

Kids Grieve Too!

Implementing Grief and Loss Groups
in Elementary and Middle Schools

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Workshop Goals

At the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

1. Describe how death affects students emotionally, behaviorally, socially, and academically.
2. Describe how to evaluate your school's need for a grief and loss group.
3. Identify how to effectively select group members.
4. Describe how to create your own grief and loss group.
5. Identify ways to assess your group's effectiveness.

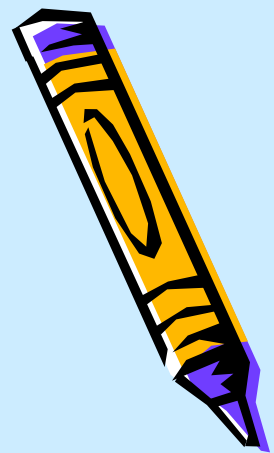


Understanding Death & Grief



Grief is...

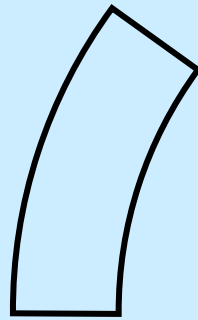
- a reaction to loss
- necessary and natural
- expected due to human attachment
- an individual process
- a cycle of changing emotions and thoughts
- a life-long process



Grief Cycle

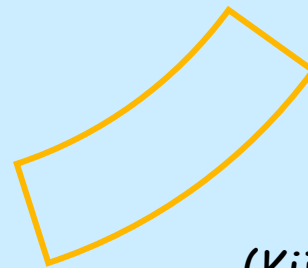
Acceptance

Denial



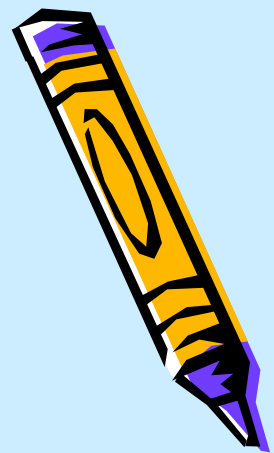
Depression

Anger



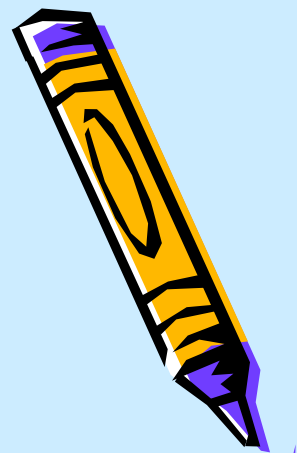
Bargaining

(Kübler-Ross, 1969)



Student's Experiences with Grief

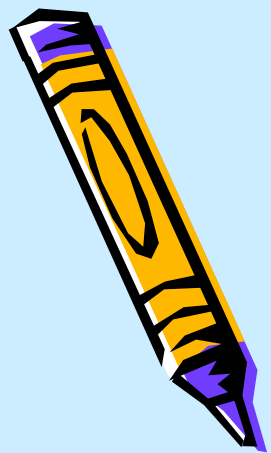
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Social
- Academic



School Counselors Make
World of Difference



The Role of School Counselors





Discussion Questions

- How have you seen death and grief handled in your schools?
- What positive experiences have your grieving students had?
- What negative experiences have your grieving students had?

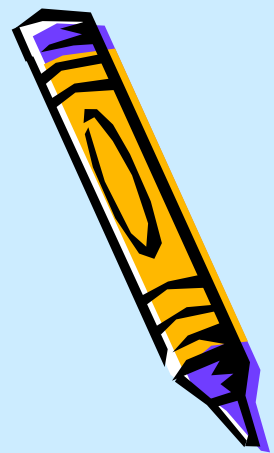


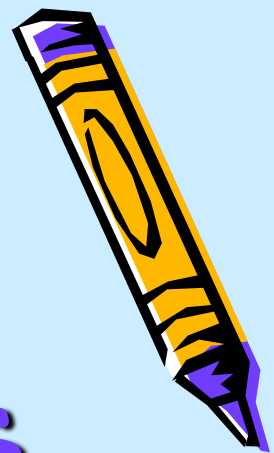


School Counselors' Roles

- Provide responsive counseling for students after a death.
- Support parents, teachers and staff as they provide for the students.
- Identify students who need more intense counseling for grief and loss.

