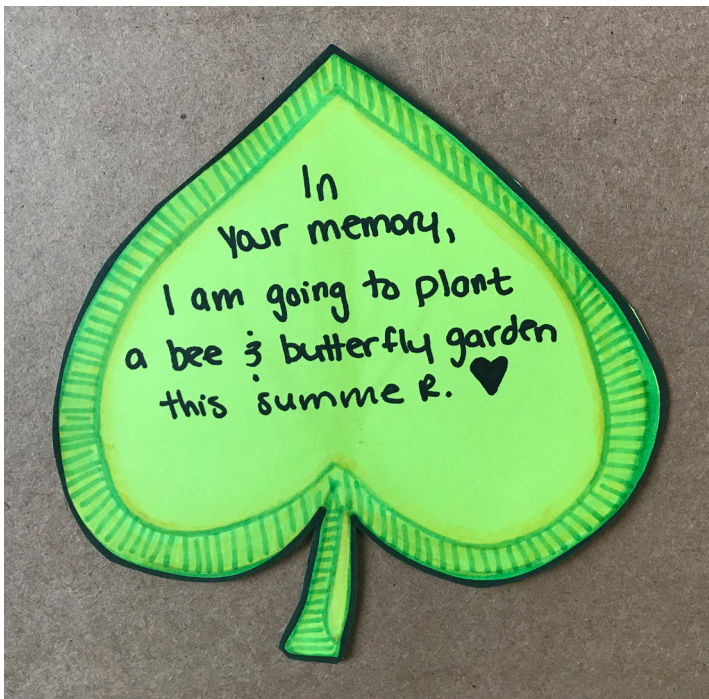
Have you had previous opportunities to talk about and remember the person who died? What was that like for you?

Read the quote in the orange box on p. 92. Can you relate to Lauren's experiences in any way?

In the Ho'oponopono Ceremony, we said 'I am sorry that we are not together.' Sometimes after someone dies, people might say, 'I am sorry for your loss.' Have you ever experienced this? What was that like for you?

Apply

Sometimes we set out to do something but it doesn't really turn out the way we expected. If a person were unable to follow through on their promise, how do you imagine they would feel? How could that person support themselves through that moment?



AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED



MEMORIAL ROCKS

Key Learning

To facilitate ongoing memory making and support continuing bonds with the person who is dying/has died.

What You Need

- River rocks
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes
- Krylon paint sealer
- Water containers

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Natasha Manzone, BA, BSW, RSW. Natasha is the Family Services Coordinator at the Seasons Centre for Grieving Children in Barrie, Ontario. In addition to being a Social Worker, Natasha also holds a degree in psychology.

How to Play

1. Open up a discussion about positive and meaningful memories of/with the person who died.
2. Discuss different ways to honour memories (ex. photos, journals, memory boxes, memorial frame, etc.).
3. Explain that we will be painting memorial rocks, in honour of the person who has died.
 - Once complete, you can place your memorial rock in a meaningful place – it might be in the garden at home, or you may decide to use it as a door stop in your room. It is up to you to decide what you'd like to do with it.
4. Invite youth to select a rock for their memorial creation.
5. Facilitate a discussion about meaningful memories as they paint their memorial rocks.
6. Remind youth that there is no right or wrong way to do this activity. They might choose to include names, dates, numbers, meaningful quotes or symbols, etc.

⚠ Once youth have finished their memorial rocks, allow the acrylic paint to dry completely before applying the sealer.
7. Invite youth to share their rocks if they are comfortable doing so.

AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORIAL ROCKS CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Was this activity difficult for you in any way?

Did you design the rock in a specific way for a reason?

Connect

What do you want your memorial rock to remind you about?

Have you had previous opportunities to talk about and remember the person who died? What was that like for you?

Apply

Where do you imagine you might keep your memorial rock?



AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED



HUG

Key Learning

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

What You Need

- Permanent or fabric markers
- Fabric paints
- Brushes
- Scissors
- Fabric (*at least 10" wide by 3' - 5' long*)
- Optional: needle & thread, scrap fabric, sequins, ribbons, buttons

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, PhD (c), CCLS.

