


**Creative Interventions for Grieving
Children, Youth, and Families**



Liana Lowenstein, MSW, RSW, CPT-S

lianalowenstein@gmail.com
www.lianalowenstein.com
(416) 575-7836


1

Liana Lowenstein is a Registered Social Worker, Certified Play Therapist-Supervisor, and Certified TF-CBT Therapist who has been working with children and families in Toronto since 1988. She presents trainings across North America and abroad. Recent speaking engagements include China, South Africa, England, and Australia. Liana's 14 psychotherapy books are known internationally for their innovative techniques. She is winner of the Monica Herbert award for outstanding contribution to play therapy in Canada.

2

Copyright © 2025 by Liana Lowenstein, MSW, RSW, CPT-S. This presentation or contents from this presentation may not be sold, reprinted or redistributed without prior written permission from the author. Direct questions about permissions to:

lianalowenstein@gmail.com



3

Engagement Activity
<p>Intervention: Scavenger Hunt</p> <p>Source: <i>Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Second Edition</i>, Lowenstein, 2024</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Increase open communication about grief and loss (2) Increase group cohesion

4

<p>Scavenger Hunt: Children's Group</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1 large sheet of paper with each group member's hand traced on it 2. Picture of a grieving child 3. 3 feelings children may have when someone in their life dies 4. 2 people with the same shoe size 5. Another word for dead. 6. Words of advice to help children who feel the death was their fault 7. Something that can help grieving children
--

5

Grief
<p><i>Grief</i> is a natural, emotional response to loss. It involves all aspects of the human experience, including social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, physical, and spiritual dimensions.</p>

6

Anticipatory Grief in Children

When a family member is seriously ill, and the child begins to experience grief reactions before the actual death happens. It involves feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear, and confusion as the child processes the potential or expected death of their loved one.

7

7

Mourning

Mourning is taking the internal experience of grief and expressing it. It is the cultural expression of grief, as seen in traditional or creative rituals.

8

8

Respect Diversity

Families will have specific beliefs about death and will practice certain mourning rituals based on their religion, spiritual, and cultural beliefs. Honor these beliefs and be accepting of diversity. Grief supporters must be mindful and respectful of the cultural narratives, practices, and responses around death, caring, and health. This includes holding in mind how our own biases, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes can color these, judge these, and over-identify with them.

-Treisman, 2021

9

9

Disenfranchised Grief

Disenfranchised grief is when a person is denied their right to feel loss. It refers to grief that is not openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or publicly mourned, often leading to feelings of isolation and confusion. This can lead to individuals experiencing intensified and prolonged periods of grief due to a lack of resolution for their emotions.

10

10

Suffocated Grief

Suffocated Grief describes the inability to openly express grief due to societal, cultural, or personal constraints, leading to internalized emotions and potential physical, emotional, or psychological symptoms. This suppression often affects bereaved children, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, whose grief is frequently ignored or penalized. Normal grief reactions, such as distraction or anger, may be misinterpreted as disruptive behavior, resulting in punishment rather than support. This cycle exacerbates their suffering, marginalizing them further.

-Bordere, 2016

11

11

Relaxation

Activity: Cookie Breathing Game

Source: Creative CBT Interventions for Children with Anxiety, Lowenstein, 2016

Goals:

- 1) Understand the concept of diaphragmatic breathing
- 2) Implement diaphragmatic breathing when feeling stressed or upset

12

12

Cookie Breathing Game

Step 1: Put your hand on your tummy, where your belly button is. Slowly breathe in and out. When you breathe in, your hand should move up. When you breathe out, your hand should move down. Breathe in and out like this 5 times.

Step 2: Continue this special way of breathing, but now when you breathe in, do it through your nose for 4 seconds, and when you breathe out, do it through your mouth for 4 seconds.

To help you do this, pretend that there is a yummy delicious batch of chocolate chip cookies that just came out of the oven. As you breathe in, smell those yummy cookies! But they're hot, so you have to blow on them to cool them down. As you breathe out, blow on the cookies to cool them down.

13

Cookie Breathing Game

Now let's play the Cookie Breathing game to help you practice. To play, roll the dice. If you roll an even number, do Cookie Breathing two times. If you roll an odd number, pick a piece of the puzzle from the bag. Play until you have collected all 4 pieces of the puzzle. Then put the puzzle together.

14

Dual Process of Grief

Children cope with the death by alternating between confronting and avoiding their grief. They deal with the death directly through loss-oriented activities, like crying or talking about the deceased, and also engage in restoration-oriented activities, which involve adjusting to life without the person who died, like returning to school or playing with friends. This model acknowledges that children's grieving is not a linear process but rather a fluctuating one, with attention shifting between the emotional and practical implications of their loss.

-Stroebe & Schut, 1999

15

15

Childhood Grief

Children's expression of grief, such as sadness and anger are exhibited in a sporadic manner, where normative activities, such as play, are interrupted by instances of intensely expressed grief.

-Albuquerque & Santos, 2021

16

16

Re-Grief

As children get older and their cognitive and emotional understanding deepens, they process grief in a new way that is in line with their current level of development and understanding. This highlights the ongoing nature of grieving in children, acknowledging that they revisit and express emotions differently as they mature

Fernandez et al., 2011

17

17

Factors That Affect The Grieving Process

Circumstances of the death:

- Cause of the death (e.g., Expected, sudden, violent, stigmatized (nature of the death does not make the situation better/worse, just different)
- Involvement in the death (e.g., witnessed, harmed, perceived life-threat)
- Fear that this could happen again or to them
- How the child was informed of the death
- Reaction of other family members to the death

18

18

Factors That Affect The Grieving Process
<p>Relationship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the child felt about the person who died (the child will grieve even if the relationship was not positive) • Role the person fulfilled for the child

19

Factors That Affect The Grieving Process
<p>Personality and background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage of development • Concept of death • Personality traits • Mental health struggles • Prior losses and impact on the child • Cultural or faith considerations • Protective / risk factors

20

Factors That Affect The Grieving Process
<p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the death on the family • Nurturing, consistent caregiving • Stability of family life after the death • Family's ability to openly express feelings and memories • How feelings are expressed by other family members • Community support • Close peer relationships • Secondary losses

21

Grief Reactions

- **Emotional:** Shock, denial, confusion, sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, loneliness
- **Physical:** Stomachaches, headaches, sleep disturbance, fatigue, suppressed immune system
- **Cognitive:** Disbelief, worries such as how did this happen? who will take care of me now? Will someone else die? Will other bad things happen?
- **Behavioral:** Crying, regression, withdrawal, aggression, assuming mannerisms of the deceased
- **Spiritual:** Spiritual questions, searching for meaning, faith community isolation, hostility toward God, spiritual experiences, continuing bonds

22

22

Grief Informed Practice

Grief-informed approaches recognize the inevitability of loss, and the individuality of each loss relative to the relationship and circumstances surrounding it. By acknowledging that grief is both individual and interwoven into a sociocultural context, a grief-informed response states: Grief is complex. You are having a normal response to a complex situation.

Donna L. Schuurman & Monique B. Mitchell, Dougy Center

23

23

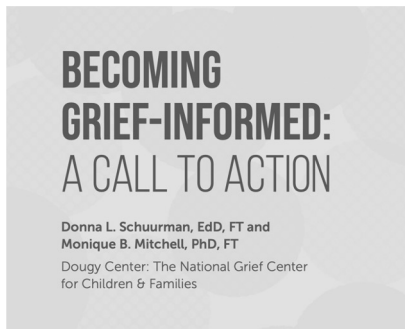
10 CORE PRINCIPLES & TENETS OF GRIEF-INFORMED PRACTICE

PRINCIPLES	TENETS
Natural	Loss is a normal, inevitable, and universal human experience. People have an innate capacity to adapt to loss and function healthily.
Heterological & Complex	Grief is an adaptive, nonpathological response to loss. Grief is complex and complicated because people and relationships are complex and complicated.
Contextual	Grief is not solely an individual experience; grief is interwoven in a sociocultural context, influenced by family, community, and other social systems. Acknowledging and addressing the sociocultural and historical factors that impact grief can reduce disparities and promote equity and inclusion.
Disruptive	Grief challenges our identity, relationships, beliefs and assumptions about the world and our role in it.
Relational Connection & Reciprocal Support	Healthy adaptation to loss is fostered by supportive relationships.
Personal Empowerment & Agency	Healthy adaptation to loss is fostered by personal empowerment and agency.
Safety	Healthy adaptation to loss is fostered by psychological, physical, and emotional safety.
Person-Centered	The duration, intensity, and experience of grief are unique for every individual.
Dynamic	The dynamic nature of grief cannot be captured by stage, phase, or other prescriptive models. There are no universally acceptable or "correct" ways to grieve.
Non-Finite	Loss is interwoven into our identity; therefore, the act of grieving is not a finite experience. Grief is ongoing.

