



Grief & Bereavement Literacy Series

Session 15: *“The Playful Art of Supporting Children with Grief”*

Presenter: Dallas Shirley, Children’s Services Coordinator, Kamloops Hospice Association

Children’s Counsellor and BC Registered Play Therapist

Nov 7, 2024: 12pm-1pm

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
<p>Presentation Key Points</p>	<p>Dallas opened the presentation introducing participants to a coping activity (Ideal Grief Dream Drawing) to help children (and adults) process grief. Can be used as a general coping activity, not just grief-related.</p> <p>Books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story Books can be helpful to explain concepts around death, next steps after death, grief. • Kids don’t usually gravitate towards them, but they can be useful. Many are good stories but can be outdated with some language used so feel free to change them. Can use stickers for this <p>Avoid Silver Linings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid these phrases. While well-meaning, people of all ages comment “I don’t want to be rescued out of my grief. It’s my expression of love and I want to sit in it. And I want you to sit in it with me” • Especially don’t say “At least...” • Brene Brown empathy vs sympathy clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw <p>All feelings are welcome in grief process. It’s not just sadness. So important to acknowledge that all feelings can happen and normalize them (esp in complicated death/grief)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, children and youth don’t name their feelings as much as shown them through their behaviours • They may regress to a younger stage when they felt safe (ex. A younger sounding voice) • May have hard time sleeping on own or eating, may express anger • Anger expression activities: bingo dabbers, throwing pinecones, drums (bins and duct tape), feelings tornados • Have list of ways to express feelings when feeling overwhelmed. Look at together in session and child select ones they would like to try when they feel overwhelmed. Practice together <p>Caregiver support – ask on intake what supports do you have? Often caregivers don’t look at this but are more concerned with helping the child</p> <p>Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallel play - Doing something side by side is less intimidating than facing each other • Play is a child’s first language – it’s how they express themselves • Play is never just play, it’s usually a reflection of what they are going through • Can be easy to guess what’s happening at times, but try not to assume. Our ‘peaceful’ and ‘distressing’ things are different. Reflect to check in • Sometimes you won’t know what’s happening and that’s ok. It may come up later. Children will most often correct if you got it wrong and tell you what the story is actually about <p>Brain breaks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual breaks for your brain, not meditation, not in the moment as the moment you are in may be incredibly hard • Ex. Playground, video games <p>-Remembering activities [linked in resources section]</p> <p>-Focus on continuing bonds: ex. Quilt with fabric from loved one.</p> <p>-Facilitating feelings: candies and talk about feelings game: prompts (frame prompts with “I feel ____ when ____” to help with ownership) and when they answer the question they get candy. Beach ball of emotions: throw ball and when it lands on your thumb talk about a time you have felt that way or would feel that way</p>

	<p>Grief groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dallas’ book on Grief Groups – [Linked below] <p>Wishes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share wishes at end of individual sessions and after group sessions <p>Use concrete accurate words about a death. Sick, lost, sleep terms can cause so much anxiety for kids. Name what happened. “they got very sick with _____ [disease] and died]</p>
<p>Discussion Key Points</p>	<p>Q: Have you seen an increased awareness of children’s grief in your career so far?</p> <p>A: Yes, as more organizations come out to do this work and share what children experience</p> <p>Q: How do you get interest in grief groups?</p> <p>A: Involvement in schools. CAST (Community Agency Support Teams). School admin and counsellors meet quarterly so they know what programs are available and can refer families</p> <p>Q: Do you run any formal training sessions?</p> <p>A: I’ve done some workshops and love experiential training with activities. Interested and open to connect about this! connect@dallasshirley.com</p> <p>Q: How do you readdress grief as children age at different developmental stages? Do you usual allow children to self-identify they need to readdress something now they are in a different stage? Things you advise caregivers to look for to signal child may need to readdress?</p> <p>A: Development age is very important and looks different. Grief is life-long and can come up at random times or at big milestones (graduation). Look for behaviours that are out of the norm such as eating significantly less, sleeping much less and this continues for some time.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Session recording link</p> <p>Session slides: Presentation slides</p> <p>Contact with Dallas: connect@dallasshirley.com</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembering activities: Making Time for Memories – Dallas Shirley • Stinking thinking thoughts box, Hidden Feelings Mask, Beach ball of emotions (scroll down to the bottom of the page) • Dino Egg Stress Ballons, Coping Catchers, Super Muscle Exercise <p>Books:</p> <p>Woodland Wisdom Books by Dallas Shirely. Can connect with Dallas about getting a pdf copy of her books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death, Grief and Loss (grief group experiences) • My many, many, many feelings and my stinking thinking thoughts • The Difference Between Anger & Abuse: Coping with Anger in Healthy Ways <p>Other resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Bereavement Helpline • Kids Grief.ca • Kids Help Phone • Sesame Workshops • Supporting Children with Grief <p>The action plan report link: https://www.bc-cpc.ca/about-us/activities/new-projects/bereavement-study/grief-and-bereavement-support-in-bc-a-collaborative-improvement-action-plan/</p> <p>Joshua’s podcast link: https://www.griefdreams.ca/</p> <p>Our ECHO program webpage lists all current sessions open for registration.</p>