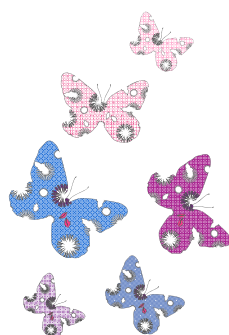


Good Grief: Interventions for Supporting Bereaved Children and Adolescents

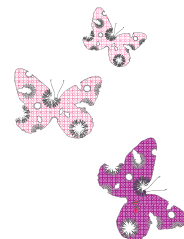


Presented at the 63rd Annual Convention of the NACSW
October 19, 2013

Erica Serrine, Ph.D., LCSW

“If you live to be 100, I hope I live to be 100 minus
one day, so I never have to live without you.” ---
Winnie the Pooh

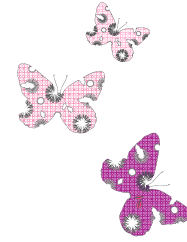
Common Questions Following a Death



- How did this happen?
- Is it going to happen to me?
- Is it going to happen to someone else I love?
- How is this going to impact me?
- Did I do something to cause it?
- Who is going to take care of me?



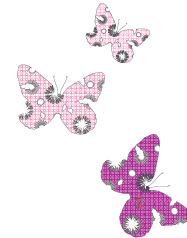
Common Grief Reactions Among All Age Groups



- Regressive behaviors
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating
 - * Change in schoolwork/grades
- Somatic complaints
- Anger
 - * acting out/aggressive behaviors
- Guilt
 - * magical thinking
- Fear
- Continuing attachment bonds



Suggested Interventions for All Age Groups

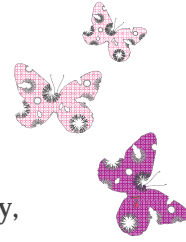


- Normalize feelings of grief
- Model healthy mourning behaviors
- Use concrete terms when discussing death
- Foster an environment encouraging open and honest dialogue about the death
- Provide a caring and supportive environment
- Provide opportunities for memorialization
- Discuss expression of CABs
- Bibliotherapy, Artwork, Play Therapy



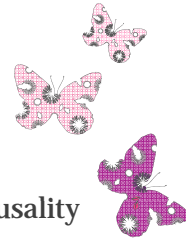
Toddlers and Preschoolers Age 2-5

- Limited understanding of irreversibility, nonfunctionality, and causality
- Exhibit magical thinking
- Short attention spans

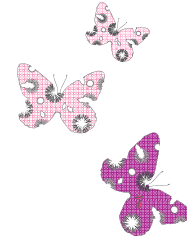


Elementary School Age 6-10

- Most understand irreversibility and causality
- Often still exhibit magical thinking
- Sometimes view death in a violent sense
- May fear death is contagious



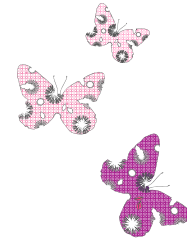
Late Elementary/Middle School Age 10-12



- Understand Universality
- Egocentrism begins
 - * May view death as a punishment
 - * May express concern about how the death will impact them personally
 - * May begin to conceal emotions



High School Age 13-18+

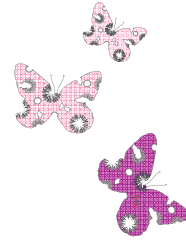


- Understand death on an adult level
- Experiencing a major life transition prior to the death
- Increased questions about spirituality
- Egocentrism
- May assume family roles of the person who died
- Often hide emotions
- May lack adequate peer support



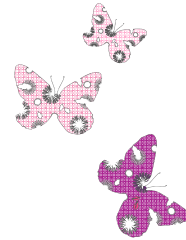
Signs of Concern All Ages

- * Clinical Depression
- * Suicidal Ideation or Attempts
- * Apparent Lack or Avoidance of Emotion
- * Withdrawal from Family and Friends
- * Drug/Alcohol Use or Abuse
- * Illegal Behavior



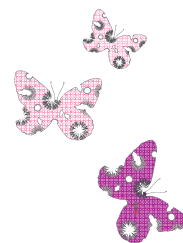
Using Artwork to Explain:

- * Suicide
- * Remarriage of a Surviving Parent
- * Cancer



Sample Support Group Session Topics

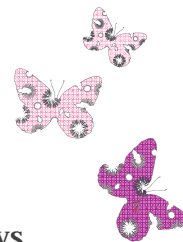
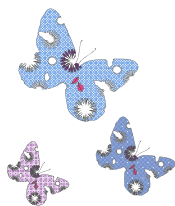
- My Grief Story
- Coping with Anger
- Coping with and Expressing Feelings
- Seeking Support
- Coping with Changes (Good and Bad)
- Memories (Positive and Negative)
- Continuing Attachment Bonds



Closing Thought

- “If ever there is tomorrow when we're not together.. there is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we're apart...I'll always be with you.”

–Winnie the Pooh



Resources

- <http://www.pbs.org/parents/whenfamiliesgrieve/>
- <http://childrengrieve.org/>
- <http://www.dougy.org/grief-support-programs/>



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