24

24

Download the position paper:



25

Prolonged Grief

Though not typical, some children develop grief responses that are more severe and impairing. These responses involve an extended period of debilitating longing for and/or preoccupation with the person who died, with thoughts or memories of the person who died, or with the circumstances of the death.

- Van Dijk et al., 2023

26

26

Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)

Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) in children involves an extended period of intense longing for the deceased or with the circumstances around the death. These children have difficulty adjusting to the loss, which leads to impaired functioning in various areas of their life.

In 2022, PGD was included in the two main classification systems for mental disorders: The DSM-5-TR and the ICD-11.

27

27

PGD: Factors to Consider for Children

- New field of study, especially among children
- Grief resurfaces months/years after the death as children's cognitive capacity shifts and they reach different developmental milestones
- The grieving process in children is non-linear
- It's challenging to assess PGD in youth

28

28

Childhood Grief

Rather than focusing on grief as a diagnosis, pay attention to signs that the child may be struggling to cope with the death, such as significant changes in behavior, ongoing emotional distress, sleep disturbance, regression in developmental milestones, and refusal to accept the death. If this persists over an extended period and significantly impacts the child's well-being and daily functioning, then an appropriate support plan should be put in place. Keep in mind that ongoing struggles can be indicative of many factors, including other losses, secondary losses, mental health issues, familial challenges such as lack of emotional and/or physical safety, neglect or abuse.

29

29

Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG)

Children *perceive* the death as terrifying, whether the death was sudden and unexpected or due to natural causes, and develop death-related trauma responses. Trauma responses interfere with the child's grieving process because they are stuck on the traumatic or horrifying aspects of the death and are unable to endure the thoughts, feelings, and memories necessary for mourning.

30

30

Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG)

Children perceive the death as terrifying:

- Sudden
- Unexpected
- Accidental
- Violent
- Gory (e.g., Lucy)
- Unbearably agonizing*

31

31

Features of Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG)

- *Reexperiencing*: Frightening or distressing thoughts and images, memories, or dreams of the person, the way the person died, or other situations that seem unrelated to the death.
- *Avoidance or numbing*: Avoids thinking or talking about the person who died, even positive memories, because they may lead to scary images of the way that person died.
- *Hyperarousal*: Irritability, anger outbursts, trouble sleeping, decreased concentration, increased vigilance and jumpiness, and fears about safety for themselves or others.
- *Emotional deregulation*: Difficulty modulating feelings and/or behaviors, especially when reminded of the death.

32

32

Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG)

- Death of a significant person in circumstances perceived as traumatic
- Interaction and presence of significant PTSD reactions
- Distress responses are triggered by trauma/loss reminders, and lead to avoidance or lack of feelings
- Avoid positive memories of the deceased because they trigger reminders of the death
- Difficulty or avoidance of positive memories of the deceased because they are linked to horrible images and upsetting thoughts and feelings
- Impingement on ability to engage in tasks associated with bereavement

33

33

Children's Concept of Death

- Infants-age 2: No understanding of the concept of death, but react to upset and changes in their environment/routine brought about by the absence of a significant caregiver. From 8 months, develop a sense of missing someone
- Age 2-5: View death as temporary or reversible
- Age 6-10: Begin to understand finality, may fear death as contagious
- Age 10-12: Understand universality, may view death as punishment for bad behavior, may worry will forget the person
- Age 13+: Can truly conceptualize death and understand it is inevitable and irreversible

34

34

Magical Thinking

Magical thinking refers to a cognitive process where a child believes that their thoughts, actions, or wishes can influence or have caused the death. This type of thinking is common in children because they are still developing an understanding of cause and effect, as well as the concept of death. It is a part of their normal psychological development and a way for them to make sense of events that are beyond their control or understanding.

35

35

Risk Factors

- Conflictual relationship with deceased prior to death
- Pre-existing psychological difficulties
- Violent cause of death, perception of life threat at time of death, witnessed physical distress in dying person
- Limited knowledge about the death
- Exclusion from grieving rituals, inhibited to openly grieve
- Guilt and shame related to the death
- Psychologically vulnerable parent, poor family coping
- Lack of family and community support
- Secondary losses and adversities

Cohen et al., 2017; Salloum 2015 ³⁶

36

Areas to Assess
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver's history and prior exposure to trauma and loss • Child's history and prior exposure to trauma and loss • Child and family functioning before and after the death • Child's strengths, protective qualities, skills, and interests • Child's relationships with family and peers • Child's academic, emotional, behavioral functioning • Child's relationship with the person who died • Circumstances of the death • Caregiver's strengths, vulnerabilities in caring for the child • Caregiver's beliefs about what the child should be told about the death and how the death was communicated to the child • Current family dynamics, responses to the death, and daily functioning and routine

37

37

Areas to Assess
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific religious, cultural, spiritual, and family beliefs and traditions regarding death and mourning • Child's involvement in mourning rituals and the goodbye process • Child's grief reactions, indicators of trauma, and coping styles • Family's grief reactions and ability to communicate openly about the death • Continuity versus disruption of the child's daily routines, changes in who provides direct care for the child • Secondary losses (e.g., moving, changing schools) • Legal, criminal, financial issues since the death • Community supports • Caregiver's willingness to fully participate in sessions • Other major stressors the child or family is experiencing

38

38

Parent Intake Session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview is best • Rapport-building is the priority • Balance task with process • Ask the right questions

39

39

Parent Questionnaire: BereavementSource: Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, 2nd Edition, Lowenstein, 2024

- Describe significant stresses, traumas, losses child experienced.
- What was child's relationship like with the person who died?
- What was the cause of death (How person died, anticipated or sudden, how was child prepared for the death, did child witness the death, participate in a goodbye process)?
- What was the child told about the death, and how did child react?
- What are your beliefs/practices regarding death, afterlife, mourning?
- Did child view the body, attend funeral/burial? (Describe child's involvement in funeral, child's reactions):
- Is it easy or hard for you and your child to talk about the death? What questions has the child asked about the death and how have you responded? Does the child avoid talking about the deceased?

40

Parent Questionnaire: Bereavement

- Describe child's emotional expression of grief (i.e., Shows little emotion, cries a lot, angry outbursts)
 - Describe child's signs of distress (use symptom checklist*)
 - Are there any people, places, or situations that remind the child of the death and frighten the child?
 - Who are supports to your child/family, how is support expressed?
 - How does child get along with peers? Does child discuss the death with friends, teacher?
 - Have you observed the child showing danger scenes or death scenes in his/her play?
 - What significant changes has child faced since the death (i.e., moved, new school, separation from family members)?
 - On a scale of 1-10 (1 = not coping well and 10 = coping well), how do you think you (parent) are coping with the death?
- (Also collect detailed history of parent's background)

41

Symptom Checklist: CTG

- ☐ Nightmares, trouble falling or staying asleep
- ☐ Plays out or draws about how the person suffered or died
- ☐ Physical complaints (Stomachaches, headaches)
- ☐ Difficulty at school
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating, even when doing fun things
- ☐ Jumpy, easily startled
- ☐ Avoid talking about person who died, going places or engaging in activities that are reminders of the person
- ☐ More withdrawn, less joyful, not doing activities enjoyed prior to the death
- ☐ Excessive worry about something else bad happening
- ☐ Clingy to caregiver, anxious when apart from caregiver
- ☐ Talks about being responsible for the death
- ☐ More angry and irritable

42

Parent Questionnaire: Long-Term Illness

1. Child's first awareness of loved ones illness and reaction
2. Parent-child ongoing communication about the illness
3. Child's observation of parent's reaction to the illness
4. Child's interactions with the person who is ill
5. Diagnosis, treatment, medications, observable side-effects
6. Child witnessing ill person in pain or physical distress
7. Child's inclusion in hospital/hospice care
8. Explanation to the child regarding terminal/end of life stage
9. What child recalls from the last days and emotional response
10. Goodbye process, last conscious interaction
11. How child learned about the death and reactions
12. Child's involvement in funeral/memorial service, burial

43

Teacher Questionnaire

1. How is the child doing academically? (Below / Above average?)
2. How does the child present emotionally (Happy? Sad? Fearful? Numb?)
3. How does the child present behaviorally? (Outgoing? Withdrawn? Aggressive? Well-behaved?)
4. How does the child get along with peers?
5. Describe any concerns you have about the child.
6. Describe any concerns you have about the parent(s).
7. Please add any other information you think would be helpful in my assessment of this child.