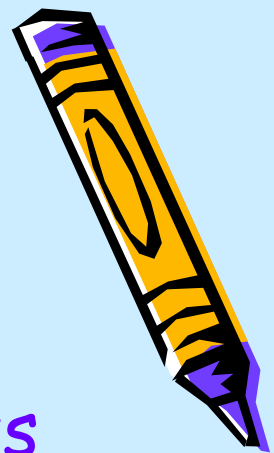
Adapted from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=533>





Evaluating Your School's Needs





Understanding the Need

- 1 in 9 American children and adolescents experience the death of a parent before age 20.
- 1 in 7 American children and adolescents experience the death of a sibling before the age of 20.

* Source: National Survey conducted by Comfort Zone Camp (2010)



Evaluating your school's need



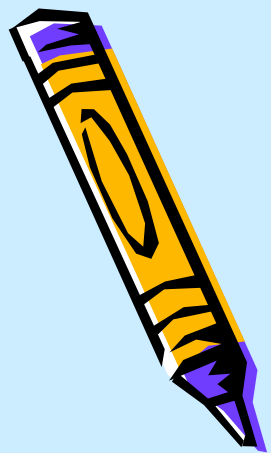
1) The need is there!

2) Collect information from:

- Teachers (e.g., announcements at meetings, surveys)
- Parents (e.g., Newsletters)
- Students (e.g., brief surveys, flyers)
- School Counselors (e.g., records, personal knowledge)



Creating Your Grief and Loss Group



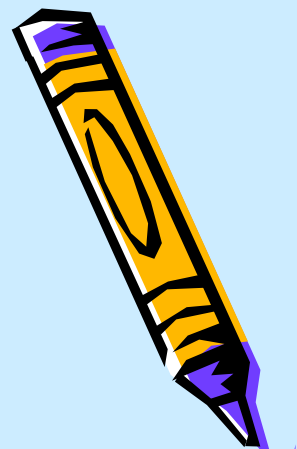
Responsive Services: Group Counseling



Group counseling aims to:

- normalize the child's experience
- provide children with a safe place to express their honest experiences
- reduce loneliness and isolation
- provide children with a sense of community
- give children the opportunity to ask one another for support
- learn new coping skills, and get accurate information about grief and loss



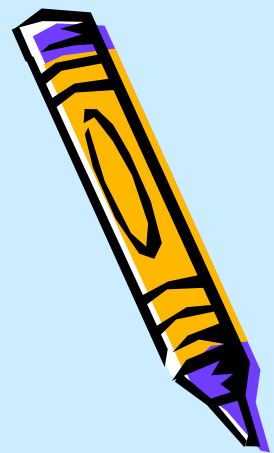


Selecting Group Members

- Advertising and recruiting
- Individual interviews for screening
 - What should you screen for?
 - What makes a good group member?
 - How many students?
 - What range of ages/grades?
- Having a referral sources for students who cannot get into the group
- Be prepared to run more than 1 group!



Tasks of Grief



- Accept the reality of the loss.
- Experience the pain of grief.
- Adjust to life without the loved one.
- Find ways to remember the loved one.

(William Worden, 1991)



10 Stage Grief and Loss Group

1. Structuring the group
2. Getting to know each other
3. Sharing their story
4. Creating a narrative with positive memories
5. Identifying and expressing emotions
6. Strengthening coping skills
7. Increasing positive social support
8. Finding ways to remember
9. Planning a “goodbye” ceremony
10. Group Termination



Creative & Expressive Techniques



Telling their Therapy

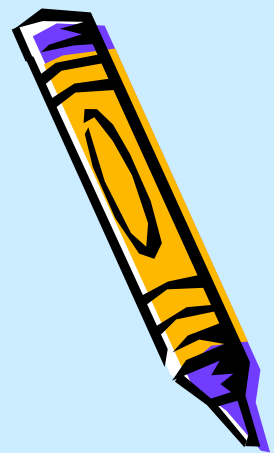
- Create a safe space
- Have the child "introduce" their deceased loved-one to the group.
- "Show and Tell"
- Share positive memories
- Share pictures
- Create memory books
- Provide students with appropriate psycho-educational materials.