Ceilidh is a PhD candidate in the Family Relations and Human Development program at the University of Guelph, and a Child Life Specialist focusing on Research & Evaluation with the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre in Toronto. Since 2001, Ceilidh's clinical work, research and teaching has focused on communicating and supporting children and families living with the serious illness, dying or death of a close family member.

How to Play

1. Explain that when someone is dying/has died we can still 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 youth to make a 'hug.' They get to decide what to do with the hug that they make. Remind youth that 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.).

⚠ Some youth may wish to put the Hug in the person's casket prior to cremation or burial.

3. Lay a piece of fabric out on a flat surface. Help youth 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 young person's hug as closely as possible.
4. After both hands have been traced, the young person may want to connect the lines so that it resembles a scarf with hands on each end. Some youth want to cut out their hugs, others want to keep a strip of fabric or a whole blanket intact. Encourage them to do whatever feels right for them.
5. Support youth to 'infuse' their hugs with feelings, wishes and memories.
 - They can draw, paint or sew
 - They can use images, words, symbols, patterns and/or decorations

Some young people will be immediately open to the creative, crafty and connective nature of this activity, while others may be reluctant, perceiving it to be an activity for younger children. In the latter case, some young people are more receptive to the idea that the dying person may appreciate the care and connection with the young person, and benefit from knowing that people of all ages can adapt this activity to their own circumstances — no one is "too old" for a hug.

AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

HUG CONTINUED
 **Discussion**
Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Connect

Do you have any other items that help you to feel connected to the person who is dying?

Apply

What are some other ways you can show you care and feel connected to the person who is dying?

 **Variations**

1. Although any soft fabric will work, using a sheet or piece of clothing belonging to the person who is dying can make this activity even more personal and meaningful.
2. This activity can be done individually or as a family to give to the person who is dying.
3. Youth may want help to make a hug by tracing the hands of the person who is dying to keep for comfort after they have died. Seek permission from the person who is ill before providing this option to youth.



AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY BEADS



Key Learning

Validate the connection between youth and the person who is dying.

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 Youth

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, PhD(c), CCLS.

Ceilidh is a PhD candidate in the Family Relations and Human Development program at the University of Guelph, and a Child Life Specialist focusing on Research & Evaluation with the Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre in Toronto. Since 2001, Ceilidh's clinical work, research and teaching has focused on communicating and supporting children and families living with the serious illness, dying or death of a close family member.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be creating beads that can help us to remember special memories and stay connected.
2. Encourage youth to choose paper to cut into triangles:
 - Cut long (6 – 18"), narrow (0.5 – 1.0") triangles.
 - Each triangle will make one bead.
 - Lay the triangles colourful side facing down.
 - Invite youth to write on the back of the paper.
3. Reassure youth that when the bead is finished, the writing will be hidden keeping it private.
4. Provide youth 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.
5. 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 for the glue to adhere.
 - Once the beads are dry, seal them with clear nail polish to make them water-resistant.
6. When the beads are dry, youth can string them together to make a necklace, bracelet or keychain that they can keep with them to help them remember.
 - Other beads can be used decoratively between the paper beads, or to extend the bracelet or necklace.

When young people are grieving, they may need support to remember comforting memories, or sources of strength, or the people who understand and support them. This activity can be adapted by making beads to represent any or all of these things, depending on the needs of each young person. They may want to make these for themselves, for the person who is dying, or for another family member.

AGES 13+

STAYING CONNECTED

MEMORY BEADS CONTINUED



Discussion

Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up as you made your beads?

What are some of the things that you remember, or that you want to remember?

If a younger family member asked you what your [person] was like, what would you want them to know?

What have you learned from your [person], either because they purposely taught it to you, or because you learned things from watching how they lived their life?

How do you feel as you wear/hold your memory creation?

Connect

What helps you to feel comforted?