44

Interventions with Caregivers

- Process caregiver's own grief and how this relates to their feelings/reactions to child
- Augment parenting skills
- Encourage caregiver to maintain daily routines
- Provide psychoeducation: Impact of loss at different ages, reactions to loss, children's needs
- Teach how to have appropriate dialogue with child about the death
- Teach how to model appropriate expression of feelings

45

Books that Have Creative Engagement Activities

More Creative Interventions for Troubled Children and Youth By Lowenstein

Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families: Practitioners Share Their Favorite Techniques, Edited By Lowenstein (Volumes One through Four)

Structured Play-Based Interventions for Engaging Children in Therapy By Cavett

Multicultural Counseling Workbook: Exercises, Worksheets, and games to Build Rapport with Diverse Clients by Korn

46

46

Rapport-Building

Activity: How About You

Source: Creative CBT Interventions for Children with Anxiety, Lowenstein, 2016

Goals:

- 1) Begin to establish the therapeutic relationship
- 2) Decrease child's anxiety interacting with the therapist

47

47

Assessment Interventions

Intervention: The Person's Death: The Dice Game

Source: Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Second Edition, Lowenstein

Goals:

- (1) Assess child's understanding of the death
- (2) Assess child's reactions to the death

48

48

Assessment Activities
<p>Activity: Adapted from: Google It</p> <p>Source: Brenda Sousa, in: <i>Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children Adolescents, and Families Volume Three</i> (Edited by Lowenstein, 2010)</p> <p>Goals:</p> <p>(1) Establish a positive and open therapeutic environment</p> <p>(2) Gather information about the client</p>

49

<p>Google It</p> <p>This activity will help me get to know you better so I can help you. I'm going to ask you some questions, and they way to answer is to search on Google Images. You can type in as many words as needed to find what you're looking for.</p>

50

<p>Google It</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Google something that you enjoy doing 2. Google something that helps you feel safe 3. Google something that makes you feel angry 4. Google something that makes you feel sad 5. Google something that shows how the person died 6. Google a worry you have had since the person died 7. Google a weather scene that reminds you of your family 8. Google something that shows what has helped you since the death 9. Google something that represents a proud moment 10. Ask me a Google It question to get to know me better

51

Assessment Interventions

Intervention: How I Think, Feel, and Behave

Source: Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Second Edition, Lowenstein

Goals:

- (1) Assess child's understanding of the death
- (2) Assess child's reactions to the death

52

52

Family Assessment

- Power and Control: Who leads, makes decisions
- Communication style (open and direct, closed, respectful)
- Were the parents able to demonstrate appropriate affection and praise and focus on the needs of each child
- Did the parents set appropriate limits
- Did any dysfunctional patterns emerge i.e. parentification, triangulation, disengagement, scapegoating, overfunctioning
- What significant content emerged (what was said, what was the actual product created by the family)

Gil, 1994; Lowenstein, 2010

53

53

Family Assessment Activities

- Family Gift: Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein
- Family Puppet Interview: Play in Family Therapy, Gil
- Themed Family Portraits: By Thomas in Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families Vol Three Edited by Lowenstein
- Boat Storm Lighthouse: By Post-Sprunk in Creative Family Therapy Techniques, Edited by Lowenstein
- Family Strengths and Needs Game: By Slobodnick in Creative Family Therapy Techniques Edited by Lowenstein
- Our Family Life Scavenger Hunt: By Cavett in Creative Family Therapy Techniques, Edited by Lowenstein

54

54

Guidelines for the Grief Support Team

- Model open communication about death and help the family talk openly about the death
- Recognize that children will grieve differently as they mature developmentally, so provide ongoing support as needed
- Help the child grieve in tolerable doses
- Traumatic grief: Address and partially resolve trauma symptoms prior to grief issues*

55

55

Tiered Model of Bereavement Services

Figure Two: Levels of bereavement support and service from general (Level 1) to professional mental health services (Level 4)

Level	Services / Support
Level 1 – Information and Guidance	Accurate and honest age appropriate information Easily accessible via websites, leaflets, bereavement helplines Supportive family and community based responses
Level 2 – Organised Bereavement Support Services	Meeting others with similar experiences Help develop coping strategies Preferably community based activity Aim to decrease isolation, increase understanding Support services may explicitly involve parents/ family members to promote coping, and to provide opportunity for positive experience Often provided through voluntary sector
Level 3 – Professional Counselling	Appropriate child centred counselling Tailored for children with specific risk factors and/or who are experiencing difficulties relating to grief May be individual or group based approaches.
Level 4 - Psychotherapy and mental health service	Specialist service with core psychotherapeutic/ intervention protocol aiming to ameliorate complicated grief May include services which focus on symptoms of trauma May involve therapeutic work with family

56

56

Tiered Model of Bereavement Services

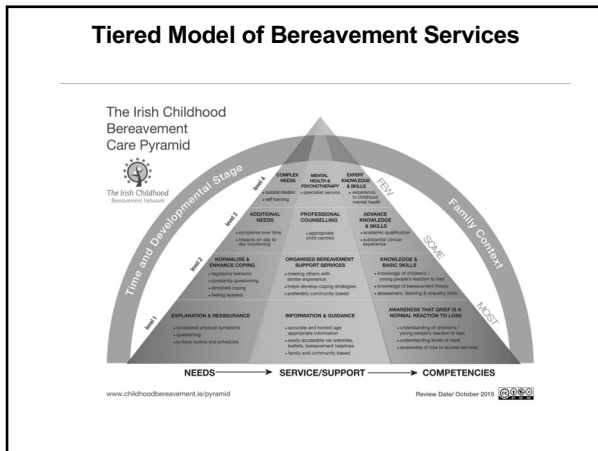
Figure Three: Levels of competences for those supporting and working with bereaved children from awareness (Level 1) up to expert knowledge and skill (Level 4)

Level	COMPETENCIES
Level 1	Awareness that grief is a normal response to loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of children's / young people's reaction to loss • Understanding levels of need • Awareness of how to access services
Level 2	Knowledge and basic skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of children / young people's response to loss • Knowledge of bereavement theory • Assessment, listening and empathy skills
Level 3	Advanced knowledge and skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic qualification • Substantial clinical experience
Level 4	Expert knowledge and skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in childhood mental health

57

57

19



58

Tiered Model of Bereavement Services: Level 1

ALL bereaved children need:

- Support from family, extended family, friends
- Involvement and inclusion—both before and after a death, with preparation and reassurance
- Provide key information to primary caregivers so they can support the child with empathy and understanding
- Provide child with age-appropriate information in clear and concrete/concise language
- Listen to, validate, normalize their thoughts, feelings
- Fears and anxieties addressed
- Explain that it's okay not to be sad all the time, children dip in and out of sadness
- Routines and predictability

59

59

Tiered Model of Bereavement Services: Level 2

- Need to feel less isolated and to meet others in similar situations
- Develop coping strategies and acknowledge feelings
- Build new explanations as they develop emotionally, cognitively & socially over time; revisiting what the death means
- Have their thoughts, feelings and opinions listened to and acknowledged in a more formal setting and outside of the family
- Develop a story of their changing life

60

60

Tiered Model of Bereavement Services: Level 3

- Address grief reactions that are interfering with daily engagement, marked changed behavior /personality (anxiety, withdrawal, isolation, aggression, anger)
- Help with deaths which may be surrounded by secrecy or stigma
- Cope with conflicting emotions, guilt, confusion, blame, relief

61

61

Tiered Model of Bereavement Services: Level 4

- Help with grief reactions and responses that are presenting as acute and require an immediate professional intervention (self harm, suicidal ideation, depression)
- Help with pre-existing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression
- Help with persistent distress and preoccupation with circumstances of the death

62

62

Tasks of Mourning

- Accept the reality and permanence of the death
- Build coping skills
- Experience and cope with the painful emotions of the death
- Adjust to life changes that result from the death
- Resolve any ambivalent feelings toward the deceased and preserve positive memories of the person who died
- Maintain an appropriate, continuous attachment to the person who died
- Develop new relationships and deepen existing relationships
- Cope with future loss reminders, grief bursts

-Worden, 1996; Cohen et al., 2017

63

63

TF-CBT: Grief Focused Components

- Psychoeducation focused on grief-related issues
- Communicating openly in the family about death
- Mourning the loss
- Addressing ambivalent feelings about the deceased
- Preserving positive memories
- Redefining the relationship, embracing new relationships
- Meaning making

Cohen, Mannarino, Deblinger, 2006

64

64

Goal: Verbalize Understanding of Death

Goals:

- Define death and related issues
- Understand the finality of death
- Talk more comfortably about death

Interventions:

- Learning About Death Card Game (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Life and Death (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- The Zebra's Death (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Weather Inside (Source: Unknown)

65

65

Why Tell the Children?

