

* Children and Loss

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COUNSELLOR
RESOURCES



* Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- ✓ Gain a deeper understanding of how bereavement and loss can affect children and young people.
- ✓ Discover new ways of working within this niche area.

Objectives:

- ✓ Understand the factors affecting bereaved C&YP
- ✓ Look at key facts and figures relating to bereaved C&YP
- ✓ Learn how to talk to C&YP about death
- ✓ Discover their age-related understanding of grief
- ✓ Look at a child's possible grief reactions
- ✓ Explore various elements of working with a grieving family
- ✓ Pick up ideas of how to work with a grieving C&YP

* Nicola Hughes

- ✓ My first placement was with a Bereavement Charity
- ✓ I've worked with Bereaved children and their families since 2010.
- ✓ I deliver extensive training to professionals within the community, schools, and university's
- ✓ I've been a group supervisor for a Bereavement Charity
- ✓ I'm in Private Practice as a Creative Counsellor, Clinical Supervisor and Trainer.
- ✓ I work with individuals, young people and couples, face to face, online and outdoors.



* Overview

- ✓ You
- ✓ Key Information
- ✓ How to help the bereaved family
- ✓ The work



* You

Do you agree or disagree or somewhere in between?

“Children should be introduced to death as early as possible.”

Agree--- 1—2---3---4---5---Disagree

* You

Do you agree or disagree or somewhere in between?

“Children grieve differently to adults.”

Agree--- 1—2---3---4---5---Disagree

* You

Do you agree or disagree or somewhere in between?

“Funerals are not for children.”

Agree--- 1—2---3---4---5---Disagree

* Euphemisms

- ✓ Popped his clogs
- ✓ Pushing up daisies
- ✓ Kicked the bucket
- ✓ Brown bread
- ✓ Slipped away
- ✓ Crossed over
- ✓ Passed
- ✓ Star in the sky
- ✓ Through the pearly gates
- ✓ Lost
- ✓ Resting in peace
- ✓ Gone to be with their maker
- ✓ Breathed their last breath
- ✓ In a better place
- ✓ Asleep
- ✓ Born sleeping

* Consider the affect they have on children

- ✓ Young children take words literally
- ✓ They are confusing
- ✓ Colludes with fantasy thinking

Instead be explicit, honest and keep it simple



* Key Information

Facts & Figures

- ✓ A parent of children under 18 dies every 22 minutes in the UK; around 23,600 a year. This equates to around 111 children being bereaved of a parent every day.
- ✓ 1 in 29 5-16 year olds has been bereaved of a parent or sibling - that's a child in every average class.

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/death-bereavement-statistics>

*** Children who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling or friend are more likely to have continued issues than their non-bereaved peers**

- 55% more likely to have a serious illness themselves
- 80% more likely to have a diagnosable mental disorder
- 60% more likely to be excluded from school at some point
- 6 times more likely to be looked after by the local authority
- 60% more likely to drink alcohol regularly
- Smoke and use cannabis at least once a month

Engage in more difficult behaviour such as staying out late or truanting from school

Research by Faulth et al 2009: Secondary analysis of the Mental Health of children and young people in Great Britain, 2004



* How do we talk to children about death?

My Top Tips:

- ✓ Tell the truth
- ✓ Answer questions simply
- ✓ Teach life cycles
- ✓ Books
- ✓ Movies
- ✓ Use and look for opportunities within daily life

* Age Related Understanding of Death

0-2 years	While no concept of death, child will be very aware of the loss of carer. Child can also sense grief from others.
2-5 years	Aware of difference between alive and dead. Child may think dead people continue to do everyday things or that death is temporary.
5-9 years	Child may develop the concept that death is permanent and irreversible. They may personify death; e.g. a person or monster.

9-11 years	Child is developing a more realistic understanding of the concept of death. They may show an interest in the biological aspects of death and also in the spiritual aspects. A sense of their own mortality may develop.
Adolescents	They have a full understanding of death (also of spiritual / abstract elements) and are more aware of long-term consequences of death. Increased influence of peer group. Also tension between dependence and independence.