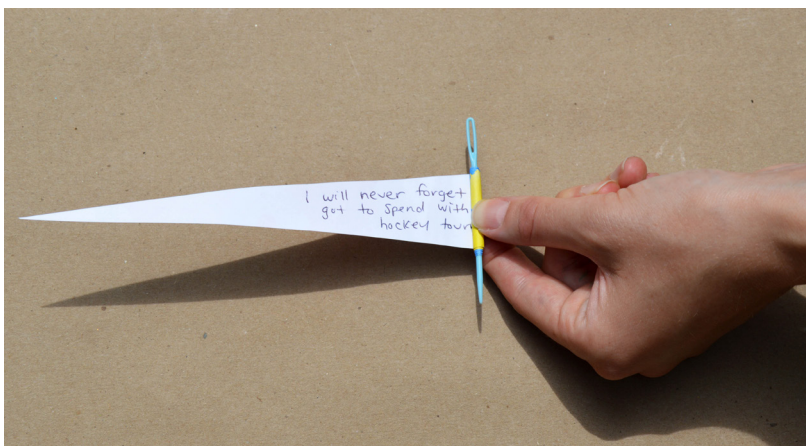
What are some thoughts that bring you comfort?

Are there things that other people do for you that are comforting?

Apply

What are some other ways you can show you care about and feel connected to the person who is dying?

Who are the people in your family who try to understand and support you? What about extended family? Friends at school? Teachers, coaches, professionals, co-workers, other community members?



ROCK CEREMONY



Key Learning

Provide youth with an opportunity to say goodbye and extend appreciation to their peers at the end of a group.

What You Need

- Smooth/polished rocks
- Rough rocks
- Small pouches (one for each youth)

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity has been adapted with permission from Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens (p. 48). © 2012 by The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families. Visit their website at www.dougy.org.

Preparation Activities

1. Gather or purchase a collection of rocks (a minimum of three smooth rocks and one rough rock for each youth).
2. Spread the rocks out for youth to see.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be engaging in a final closing activity that provides youth with an opportunity to share what they appreciate about being in group *and* what they appreciate about their fellow group members.
2. Provide each group member with a small pouch.
3. Invite each group member to select three smooth rocks and one rough rock to put in their pouch, explaining that:
 - The smooth rocks represent the aspects of grief that they feel they are better able to cope with in a safe and healthy way
 - The rough rock reminds us that there may always be difficult moments in grief, and that is okay

⚠ Inform youth that they will be able to take their rock pouch home with them if they would like to.
4. Invite a group member to start the closing ceremony by:
 - Sharing their rock selections with the group, explaining what it was that drew them to each rock if they are comfortable doing so
 - Passing their pouch of rocks around the circle, giving their fellow group members a chance to say goodbye and share what they appreciated most about them
5. Continue this process until everyone has a chance to pass their pouch and share their appreciation for one another.



Discussion

Reflect

What was most surprising for you about this activity?

What was it like for you to hear the things that your fellow group members appreciate about you?

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during this activity?

Connect

Can you think of another time when you felt this way?

Apply

In what ways might you use your rocks as you continue along your grief journey? (ex. reminder of waves of grief, as a source of connection to the group, give to another grieving person to validate their experiences, etc.)

AGES 13+

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

FEEL GOOD MESSAGES

**Key Learning**

Empower youth to cope with grief in a safe way beyond support sessions.

What You Need

- Scissors
- Glue
- Coloured cardstock
- Decorating materials
- 'Feel Good Messages' handout

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was adapted with permission from Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children (p. 133). © 2006 by author Liana Lowenstein. Visit her website at www.lianalowenstein.com.

Preparation Activities

1. Photocopy the *Feel Good Messages* handout on page p. 102 (one copy for each youth).

How to Play

1. Validate the difficult feelings that can come up when a support program comes to a close, emphasizing that they have the tools to safely cope with challenging and uncomfortable emotions beyond the program.
2. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that will help to empower us to cope with sad and difficult emotions using *Feel Good Messages*.
3. Provide each youth with a piece of coloured cardstock and a copy of the handout from p. 102.
4. Invite youth to:
 - Read the *Feel Good Messages* on the handout provided
 - Cut out the ones you find helpful and glue them onto coloured cardstock
 - Create your own *Feel Good Messages* if you'd like
 - Decorate your poster
5. Remind youth that they can read the poster to themselves whenever they need help and comfort.
6. Invite youth to share their poster with the group if they feel comfortable doing so.

**Discussion****Reflect**

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during this activity?

What *Feel Good Message(s)* do you connect with most?

Are there any *Feel Good Messages* that you had a hard time connecting with?

Connect

What are some things that prevent us from practising self-compassion?