- Children are sensitive to change and will pick up that something is happening in their family that they don't know about. This makes them anxious
- If adults avoid open discussion with children, this sends the message that it is not okay to talk and children will shut down
- If children are lied to and later they somehow learn the truth, their trust in you can be difficult to regain. They might think, "If you lied to me about this, what else are you lying to me about?"
- When not given all information, children make up stories in their minds, often blaming themselves

66

66

Why Tell the Children?

- It is natural to spare children from the truth by making up another explanation. However, children often find out the truth by accident by overhearing a conversation, seeing it on the news, or hearing about it from another child. It is better for children to be given accurate information by a caring adult rather than from rumor
- When children are told the details of the illness/death in a planned and appropriate way, it provides an opportunity to process their feelings, answer their questions, and reassure them that they are safe and will be cared for

67

67

Tips for Explaining Death To Children

- Prepare yourself before addressing the issue with the child
- Begin by asking the child what they already know: "Dad is not here. What do you think happened to him?"
- Give an honest, brief explanation and use direct language: Dying or Dead, NOT gone, asleep, lost, or passed away
- Young children need brief, simple, and repeated explanations. Don't be afraid to repeat the same thing over and over

68

68

Tips for Explaining Death To Children

- Answer questions honestly. If you don't know the answer, say "That's a good question but I don't know. If I find out would you like me to tell you?"
- Listen to and validate the child's feelings, and invite more (e.g.) "You look upset. Tell me about your feelings"
- Invite dialogue about any worries the child might have: "It's normal to feel worried. What questions or worries do you have?"
- Reassure the child they will be cared for: "There will always be adults to take care of you, like Aunt Lisa"

69

69

Tips for Explaining Death To Children

- Don't be afraid to show emotion. If you grieve openly it gives permission for your child to grieve openly. Put words to your emotions, and offer reassurance: "I'm crying because I am sad that dad died. But even though I feel sad, I can still take care of you"
- It is normal for children to think that they somehow caused the death. Alleviate guilt by repeatedly saying, "You did not make dad die, and you cannot bring dad back alive"
- Alleviate child's fear that other family members will die soon too: "Most people live a long and healthy life. I expect to live for a long time"

70

70

Tips for Explaining Death To Children

- Keeping children informed will alleviate their anxiety. Explain the process that will be followed and what will happen next
- Ask children what they think about what you have said to make sure they have actually understood
- Plan to have future discussions about details of the death as children express a readiness to hear more: "Now that you seem ready, I'd like to tell you some more about how your dad died"
- If child wasn't initially told the truth about the cause of death, prompt parent to say: "I wasn't sure what to say before, but I got help so now I know how to tell you what really happened"

71

71

What to Say

TERMINAL ILLNESS

"___ has a serious illness called ___. The doctors tried their very best to make ___ better. I am sad to say that the doctors cannot make ___ better and ___ is dying. When someone dies, their body stops working and can never work again. When ___ dies, we will not be able to see ___ ever again. We don't know exactly when ___ will die, but soon it will be time to say goodbye forever to ___. Let's practice together first, so when we say goodbye forever to ___ you will know what you want to say."

More info: Children at the Bedside of a Dying Family Member:
Virtualhospice.ca

72

72

What to Say
<p>SUDDEN DEATH</p> <p><i>"His (heart, brain, etc.) stopped working. It couldn't be fixed and he died."</i></p>
<p>ACCIDENT</p> <p><i>"A sad thing happened with a (car, motorcycle, etc.). His body was hurt, could not be fixed, and he died."</i></p>
<p>ILLNESS</p> <p><i>"() had an illness called (). The doctors tried but I'm sad to say that they couldn't make () better and () died."</i></p> <p><i>(Provide additional information related to the illness)</i></p>

73

73

What to Say
<p>MURDER</p> <p><i>"Murder means someone kills another person on purpose. They hurt the person's body so badly that they make the person's body stop working forever."</i></p> <p><i>If your child asks how the person was killed, then they are usually ready to hear more detail, or they may have overheard a conversation and want clarification. Provide an honest answer without sharing gory details—for example, "() got into a big fight and was killed by () with a (gun, knife)," Or "Someone with a gun shot a lot of people, and () was one of the people who was shot and killed."</i></p>

74

74

What to Say
<p>SUICIDE</p> <p><i>"() died by suicide. This means () made their body stop working so that they would die."</i></p> <p><i>Older children: "() died by suicide. They made their body stop working so they would die. When someone dies by suicide, their brain was not able to think properly. It's hard for them to think of other ways to get better and use all the help that is available."</i></p> <p><i>If your child asks how they made their body stop working, then they are usually ready to hear more detail, or they may have overheard a conversation and want clarification. Provide an honest answer without sharing gory details—for example, "They hung themselves. This means that they used a rope to stop their breathing."</i></p>

75

75

What to Say
<p>ACCIDENTAL OVERDOSE</p> <p>Younger Children: <i>"He didn't mean for it to happen, but he died from taking too much (medicine, drugs, alcohol)."</i></p> <p>Older Children: <i>"Death from a substance use disorder is when a person mistakenly used the wrong substance or more of the substance than the body can handle and it caused the body to stop working. A substance use disorder is a mental illness – meaning that someone's brain is sick. This type of disorder is commonly referred to as addiction."</i></p>

76

Empathic and Exploratory Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I can see how upsetting this is to you." • "I know this is very, very hard." • "Whatever you're feeling is okay" • "How do you feel about what I just told you?" • "You mentioned that you feel (name emotion), please tell me more about that." • "What do you worry about happening next?" • "What has been most difficult for you so far?"

77

Life and Death
<p>Let's talk about what it means to be alive and what it means to be dead. All people are born, they live, and eventually they die. Death happens when a person's body stops working. Dead people can't breathe, eat, walk, talk, play, sleep, or go to the bathroom because their bodies don't work anymore. A dead body can't feel anything like hot, cold, hurt, or pain. Let's complete the following exercises to understand the difference between being alive and being dead:</p>

78

Life and Death

- Dead people don't breathe because their bodies don't work anymore. You and I are alive, which means we can breathe. Let's breathe in and out 3 times.
- Dead people don't eat because their bodies don't work anymore. You and I are alive, which means we need to eat. Let's say our favorite food and then pretend to eat it.
- Dead people don't feel hurt or pain because their bodies don't work anymore. You and I are alive, which means we can feel hurt or pain. Let's pinch our arm (not too hard!).
- Dead people don't move because their bodies don't work anymore. You and I are alive, which means we can move. Let's jump up and down three times.
-

79

Areas to Address: Suicide / Homicide/ Overdose

- Help caregivers understand the benefits of being honest with children about the cause of death.
- Define the cause of death using age-appropriate language that does not stigmatize the person who died.
- Normalize and address common feelings such as abandonment, anger, sadness, guilt, regret, fear, embarrassment, confusion.
- Alleviate shame, stigma, and self-blame.
- Normalize ambivalent feelings toward the person who died and provide opportunities to express these mixed feelings.
- Alleviate fears, intrusive thoughts, and nightmares.
- Murder/Violent death: Discuss media attention, police presence/investigation, court proceedings.

80

80

Areas to Address: Serious Illness

- Define the illness and the treatment the person received.
- Explain *contagious* and alleviate fears that other family members will get the illness and die.
- Alleviate guilt for believing that they made the person sick or did not prevent the death.
- Affirm that doctors tried their best to make the person get better.
- Discuss anticipatory grief and the goodbye process.
- Process feelings regarding witnessing the ill person's physical deterioration, invasive medical procedures, suffering and dying.