Expressive Therapies

- Slideshows
- Memory Videos
- Memory boxes
- Feeling Hearts
- Transforming clay
- Non-directive play therapy for uncomplicated grief
- Consider directive play therapy for complicated grief and/or trauma
- Bibliotherapy
 - For teens "You are not alone: Teens talk about life after the death of a parent" (Hughes, 2005) .



Developmentally Appropriate Interventions



7-11 years

- Answering questions directly
- Encouraging self-expression and healthy control
- Guided activities
- School involvement and support

11-13 years

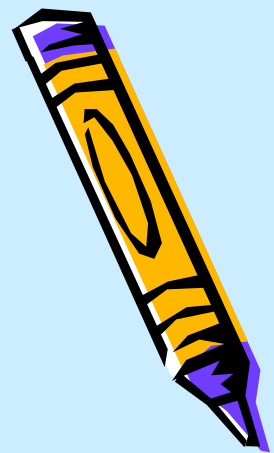
- Importance of respecting independence
- Expressive therapies; Bibliotherapy, art, music
- Group/peer support

13-18 years

- More willing to talk to people outside of the family
- Perceptions and support of peers is vital!
- Help the adolescent express his experience without taking control



Program Evaluation



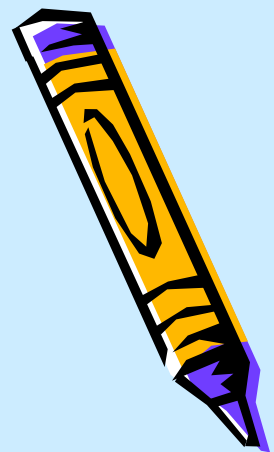
Program Evaluation

Areas to Assess

- Academic
- Behavioral
- Emotional
- Social
- Symptoms of Grief

Ways to Assess

- Pre and post test
- Parent report
- Student report
- Teacher report
- Changes in grades



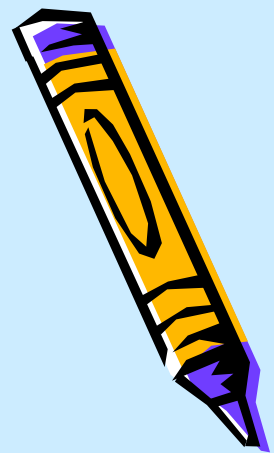
Summary



- You have now developed an understanding of the various experiences associated with providing grief counseling to children in the schools.
- This is only the beginning on your journey to assist children who have experienced the death of a loved one.
- In conclusion, with a relative degree of confidence, you should now be able to:
 1. Describe how death affects students emotionally, behaviorally, socially, and academically.
 2. Describe how to evaluate your school's need for a grief and loss group.
 3. Identify how to effectively select group members.
 4. Create your own grief and loss group.
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Discussion & Questions



- Please feel free to email me at tillmank@newpaltz.edu -

Helpful Organizations



Comfort Zone Camp. "Comfort Zone Camp is the nation's largest bereavement camp. Comfort Zone Camps are offered free of charge to children ages 7-17 who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling or primary caregiver. The camps are held year-round in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Virginia."
[www.comfortzonecamp.org]

The Dougy Center. "The Dougy Center was the first center in the United States to provide peer support groups for grieving children... Through (their) National Center (they) provide support and training locally, nationally and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children in grief." [www.dougy.org]

*Additional references are available from the presenter, Kathleen Tillman, who can be contacted at tillmank@newpaltz.edu