Apply

Where do you think you might keep your poster?

In what ways might this activity be helpful to you in the future?

**Variations**

1. Invite **older youth** to create an affirmation box (see p. 27).

FEEL GOOD MESSAGES CONTINUED



There are things I can do to help myself feel better

I made it through tough times before and
I can make it through tough times now

Nothing I said or did caused my special person's death

I can feel good about my proud moments

I am strong and healthy

My special person has died but my
memories of him or her will last forever

I am loved

I can be happy for all that I have

Even though my special person died,
I can still be happy and enjoy life



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AGES 13+

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

WHAT I VALUE MOST

**Key Learning**

Help youth to develop a sense of self.

What You Need

- Deck of 'Value Cards'
- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Pens
- Values handout

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity was provided by Sarah Waldman, MA, RP. Sarah is a Registered Psychotherapist with a Masters in Creative Arts Therapies. She is currently employed as an Education Specialist/Therapist with the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Ontario.

Preparation Activities

1. Create a deck of 'Value Cards:'
 - Approximately 30 – 40 cards, each featuring an image:
 - Cut from magazines and pasted onto cardstock; or
 - Printed from the computer onto heavy weight paper
 - Cards should be large enough to clearly see the images (~ 5" x 8").
 - The images should be diverse both in sense of the themes the images represent (ex. relationships, pets, art, education, work, etc.) and people (ex. race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc.).
 - Many of the cards should be without people (ex. pictures of rocks, landscapes, seasons, pets, books, etc.).
 - Ensure you have a variety of cards to choose from (including blank cards). Curate the cards based on the individual and/or group.
 - Be sensitive to ensure the diversity of the individual/group is represented in the images in a respectful manner.
 - If possible, laminate the cards for future uses.

How to Play

1. Facilitate a discussion about values (brainstorm alongside the group and record key points on the flip chart):
 - What are values? Why do you think they are important?
 - Values are what is important to us in life. They are the standards that help guide our behaviour and the decisions that we make.
 - We can think of values as a road map; it can be very difficult to know where we are going if we do not know what our values are and what is important to us.
 - Do you feel you have a good sense of what you value most in life?
 - How does grief and loss impact our sense of what we value most?
2. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that will help us to identify our values and consider the ways in which grief has impacted our own personal values. As this group is coming to an end, we thought it would be helpful to spend some time considering what our goals are both in the next few months and longer term.
3. Spread the cards out throughout the room and distribute the handout.
4. Let participants know that we will be using these images to help create a list of what they value most in life.
5. Invite youth to walk around the room looking at the cards.
 - Which cards represent something that is really important to you?
 - Which ones seem to resonate most with you?
 - What feelings come up for you when you look at the cards?
 - Is there a card that isn't there that you wish was?

WHAT I VALUE MOST CONTINUED 2/3



How to Play *continued*

6. Invite youth to pick three cards that represent them the most. If they do not see a card that resonates with them, or if someone else picked up a card they wanted, youth can quickly draw or write down what they were looking for on one of the blank cards.
7. Invite youth to share one or more of the cards they picked.
 - What values do they represent? What drew you to the image?
8. Ask youth to look at their cards and think about what drew them to the three images. Invite youth to come up with three words to represent their values. They may write their three words on the handout.

Discussion

Reflect

In what ways has grief impacted your values?

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during this activity?

What was most surprising for you about this activity?

Connect

Are there values that are easier or harder to make a priority? In what ways?

Is there a gap between where you are now and where you want to get to?

How do your identified values connect with your strengths?

Apply

In what ways might this activity be helpful to you in the future?

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AGES 13+

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

WHAT I VALUE MOST *CONTINUED 3/3*



WHAT I VALUE MOST

- Love
- Wealth
- Family
- Morals
- Success
- Knowledge
- Power
- Friends
- Free Time
- Adventure
- Variety
- Calmness
- Freedom
- Fun
- Recognition
- Nature
- Popularity
- Responsibility
- Honesty
- Humour
- Loyalty
- Reason
- Independence
- Achievement
- Beauty
- Spirituality
- Respect
- Peace
- Stability
- Wisdom
- Fairness
- Creativity
- Relaxation
- Safety
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The 3 things I value most are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



WEAVING HEARTS



Key Learning

Explore the impact of the group experience and empower youth as they continue along their grief journey.