81

81

Areas to Address: Military/Line-of-Duty Death

- Acknowledge the person's decision to join the military/police/fire department, their commitment to serve, the child's feelings about their family member serving in the military/being a police officer/firefighter.
- Explain terms that fit the circumstances such as *Died Serving*, *Friendly Fire Death*, *Training Accident*, *Ultimate Sacrifice*, *Surviving Military Family*, *Gold Star Family*.
- Explain military/line-of-duty funerals and rituals/traditions.
- Process potentially traumatic aspects of the death such as violent death, intentional, or mutilated body.
- Explore feelings related to the return of the remains (there may be severe disfiguring wounds) or if the body was never recovered.
- Explore feelings related to moving/relocation.

82

82

Areas to Address: Natural Disasters

- Explain the type of natural disaster and its impact on the community.
- Define terms such as first responders and evacuation.
- Process feelings related to people or pets getting injured or dying, their home, possessions, and community being damaged or destroyed, thinking that their life was in danger.
- Explore ways to feel safe (physically and emotionally) and identify caring adults who can help.
- Reduce anxious reactions to post-disaster sensory triggers.
- Explore feelings related to moving/relocating, living in temporary or unstable housing, missing school days, and other stressful ways their life has changed since the disaster.

83

83

Factors that Complicate Stigmatized Death

- **Double blow:** Mourning the death coupled with how they died (Rynearson, 2012)
- **Ambiguity:** Was it purposeful or accidental?
- **Preventability:** Could I have stopped it? Could they have gotten better help?
- **Shame, guilt:** Is it my fault? Is it someone else's fault? Is it their fault? What will others think of them, of me? I'm ashamed to think they were selfish
- **Secrecy:** Don't tell others, don't talk about it
- **Lack of family/community support:** People avoid talking about it
- **Trauma:** Direct or imaginal exposure, fear/horror re: manner of the death

84

84

Guidelines for Playful Family Therapy

- Use activities that engage all family members
- Select activities that are developmentally appropriate for all family members (cognitive capacity, language skills)
- Join with each family member
- Respect the family's culture
- Establish rules at the outset
- Limit involvement when assessing (unless safety is a concern) to allow family dynamics to emerge
- Focus on the interaction among family members
- If possible, videotape the session

GII, 2015; Lowenstein, 2010b

85

85

Joining

- Define family therapy
- Normalize family therapy can make people feel uncomfortable
- Build an alliance with every family member
- Respect parental hierarchy
- Emphasize that everyone plays a part in making it better

Rivett & Street, 2009

86

86

Joining

- Address the children in age-appropriate ways
- Ask everyone for a description of the problem
- Listen carefully to each family member
- Be sensitive to the family's cultural differences
- Identify family strengths
- Compliment the parents on the children
- Help the family set meaningful goals

Rivett & Street, 2009

87

87

Engagement and Assessment Techniques

Activity: Colored Candy Go Around

Source: Katherine Arkell, in *Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families Volume Two* (Edited by Lowenstein, 2010a)

Goals:

1. Increase comfort level with family therapy
2. Increase open communication
3. Assess family relationships and dynamics

88

88

Colored Candy Go Around

Distribute 4 candies to each family member. Have each member sort their candy by color with instructions not to eat them yet. Ask one family member who has a green candy to give a response to the question that corresponds with the green candy. If players have 2 green candies, they share two responses to the question that corresponds with the green candy. If players have 3 green candies, they share three responses to the question that corresponds with the green candy. Family members who have green candies then give responses to the green question. Once a response to the green question has been given, the green candy can be eaten. Continue with each colored candy, in the order below:

- Green: Ways you have fun with your family
 Purple: Say something nice to each person in your family
 Orange: Things that bother / upset you about your family
 Red: Things you wish were different about your family
 Yellow: Things you're excited to do with your family

89

Goal: Increase Open Communication in the Family

Goals:

- Increase open communication in the family about the death
- Implement new methods of effective communication among family

Interventions:

- Family Card Game (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Feelings Check-In (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Messages in Art (Gil, in Creative Family Therapy Techniques, Edited by Lowenstein)
- Emotional Pie Chart (Appeldoorn, in Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families Volume Four, Edited by Lowenstein)

90

90

Open Communication: Tips for Caregivers

- Use direct language i.e., dying, died
- Take advantage of teachable moments i.e., Encourage your child to talk about dead squirrel he/she sees at the park
- Model and encourage open discussion about positive and negative memories of deceased
- Model and encourage open expression of sadness, including crying
- Model and encourage open discussion about future events that will no longer be shared with the deceased
- Look at and discuss photos of the person who died
- Discuss beliefs about what happens after death
- Answer questions openly and honestly, give brief repeated responses, and encourage child to ask more questions

91

91

Feelings Check-In: Tips for Caregivers

Try to make the Feelings Check-In with your child part of your daily routine. For example, do it after school during snack time or each night at bedtime.

Here are some ways to respond to your child:

Repeat: You feel _____ because _____.

Normalize: It's normal and okay to feel _____ about _____.

Validate: It makes sense that you feel _____.

Explore: Tell me more about your upset feelings.

Encourage: You can talk to me about anything. I am ready to listen.

Comfort: Provide physical comfort such as gently rubbing their back.

Soothing voice: Try to have a calm, soothing tone of voice.

Don't feel you have to make it all better. Listening, validating feelings, and offering comfort is what your child needs from you. Be consistent—try your very best to do the Feelings Check-In every day.

92

92

Messages In Art

Sometimes it can be difficult to verbally express thoughts and feelings. Expressions through art can be a helpful way to release and communicate feelings. Choose a family member with whom you would like to communicate a message. Use the art supplies to create your message. Once completed, explain your message and the meaning of the materials you selected.

93

93

Messages In Art: Process Questions

- 1.What was it like to communicate your message through art?
- 2.How did you feel during the message creation and message delivery part of this activity?
- 3.How did it feel to receive the message from your family member?
- 4.What did you learn through this activity about ways to communicate with your family about your thoughts and feelings?

94

Goal: Commemorate the Deceased

Goals:

- Verbally express ambivalent feelings toward the deceased
- Identify and preserve positive memories of the deceased
- Convert the relationship with the deceased from a relationship of presence to one of memory

Interventions:

- What I Liked and Didn't Like (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Dice Game and Photo Book (Cory Helps Kids Cope with Grief, Lowenstein)
- Memory Tape (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Always In My Heart (Cory Helps Kids Cope with Grief, Lowenstein)

95

95

Continuing Bonds

Continuing bonds in mourning is where relationships between individuals are not considered broken due to death.

-Klass et al., 2006

96

96

Expressions of Continuing Bonds

- Recalling memories of the deceased
- Looking at photos or videos of the deceased
- Holding onto belongings of the deceased
- Maintaining rituals shared with the deceased
- Continuing to visit places used to go to with the deceased

97

97

Addressing Ambivalence

- Normalize that ambivalence is normal in relationships
- Process ambivalent feelings toward the deceased
- Ambivalent feelings are heightened if the death was suicide or if the relationship was conflictual prior to the death
- Help parents and children talk about negative and positive memories or attributes of the person who died
- Address tendency to idealize the deceased which could invalidate the child's expression of ambivalent feelings

98

98

What I Liked / Didn't Like

Nobody is perfect, not even the person who died. Chances are, there were things you liked and didn't like about them. It's okay to remember and talk about both the good and the difficult times. Use the paper body to represent the person who died. On one side of the paper body, write the things you didn't like about the person who died. Then turn over the paper body, and write on the other side the things you liked about the person who died. Use the questions below to help you think of things you didn't like and liked about the person who died. Thinking about what you liked and didn't like about the person who died may make you feel happy, sad, angry, or other feelings. Let yourself feel whatever you are feeling—that's a part of grieving!

99

What I Liked / Didn't Like

What I Didn't Like

- Things the person who died did that upset me
- Mistakes the person who died made
- Times the person was angry at me and/or I was angry at them

What I Liked

- Some things the person who died did that made me happy
- Some things the person who died taught me
- Some things the person who died did for me that were kind

100

What I Liked / Didn't Like

After you have finished writing on the paper body, answer the questions below:

1. How do you feel as you think and talk about what you didn't like and liked about the person who died?
2. How would you have liked the person to have behaved differently?
3. What's something that you liked or appreciated about the person who died that is especially important to you?

101

Photo Book and Dice Game

Let's play a game to help you talk about memories. Roll the dice. If you roll an even number, answer a question below. If you roll an odd number, choose one of the photos in your book and tell about it. Play until all the questions below have been answered.