* Developmental Issues

- ✓ Immature thinking capacity
- ✓ Egocentric views and 'magical thinking'
- ✓ Difficulties comprehending the concept of death
- ✓ Lack of control over options
- ✓ Lack of information or knowledge
- ✓ Less able to handle stress
- ✓ Lack of language to communicate to others how they are feeling and coping



Grief is a natural process
It does not necessarily require
professional intervention



* Possible Grief Reactions

Behavioral

- ✓ Withdraw, regress or become clingy
- ✓ Behavioral problems
- ✓ Risk-taking behavior or cause harm to themselves
- ✓ Poor punctuality or truant
- ✓ Difficulties with concentration and learning
- ✓ Be preoccupied or become forgetful
- ✓ Hit out

Physical

- ✓ Sweating, butterflies, constricted throat
- ✓ Sensation of a weight on shoulders, neck and head
- ✓ Exhaustion, ache and pains
- ✓ Affected appetite, sleep, bladder or bowel control
- ✓ Decreased resistance to illness
- ✓ Present similar symptoms to the person who died

* Possible Grief Reactions

Thoughts

- ✓ Its my fault they died
- ✓ People I care about are going to die
- ✓ Why did they leave me
- ✓ Its not fair
- ✓ The world is not a safe place

Feelings

- ✓ Mood swings, nightmares
- ✓ Become fearful of the dark
- ✓ Feel lonely/abandoned, anxious, sad, guilty, angry, relieved, numb, overwhelmed, bitter, confused, heartache, happy memories



Working With Bereaved Families



* **12 Needs of a Bereaved Child** **- INFORMATION**

- ✓ A child needs clear, comprehensive information about the death
- ✓ A child needs reassurance that they are not responsible for the death
- ✓ A child needs reassurance that they will be cared for
- ✓ A child needs safe companions who respond to their questions

Based on William Worden's (1996) findings of a 2 year study -
The Harvard Bereavement Study re death of a parent-and a CBN
(Childhood Bereavement Network) study (2007)

* **12 Needs of a Bereaved Child** **- FEELINGS**

- ✓ A child needs to be allowed to express feelings and then have their fears and anxieties soothed
- ✓ A child needs to have someone who will listen attentively so that their feelings will be acknowledged and respected (empathy).
- ✓ A child needs their thoughts and feelings validating.
- ✓ A child needs help gaining perspective on their emotions

*** 12 Needs of a Bereaved Child - GRIEF**

- ✓ A child needs to see other people grieve and learn how people grieve in the group they belong to.
- ✓ A child needs to be involved and included in open grieving.
- ✓ A child needs permission to continue with interests and activities.
- ✓ A child needs to say goodbye to the person who has died and have opportunities to remember the deceased throughout their lives.

* The Parent

“The function of the surviving parent is the most powerful predictor of a child’s adjustment to the death of a parent.”

Based on William Worden’s (1996) findings of a 2-year study –
The Harvard Bereavement Study re death of a parent.

* The “Good Enough” Grieving Parent

- ✓ Psycho education
 - Share information, books, movies
 - Encourage to go to counselling if applicable
 - Teach some theory
- ✓ Home truths
- ✓ Longer assessment period
- ✓ Holding

* Assessment

- ✓ Intervening variables
- ✓ Stages of grief
- ✓ Tasks of grief
- ✓ Whirlpool of grief
- ✓ Child's reactions
 - what is the 'problem'?
- ✓ Meaningful dates
- ✓ Genogram or ecogram
- ✓ Why now?





* The Work

- ✓ Whatever of the '12 needs' isn't being met
- ✓ A place to remember
- ✓ A space to feel uncomfortable feelings
- ✓ Help to say goodbye
- ✓ Psycho education for parents
- ✓ Creative work



* Contracting Box

- ✓ Box – our room
- ✓ Them and me – figures
- ✓ Clock – time
- ✓ Key – notes and work kept in a safe place
- ✓ Purse – confidentiality

<https://www.facebook.com/CreativeSupervisionleeds/videos/1868564263434805/>

* Ideas

- ✓ Getting to know client
 - Jenga questions
 - Assessment Worksheet
 - The whirlpool of grief
- ✓ Help remember:
 - Decorate a candle, photo frame, pebble or pillow case,
 - Make a memory box or memory jar using salt and chalks
- ✓ Say goodbye:
 - Writing; poetry, diary, letters
- ✓ Express Feelings:
 - Drawing and painting
 - Box/envelope with feelings inside
 - Use clay / sand / play dough
 - Make a puppet
 - Collage



* The Final Breath

What next?

- ✓ More training?
- ✓ Watch a grief movie?
- ✓ Buy some children's grief books?
- ✓ Make changes to your parenting or ways of working?

* CPD Certificate

Don't forget to claim your CPD certificate.



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