What You Need

- Ball of multi-coloured yarn
- Scissors

No. of Youth

- 4 or more

This activity was provided by Sara Notenboom, MA, RP. Sara is an Individual, Couple and Family Counsellor. She has a passion for empowering people to live their best life by getting them in touch with what is blocking them - fears, hurts unhelpful thought patterns, emotional wounds and so forth. She has worked with countless individuals and has experience addressing various issues, including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and trauma. Sara regards her work as her calling and is committed to serving those she works with in a manner that facilitates a sense of safety so she can maximize her clients' capacity for personal growth and change.

How to Play

1. Explain that we will be engaging in an activity that honours our collective courage and compassionate care.
2. Invite the group to sit or stand in a circle formation.
3. Have a facilitator demonstrate how to throw the yarn:
 - Grasp the yarn in one hand, holding the tail tightly in the other
 - Before you throw the ball of yarn, share one thing that you have gained from participating in the group
 - Call out the name of the person you wish to toss the yarn to
 - Gently throw the ball of yarn (*underhand is preferable in small spaces*) to the person while holding on to the tail
4. Continue this process until everyone in the group has had the chance to share and the ball of yarn has been tossed back to the facilitator who started off the activity.
5. Once finished, each person should be holding on to a length of yarn that connects them to their fellow group members. The finished product should resemble a colourful web!
6. Explain that although the group is coming to an end, the experiences and emotions that we shared together will continue to be a source of connection.
7. Ask youth to lay the web on the floor.
8. Invite youth to cut a length of the web to take with them as a symbol of this ongoing connection and a reminder to care for our grief.

⚠ What in the world would a group member do with a length of yarn you might ask. Some group members have tied it to their wallet, pencil case or key chain. One group member even cut a long length of yarn to make a braided bracelet!

AGES 13+

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

WEAVING HEARTS *CONTINUED*
 **Discussion**
Reflect

How does the web symbolize the group experience?

Compared to the first day of group, how is the energy in the room different today? How is it the same?

What thoughts and feelings came up for you as your fellow group members spoke of the impact that group has had on them?

Connect

What helped you to feel safe in group?

What helped you to feel connected to your fellow group members?

Apply

Who could you go to for support if you needed to talk? Cry? Sit in silence? Share memories? Laugh?

What would you like your friends/family members to know about grief?

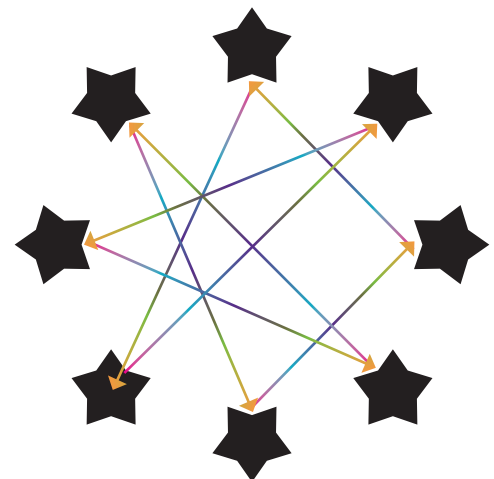
What are some strategies that might be helpful in building mutually supportive relationships with your friends/family members?

 **Variations**

1. Add a second ball of yarn to the mix. Youth might share:
 - One thing they are grateful for
 - One thing they hope to accomplish in the future
 - One thing they would tell other grieving youth
 - One thing they learned about grief
 - One thing they learned about themselves
 - One way in which they have grown from this experience



Grasp the ball of yarn in one hand, holding the tail tightly in the other. Keep hold of the tail as you throw the ball of yarn to a fellow group member.