1. Tell about some times you went somewhere fun with (the deceased).
2. Describe some funny times together.
3. Tell about a time (the deceased) did something nice for you.
4. Tell about a time you did something nice for (the deceased).
5. What are some things you miss doing with (the deceased)?
6. Say what you liked most about (the deceased)
7. Describe one of the best times ever with (the deceased).

102

Treatment Goal: Express Feelings of Grief

Goals:

Express a range of feelings associated with the death
Implement adaptive coping strategies

Interventions:

- Guess Which Hand Game (Cory Helps Kids Cope with Grief)
- Ali's Story (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Feeling Sad (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)

103

103

Guess Which Hand

Therapist chooses a Feeling Square (i.e., happy), folds it several times to form a small paper clump, and places it in one hand. Therapist puts hands behind her back, moves the folded Feeling Square from hand to hand a few times. Child tries to guess which hand is holding the Feeling Square. If child guesses the correct hand, both child and therapist take turns telling a time they experienced the feeling. Child earns a point for telling about the feeling, plus a bonus point for guessing the correct hand. (If child did not guess correct hand, child earns one point for telling about the feeling.) At end of game, trade in points for a prize: 1-15 points = 1 prize; 16 or more points = 2 prizes.

104

Feelings: Guess Which Hand

Happy
Sad
Angry
Scared
Frustrated
Shocked
Guilty
Brave
Proud

105

Feeling Sad

Everyone feels sad at times, but when someone in your life dies, it can make you feel saddest of all. When you feel sad, you may feel like crying. But you may be worried that if you cry, you will make others around you sadder. Or you may think that crying makes you look like a baby. But crying is a good way to let out sadness. If you don't feel like crying, that's okay too. Not everyone cries about the death. This activity will help you talk about your sadness. Complete the sentences below:

- When I think about the person's death, I feel sad because:
- What I miss most about the person who died is:
- When I feel sad I:
- When I think about the person's death, I feel sad because:
-

106

Feeling Sad

Below are words of comfort that can help you feel better. Cut out the ones you like, fold them, and place them in the tissue packet. Then decorate the outside of the tissue packet with stickers. Take the tissue packet home as a reminder that you can help yourself feel better when you are sad. If you ever feel like crying, you can use the tissues from your tissue packet.

- *Sadness is a normal part of grief.*
- *It's okay to sometimes feel sad and sometimes feel happy.*
- *It's okay to cry and it's okay to not cry.*
- *It's okay to talk about my feelings.*
- *I am learning ways to help myself feel better.*

107

Goal: Tell the Story of the Death

Goals:

- Develop and share a coherent and accurate narrative of the death to integrate the experience into a larger life story
- Minimize intrusive and upsetting trauma-related imagery
- Gradually become desensitized to thoughts, feelings, and reminders of the trauma so memory of it is no longer overwhelming
- Feel heard and understood

Interventions:

- Play reenactment or story book
- Trauma Narration (for traumatic grief)

108

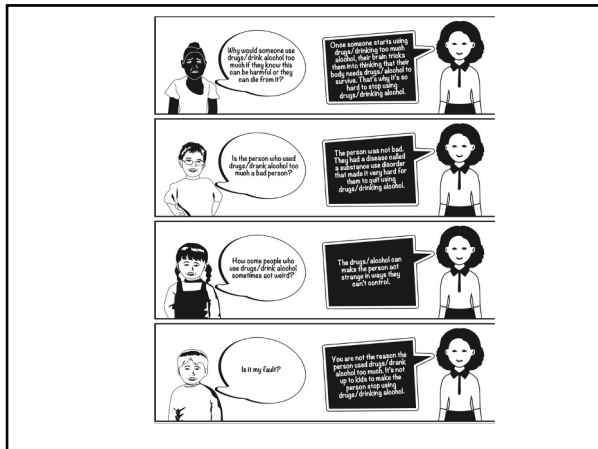
108

Comic Creation

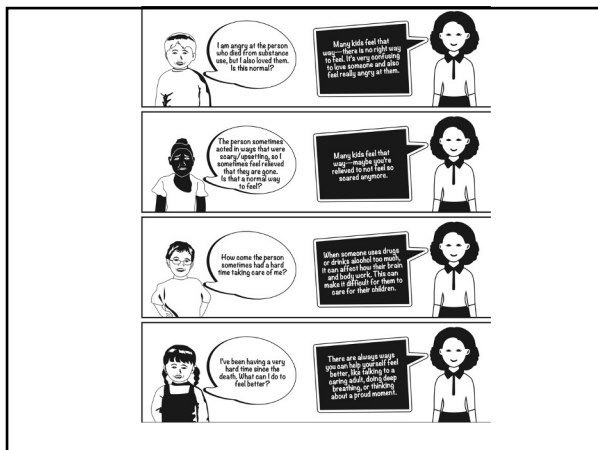
Nobody lives forever. Everybody eventually dies. People die in different ways. For example, some people die from a heart attack, some people die from a car accident, and some people die from substance use. Death from substance use happens when someone uses more drugs or alcohol than is safe for their body. The drug/alcohol can make their body have a very bad reaction or it can make their body stop working and the person dies.

It is difficult when someone in your life dies, but when someone dies from substance use, it can be so hard to understand and talk about. This activity will help you learn and talk about the death. Read the comics, cut them out, and staple the pages together to make a comic book.

109



110



111

Comic Creation

Use the comics to help you answer the questions below.

- 1.What did you learn that helped you better understand substance use?
- 2.What are some common feelings children may have when someone uses drugs/drinks alcohol too much?
- 3.What are some feelings you have experienced related to your person's death?
- 4.How can this activity help children who are dealing with a death from substance use?

112

Goal: Cope with Extra Hard Days

Goals:

- Anticipate and cope with difficult days and future bereavement-related challenges
- Recognize that it is okay to feel sudden and intense surges of grief

Interventions:

- Build-A-Teddy-Bear Puzzle (Cory Helps Kids Cope with Grief, Lowenstein)
- Getting Through Extra Hard Days (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)

113

113

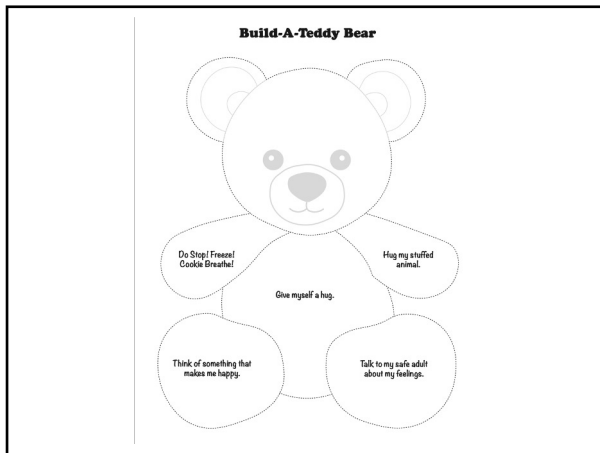
Build-A-Teddy-Bear Puzzle

Your sadness about your special person's death will come and go. There will be times when you feel happy and other times when you feel sad. Even long after the death, certain things will remind you of the person who died, and this may make you feel sad. These are called grief bursts. Holidays or other special occasions may be even more difficult, because you will wish your special person could be with you. On these special days, you might feel happy if it's a fun day, and you might also feel sad, angry, or other upset feelings because you will miss the person who died. When you miss the person who died, there are things you can do to cope with these hard days.

First, put the teddy bear puzzle together, then tape it on all sides. Read the ideas written on the bear. You can draw a happy face beside the ideas you like best! Then you can decorate your teddy bear.

Put the teddy bear beside your bed. When you're feeling sad or upset, choose one of the ideas on your bear that will help you feel better.

114



115

Coping with Hard Days: Tips for Caregivers

Bereaved individuals do not get over their grief, but the painful emotions do lessen over time. People continue to grieve the death, although with lowered levels of intensity. Various events, such as the anniversary of the death date, family celebrations, and so on, are likely to intensify feelings for a time. These are called *grief bursts*. Grief bursts are a normal part of the grieving process. Identifying potential difficult days ahead can help your child and family manage these situations. It is also important to be prepared for grief bursts that may not be connected to a trigger and just sometimes happen. Each time a grief burst happens, and you and your family get through it, you prove that you can manage it.