APPENDIX A: RESOURCES FOR ADULT SUPPORTERS

PODCAST

Grief Out Loud - The Dougy Center's Podcast

www.dougy.org/grief-resources/podcasts/

VIDEOS

When students are facing a serious illness or the dying or death of a family member, school staff are often a key support to the child. **The Children and Youth Grief Network** has created a video series to inform school staff on how to best support grieving children and youth in the school and in the classroom. *Videos funded by Retired Teachers of Ontario and District 39.*

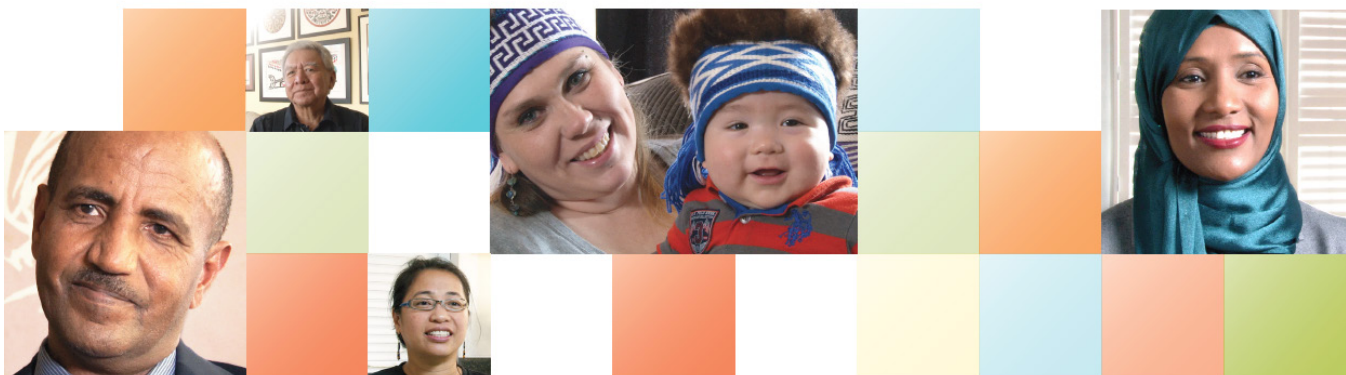
Check out the 4-part web video series featuring Andrea Warnick:

- **Module 1: How to Recognize Children's Grief**
- **Module 2: How to Support Grieving Children**
- **Module 3: What are the 4 C's? 4 Common Concerns**
- **Module 4: What to Say, What Not to Say**
- **Additional Resources**

www.youtube.com/channel/UCQvwAsW5s8NokNuMSByJOsA

LivingMyCulture.ca

Conversations on care, culture and spirituality when living with serious illness and grief.



CANADIAN
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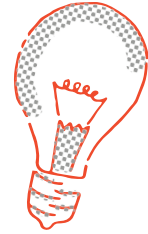
INFORMATION SHEETS

The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families - www.dougy.org

- Helping Children & Teens Cope with Fear After a Death
- Supporting Children and Teens After a Murder or Violent Death
- Supporting Children and Teens After a Suicide Death
- Supporting Grieving Siblings
- Supporting Students Who Have a Family Member With an Advanced Serious Illness
- Supporting the Grieving Teen After the Loss of a Close Friend
- Tips for Supporting Grieving Teens

Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre - www.drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca

- Attending Funerals, Memorials and Other Rituals
- Supporting Grieving Kids and Teenagers
- Supporting Grieving Kids and Teenagers at the Holidays
- Supporting Grieving Kids and Teenagers on Father's Day
- Supporting Grieving Kids and Teenagers on Mother's Day
- Supporting Grieving Students in School



Winston's Wish - www.winstonswish.org

- The Charter For Bereaved Children



KidsGrief.ca

“How do I tell the kids?”

Helping parents help kids

- Developed by families and grief experts
- A resource for healthcare providers, educators and others who support families