116

Coping with Hard Days: Tips for Caregivers

Below are some ideas to help your child and family cope with grief bursts:

- Plant a tree or some flowers in a place that holds special memories.
- On your child's birthday, write them a letter indicating how proud you are of them (be specific about some of your child's accomplishments from the past year). Include in your letter how proud the person who died would have been of your child.
- If the person who died was a parent, then Mother's Day/Father's Day may trigger a grief burst. Your child may feel sad, lonely, jealous, or angry on this day, especially when they see other children with their parent. Even though their mother or father has died, they are still their parent and your child may want to honor them by making a Mother's/Father's Day card. They can leave the card at the grave/where their ashes were buried/scattered or keep it in a special place. It may also be helpful to speak with your child's teacher to discuss ways they can support your child on days that might be especially hard.

117

Grief Support Groups: Benefits

- **Universality:** Allows children to see that they are not alone
- **Vicarious learning:** Children observe the expressions of fellow members and learn from others
- **Sharing:** Children may open up as they see other members engage in activities
- **Forming Relationships:** Groups provide a safe and structured environment that allows children to have positive social interactions
- **Increased coping skills:** Children learn coping skills and then practice in a safe environment and receive feedback

118

118

Troubleshooting

- **Interrupts:** Remind to use talking stick
- **Talks too much:** Redirect to another person or another topic; Ask the dominant member to act as a quiet observer for the session and report back at the end
- **Doesn't participate:** Provide opportunities for smaller group discussions or pair-share; have participants write or draw their answers, then share; give them a job such as observer then report back
- **Invades space:** Teach and practice boundaries (keep one arm away), process how it feels and discuss ways to respond when someone invades space, suggest ways the space invader can get needs met

119

119

Sample Group Curriculum

1. Getting acquainted: Dice Breakers, Scavenger Hunt, drawing of the person who died.
2. Understanding the death: Learning about Death Card Game (select questions appropriate to the group).
3. Beliefs about after-death: Read "The Next Place" (Hanson) then draw a picture about what you think happens when someone dies.
4. Expressing feelings: Read Ali's Story then color your own Feeling Jar.
5. Expressing and coping with anger: Brainstormers, The Turtle: An Anger-Calming Technique.
6. Memories of the person who died: Read "The Memory Box" (Rowland) then decorate the box and fill it with memories of the person who died.
7. Coping with extra hard times: Build-A Teddy-Bear Puzzle or Getting through Extra-Hard Times.
8. Reviewing, Celebrating, and Saying Goodbye: Layered Gift, High-Five Hand or Garden of Growth.

120

120

Dice Breakers

One member rolls the dice. If they roll an even number, they answer a question. If they roll an odd number, they follow the instructions:

- 1: Free choice (answer any question)
- 3: Choose a question for another member to answer
- 5: Make up a new question to add to the game

121

Dice Breakers: Questions

- If you could have anything for breakfast, what would you have?
- You can have dinner with someone famous, who would you choose?
- Describe something fun you got to do
- If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?
- You get to be in a video game for a day, which game would you choose?
- Which superhero do you most want to be and why?
- Name someone famous you would like to have for a parent and why.

122

Brainstormers

More Creative Interventions for Troubled Children and Youth, Lowenstein

Divide the group into two teams. Explain the activity as follows:

We are going to play a brainstorming game that's going to help us talk about anger. The object of the game is for each team to come up with as many items as they can for each category. For example, if the category is 'things that make people laugh' then each team must make a list of things that make people laugh, and the team with the longest list wins that round. Each round lasts three minutes. At the end of each round, each team reads aloud the items on their list. If both teams have the same item on their lists, it gets crossed off. Each remaining item counts for one point. The points are accumulated each round, and the team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

123

Brainstormers

- Things that make kids your age angry
- Things that make adults angry
- Things that happen to your body when you feel angry
- Unsafe ways to express anger
- Ways to help your body relax when you feel angry
- Positive messages kids can say to themselves to calm down when they feel angry

124

Garden of Growth

Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Teens, Families Vol 3, By Cassano

Provide group members with flower templates and have them cut out their flowers. Depending on the size of the group or mural, participants can be given one or more flowers. Explain that they are to think about what they have learned and how they have grown over the course of the group. Have participants write about their new learning or growth on the flowers. The flowers are taped onto the mural paper to create a garden. Members can work together to decorate the mural by adding accents to the garden such as a sky, sun, butterflies, etc. Group members then take turns sharing what is written on their flowers. The end product results in a beautiful visual of accomplishments for the group members. A picture can be taken of the mural and a copy made for each group member.

125

Garden of Growth: Process Questions

- How have you grown since coming to this group?
- How have others in the group helped you to grow?
- What goals do you have for your future so you can bloom into the person you wish to be?
- What decisions do you need to make in order to bloom into the person you wish to be?
- What else/who else can help you bloom into the person you wish to be?
- How can you care for yourself when you feel like you're wilting?

126

Goal: Provide a Positive Termination Experience

Goals:

- Review and celebrate therapeutic gains
- Discuss thoughts and feelings about the therapeutic journey and about ending therapy
- Prepare for future setbacks

Interventions:

- Cookie Jar (Cory Helps Kids Cope with Grief, Lowenstein)
- Last Session Family Card Game (Creative Family Therapy Techniques, Edited by Lowenstein)
- Layered Gift (Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children, Lowenstein)
- Goodbye Hand (Cory Helps Kids Cope with Grief, Lowenstein)

127

127

Guidelines for Termination

- Handle termination with sensitivity so child does not feel angry, rejected or abandoned
- Prepare child for termination well in advance by outlining how and when therapy will end
- Termination activities should help child express feelings about ending sessions, review gains, and celebrate accomplishments
- Honor the relationship that has been established by communicating to the child some of the special interactions that were experienced together

128

128

Goodbye Hand

We will each trace our hand on a piece of colored cardboard, cut out the hand, decorate and write on it a goodbye message to each other. Then we will tape each cardboard hand onto a stick.

Let's give each other the goodbye hand we made for each other and read the goodbye messages written on the hands. Then, as you are leaving here, we will use our Goodbye Hands to wave goodbye to each other.

129

Books for Parents: Bereaved Children

- ❖ Great Answers to Questions about Death: Goldman
- ❖ How Do We Tell the Children? Schaefer & Lyons
- ❖ Communicating with Children When Parent is at End of Life
- ❖ The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide: Fitzgerald
- ❖ 35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child: Dougy Center
- ❖ After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal: Requarth
- ❖ Supporting Children After a Suicide: Montgomery & Coale
- ❖ The Family Has Been Informed (Military families)
- ❖ As Big As It Gets: Supporting a Child When a Parent is Seriously Ill: Winston's Wish
- ❖ We All Grieve: Supporting Bereaved Children Who Have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

130

130

Books for Children: Bereavement

- ❖ What Does Dead Mean: Jay & Thomas
 - ❖ Rosie Remembers Mommy (Free ebook: nctsn.org)
 - ❖ Sam's Dad Died/Molly's Mom Died by Holmes
 - ❖ Helping Lily with Her Loss by Wonders
 - ❖ Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute? By Barber
 - ❖ The Boy Who Didn't Want to Be Sad by Goldblatt
 - ❖ Where Are You? By Olivieri
 - ❖ The Next Place by Hanson
 - ❖ Tear Soup by Schwiebert & Deklyen
 - ❖ Tough Boris: Brown
 - ❖ Finding Your Way to Grieve (For Autism Spectrum) by Helbert
- (For more resources visit Liana Lowenstein's Pinterest Page)

131

131

Books for Teens: Bereavement

- ❖ Straight Talk About Death for Teens by Grollman
 - ❖ You Just Don't Understand: Supporting Bereaved Teens
 - ❖ Teens, Loss, and Grief by Myers
 - ❖ The Grieving Teen by Fitzgerald
 - ❖ Fire in My Heart, Ice In My Veins by Traisman
 - ❖ Grief Recovery for Teens by Popowitz
 - ❖ Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens by Wolfelt
 - ❖ You Are Not Alone by Hughes
 - ❖ Dancing at the Pity Party by Feder
 - ❖ Grieving for the Sibling You Lost by Hyatt
 - ❖ When a Friend Dies by Gootman
- (For more resources visit Liana Lowenstein's Pinterest Page)

132

132

Books for Children/Teens: Suicide

Cammarata, D. Someone I Love Died by Suicide
 Goldman, L. Bart Speaks Out: Breaking Silence on Suicide
 Schmidt, R. Why Would Someone Want to Die?
 Biles & Wavering. My Grief is Like the Ocean: Story for Children Who Lost a Parent to Suicide
 Pekh, S. Why Did Daddy End His Life?
 Seasons Centre: What is Suicide Anyways?
 Dougy Center: After a Suicide
 Winston's Wish: Beyond the Rough Rock (Suicide)
 Grollman, E. Living When a Young Friend Commits Suicide
 Banks, K. Walking Softly, Rachel
 Mitchell, C. I Am Here For You: Story to Support Your Grieving Child Through Death From Suicide.