 CANADIAN
VirtualHospice

HELPFUL WEBSITES FOR SUPPORTERS

Art with Heart

www.artwithheart.org

Association for Death Education and Counseling

www.adec.org

Canadian Virtual Hospice

www.virtualhospice.ca

Children and Youth Grief Network

www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com

Coalition to Support Grieving Students

www.grievingstudents.org

HealGrief

www.healgrief.org

KidsGrief.ca

www.kidsgrief.ca

LivingMyCulture.ca

www.livingmyculture.ca

Mixed Emotions

www.mixed-emotions.com

MyGrief.ca

www.mygrief.ca

National Alliance for Grieving Children

www.childrengrieve.org

Rainbows Canada

www.rainbows.ca

The Moyer Foundation

www.moyerfoundation.org

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org

CYGN MEMBER LINKS

Andrea Warnick Consulting

www.andreawarnick.com

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Halton/Peel

www.bereavedfamilies.ca

Bethell Hospice

www.bethellhospice.org

C. Elizabeth Dougherty Consulting

www.cedoughertyconsulting.org

Children and Youth Grief Network

www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com

Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre

www.drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca

Family Education Centre

www.familyedcentre.org

Heart House Hospice

www.hearthousehospice.com

The Carpenter Hospice

www.thecarpenterhospice.com

The Dorothy Ley Hospice

www.dlhospice.org

The Lighthouse for Grieving Children

www.grievingchildrenlighthouse.org

CONTRIBUTOR LINKS

www.bereavedfamilies.ca

www.camh.ca

www.centerformsc.org/msc-teens-adults

www.daracounselling.ca

www.deanaslater.ca

www.dougy.org

www.drjaychildrensgriefcentre.ca

www.grievingchildren.com

www.hearthousehospice.com/huug

<http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/raising-teens/>

www.karenbluth.com

www.laurenmuscarella.com

www.lianalowenstein.com

www.mindfulselfcompassionforteens.com

www.newhopecenter.net

www.righttoplay.com

www.stjosephshospice.ca

www.traumatoart.org

www.urhomecare.org



CURRICULA & ACTIVITY GUIDES

A Handbook for Volunteers: Supporting Children Grieving the Dying and Death of a Loved One by The Children and Youth Grief Network * To request a copy email: info@childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com *

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

Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children by Liana Lowenstein

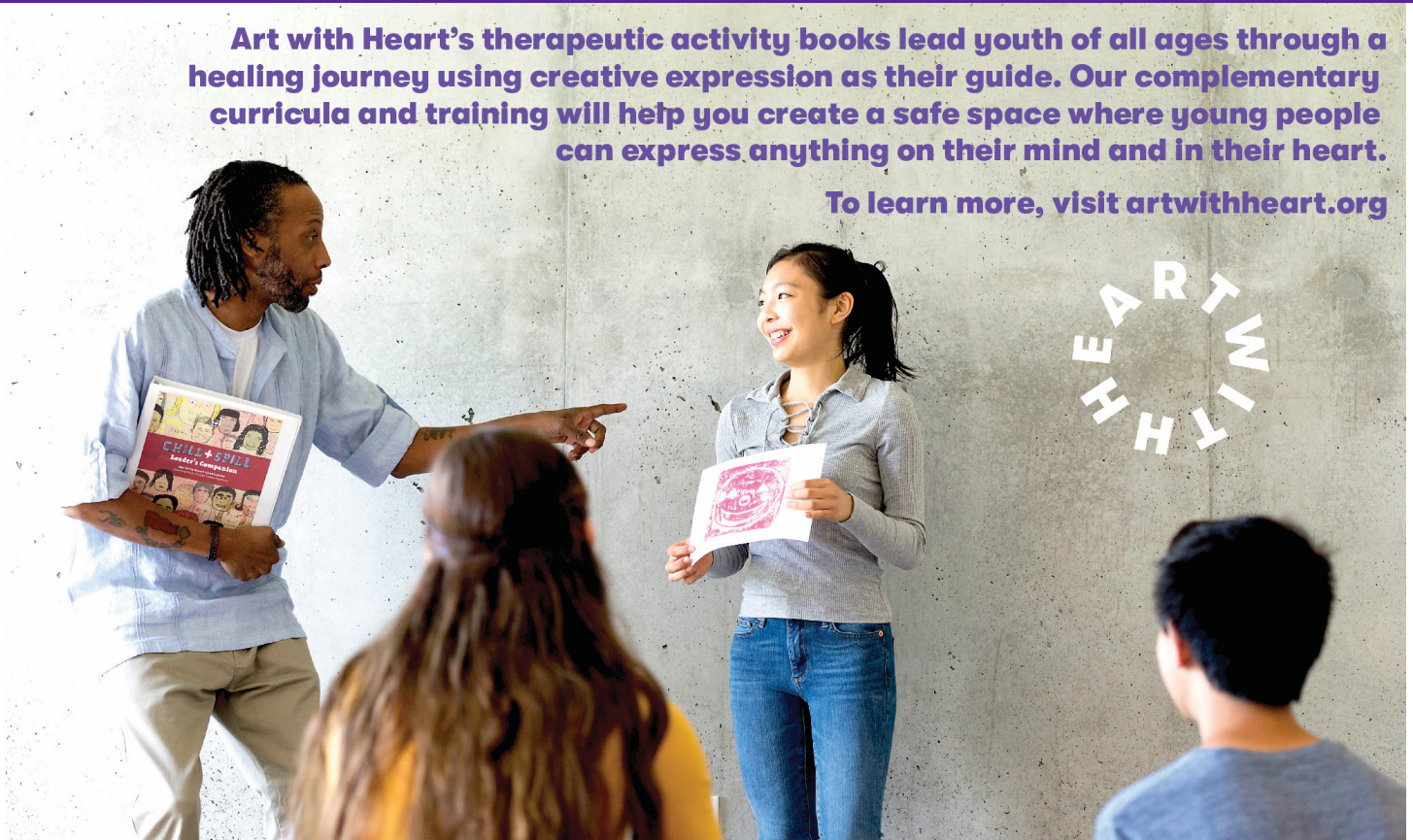
Memories Matter: Activities for Grieving Children & Teens by The Dougy Center

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

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES FOR GRIEVING YOUTH

Art with Heart's therapeutic activity books lead youth of all ages through a healing journey using creative expression as their guide. Our complementary curricula and training will help you create a safe space where young people can express anything on their mind and in their heart.

To learn more, visit artwithheart.org



JOURNALS & ACTIVITY BOOKS

Chill & Spill: A Place to Put It Down and Work It Out by Steffanie Lorig and Jeanean Jacobs (Art with Heart)

Deconstruction/Reconstruction: A Grief Journal for Teens by The Dougy Center

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

Ink About It by Annie McCall, Kate Gardener & Steffanie Lorig (Art with Heart)

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

BOOKS FOR GRIEVING YOUTH

Alice's Law: Honouring Lost Loved Ones and Finding Deeper Meaning by Lauren Muscarella

Grieving for the Sibling You Lost: A Teen's Guide to Coping with Grief & Finding Meaning After Loss by Erica Goldblatt Hyatt

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

Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love by Earl Grollman

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

We Get It: Voices of Grieving College Students and Young Adults by Heather L. Servarty-Seib and David C. Fajgenbaum

Weird is Normal When Teenagers Grieve by Jenny Lee Wheeler

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

MINDFULNESS & SELF-COMPASSION

A Still Quiet Place for Teens: A Mindfulness Workbook to Ease Stress & Difficult Emotions by Amy Saltzman

Self-Compassion for Teens: 129 Activities & Practices to Cultivate Kindness by Lee-Anne Gray

The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time by Dzung X. Vo

The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are by Karen Bluth

HELPFUL WEBSITES FOR YOUTH

Cancer Really Sucks

www.cancerrealsucks.org

HealGrief

www.healgrief.org

Help 2 Make Sense

www.help2makesense.org

SLAP'D: Surviving Life After a Parent Dies

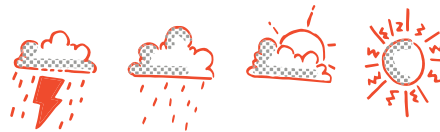
www.slapd.com

Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens & Young Adults

www.mindfulselfcompassionforteens.com

Download this cool pullout by Winston's Wish:

http://help2makesense.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/teenagers_pullout.pdf



"I would like to acknowledge and thank Dana Bingley for the passion, time and effort she has put in to compiling this, and the previous, handbook. Her expertise, experience and knowledge of resources and people working in this field has served to develop a brilliant resource that will surely help propel the vision of the Children and Youth Grief Network (and all of us working with grieving children and families) that every child and youth has honest, well informed support when someone they care about is dying or has died. Thank you Dana for your ideas, orchestration and perseverance. You Rock!"

- Jodi Pereira
Director of Community Programs
Heart House Hospice

NOTABLE AMENDMENTS

* Elizabeth Dougherty's biographical information has been revised in the digital version only.



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