133

133

Books for Children: Homicide / Overdose / Trauma

Ray, M. Someone I Love Died from a Drug Overdose. Story, workbook, definitions. Ages 6-10
 Mitchell, Carla. I Am Here For You: Story to Support Your Grieving Child Through Death From Substance Use.
 Dougy Center: After a Murder: Activity Book for Grieving Children
 Winston's Wish: Hope Beyond the Headlines (Homicide)
 Flake, S. Bang! Teen struggles with shooting of little brother. Ages 12-18
 Loftis, C. The Boy Who Sat by the Window: Helping Children Cope with Violence. Classmate deals with drive-by shooting of young boy. Ages 7-12
 Holmes, M. A Terrible Thing Happened. (Trauma)
 Straus, S. Healing Days. (Trauma)

134

134

Books for Children: Natural Disaster

piploproductions.com (various topics translated into several languages)
 Trink and Sam (Versions in multiple languages for hurricanes, earthquake, tornado, wildfire)
 Birdie series (www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au)
 Bridwell, N: Clifford and the Big Storm
 Ippen, C: Once I Was Very Scared
 Ohi, R: Kenta and the Big Wave
 Rocco, J: Hurricane
 Mark, B: I'll Know What to Do, A Kids Guide to Natural Disaster
 Burton, L: The Rhino Who Swallowed a Storm
 Doerfeld, C: The Rabbit Listened

135

135

Books for Grieving Military Children

Winston's Wish: The Family Has Been Informed
 Chung, Beeney: A Kid's Journey of Grief, TAPS Edition
 Petty, D: A Soldier's Star
 Lee, M: The Hero in My Pocket
 Beard, B: Klinger: A Story of Honor and Hope
 Parga, E: Love Never Stops
 My Life Continued
 White, S: Somewhere Special

136

136

Apps / Websites for Grieving Youth

- ✧ Grief: Support for Young People
- ✧ Grief Relief
- ✧ Kids Grief
- ✧ Grief Support Network
- ✧ Grief Sucks
- ✧ A Grief Observed
- ✧ Cancer Really Sucks

137

137

Websites: Bereavement / Trauma

- ✧ Association for Death Education and Counseling: adec.org
- ✧ Canadian Virtual Hospice: virtualhospice.ca
- ✧ Coalition to Support Grieving Student: grievingstudents.org
- ✧ Dougy Center: dougy.org
- ✧ National Alliance for Grieving Children: childrengrieve.org
- ✧ National Child Traumatic Stress Network: nctsn.org
- ✧ Resilient Parenting: bereavedparenting.org
- ✧ SAMHSA: samhsa.gov
- ✧ Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors: taps.org
- ✧ What's Your Grief: whatsyourgrief.com
- ✧ Winston's Wish: winstonswish.org.uk

138

138

Websites: Suicide Prevention & Postvention

American Association of Suicidology: suicidology.com

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: afsp.org

Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors: allianceofhope.org

Youth Suicide Prevention: crisisclinic.org

139

139

Recommended Resources from NCTSN

- Articles for parents: Helping Children with Traumatic Grief
- Article, webinar: Traumatic Grief in Military Children
- Article: Coping with an Unconfirmed Death: Tips for Caregivers of Children and Teens
- Book: Ready to Remember: Jeremy's Journey
- Video: It's Okay to Remember
- Childhood Traumatic Grief Treatment Curriculum: The Courage to Remember

140

140

Bereavement Resources for School Personnel

- Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers by The Dougy Centre
- Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers: www.chilliwackhospice.org
- Supporting Grieving Students, a web video series produced by the Children and Youth Grief Network
- Coalition to Support Grieving Students: grievingstudents.org

141

141

FREE resources and discounts on therapy books!

- Download FREE eBook of child & family therapy techniques
- Read articles on cutting edge topics
- Get resources on social media (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest)
- Sign up for my FREE quarterly online newsletter
- Get 20% off my books, 30% off if you buy 4 (use code PC14)

www.lianalowenstein.com

142

Liana Lowenstein's Training Topics

- Working with Hard to Engage Children and Teens
- Creative Interventions to Assess and Treat Children and Families
- Creative Evidence-Based Interventions for Traumatized Children
- TF-CBT: Blending Theory with Innovative Techniques
- Creative CBT Interventions for Children with Anxiety
- Creative Interventions for Children of Divorce
- Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children
- Creative Interventions for Children with ADHD
- Creative Interventions to Assess and Treat School Refusal
- Creative Family Therapy Techniques
- Creative Interventions for Emotional Regulation and Social Skills
- Group Therapy: Creative Techniques and Troubleshooting Ideas
- Tips and Techniques for Online Therapy with Children
- 4-Day Certificate Program: Innovations in Child and Family Therapy

143

Use Code PC14 to Get 20% off or 30% off when you buy 4 books:

lianalowenstein.com

144

References & Suggested Readings

- Arnold, C. (Ed.). (2018). *Understanding child and adolescent grief: Supporting loss and facilitating growth*. Routledge.
- Bordere, T. C. (2016). Social justice conceptualizations in grief and loss. In D. L. Harris & T. C. Bordere (Eds.), *Handbook of social justice in loss and grief: Exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion* (pp. 9–20). Routledge.
- Clements, P. T., Vigil, G. J., Manno, M. S., Henry, G., Wilks, J., & Das, S. (2003). Cultural perspectives of death, grief and bereavement. *Journal of Psycho-social Nursing*, 41(7), 18-26.
- Cohen, J., Mannarino, A., and Deblinger, E. (2017). *Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents* (2nd ed.). Guilford.
- Goldman, L. (2022). *Life and loss: A guide to help grieving children: Classic edition*. Routledge.
- Griess, B., Burns, M. R., & Farro, S. A. (2018). Pathfinders: Promoting healthy adjustment in bereaved children and families. *Death Studies*, 42(3), 134–142.
- Harris, D.L., Tashel, B.C. (2016). *Handbook of social justice in Loss and Grief: Exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion*. Routledge.
- Keegan, O., Jones, A., Deane, C., & D'Arcy, A. (2015). *The Irish Childhood Bereavement Care Pyramid: A Guide to Support for Bereaved Children and Young People*.

145

145

References & Suggested Readings

- Lowenstein, L. (1999). *Creative interventions for troubled children & youth*. Champion Press.
- Lowenstein, L. (Ed.). (2008–2022). *Assessment and treatment activities for children, adolescents, and families: Practitioners share their most effective techniques* (Vols. 1–4). Champion Press.
- Lowenstein, L. (Ed.) (2010). *Creative family therapy techniques: Play, art, and expressive activities to engage children in family sessions*. Champion Press.
- Lowenstein, L. (2016). *Creative CBT interventions for children with anxiety*. Champion Press.
- Lowenstein, L. *Cory helps kids cope with grief*. (2024). Champion Press.
- Lowenstein, L. (2024). *Creative interventions for bereaved children* (2nd Ed.). Champion Press.
- McNeil, A., & Gabbay, P. (2018). *Understanding and supporting bereaved children*. Springer.
- McClough, J. and Gurlan, A. (2006). *Caring for kids after trauma, disaster, and death: A guide for caregivers and professionals* (2nd ed.). University Child Study Center.

146

146

References & Suggested Readings

- Neimeyer, R. A., & Jordan, J. R. (2002). Disenfranchisement as empathic failure. In K. Doka (Ed.), *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice* (pp. 95–117). Jossey-Bass.
- Opiola, K., & Swan, A. (2022). Becoming a culturally inclusive white play therapist. In D.C. Ray, Y. Ogawa, & Y.-J. Cheng (Eds.), *Multicultural play therapy: Making the most of cultural opportunities with children*. Routledge.
- Schuurman, D. L., & Mitchell, M. B. (2020). *Becoming grief-informed: A call to action*. Dougy Center: National Grief Center for Children & Families.
- Stroebe, M. S., & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale and description. *Death Studies*, 23, 197–224.
- Traher, C., & Breen, L. J. (Eds.) (2023). *The Routledge international handbook of child and adolescent grief in contemporary contexts*. Routledge.
- Worden, J. W. (2018). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner* (5th ed.). Springer Publishing Company.

147

147