GRIEF AND LOSS AND CHILDREN: A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS AND EDUCATORS

by

Rachel Mulder

B.A., University of Victoria, 1995
PDP, Simon Fraser University, 1998

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Grief and Loss and Children: A Guidebook for Caregivers and Educators

Loss and the accompanying grief that children experience in childhood is a real and problematic concern for the healthy development of children. Often times, children's grief experiences are overlooked or minimized because adults don't want to draw attention to it for fear of making it worse. This project was undertaken to demonstrate the need to address this issue. I researched the impact of leaving issues of grief and loss unresolved in childhood, and the impact that this has on subsequent development. I also examined therapeutic practice that has positive outcomes for children and combined those into a series of lessons. These lessons are crafted to work within the current BC education curriculum and can be incorporated into one on one, small group or the classroom setting, with therapeutic approaches and techniques designed to support both the grieving child and those caring adults and peers who want to help in a time of loss.

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Section One: Grief and Loss For Children: An Integrated Approach

Rationale and Purpose of Project

The existential reality of loss and death are experiences all humans encounter. For young children, this experience may come at a time when they are ill equipped to cope with the magnitude of the event. Developmental stages, circumstances of the loss, and the support of caring individuals will often have bearing on the way a child deals with a loss. Because many children experience a loss that affects family life, and parents who are also grieving, it is often the realm of those in the helping professions to deal with the aftermath of this experience.

Loss comes in many forms. Western society would love to protect children from the harshness of death, but children lose loved ones to death, both expected and unexpected. Illness and accidents affect children's lives. In our society, children lose loved ones to violence, both as victims and perpetrators. Incarceration of parents is a very real and traumatic loss. Economic crisis in families often makes children the victims of loss of security, school, home and community. Moving and the disruption of family life and familiarity may be a result of many different circumstances, but a loss nonetheless. Separation and divorce are a persistent form of loss that many children experience in their lifetimes. With such variety and diversity in the nature of loss, how can we help children to cope through these difficult times? What strategies are there for helping children to mourn? What is the normal face of mourning in young children? What do you say to children when you cannot change the reality of their loss?

For many parents and caring adults, finding support for their children within their communities is their first option in supporting their grieving child. Sometimes support groups are run locally to help children cope with death of a loved one. However, children experience loss in many forms and that is not always the best fit for them. Finding a support group that serves the emotional and developmental needs of your child, and one that is available during your child's time of need can be a difficult task.

One community based program that was developed to deal with children's grief and loss is Rainbows. Rainbows is a program that was originally developed in the US in 1983 by Suzy Yehl Marta. This program is committed to helping children and teens grieve and grow after a loss (Rainbows, 1983). The program has been available in Canada since 1983. "Rainbows offers support and direction as the bereaved journey toward acceptance of their loss" (Marta, 2003 p. 16). It is documented that over 2.7 million children have been served by Rainbows.

This program requires specialized and voluntary facilitator training, as well as voluntary enrollment and participation of young people within the program. With the program celebrating 25 years in Canada, clearly, the issue of grief and loss for children is not an area of emerging need for children. Limitations to this well-established program exist, most notably that it is not offered in all communities, and therefore is not available to all children and teens.

Without access to established programs such as Rainbows, what opportunities do children have then to share their experiences? The greatest social experience for children is at school. It is the role of schools to try to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of

students. "The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy." (BC Ministry of Education Governance and Legislation Branch, School Act Revisions, 2013, p. C-11). The work of school systems and teachers is to try to meet the varied needs of all learners, to teach to the whole child.

The majority of children's days are spent in the care of their teachers and in the companionship of their classmates. This is often where their issues of loss become most evident. Teachers and friends notice behaviour changes as well as academic changes. It is hoped that within this environment there would be caring adults to help support them through their loss. This is also a place to help normalize the variety of losses children experience and the enormous emotions that go with them. It is for these reasons that I created a guide with practical activities to assist caregivers and teachers in supporting children during delicate times of childhood grief.

The purpose of this project is:

1) to create ready-made activities that any teacher or caregiver can work through with a child;

2) provide activities that are diverse including the use of bibliotherapy, art therapy and play therapy; and

3) support school based integration of children's emotional well being into the curriculum.

The reality is that elementary school-aged children are developmentally in the pre-operational or operational stage of development. This means that many children will have some understanding of loss (Goldman, 2004), but how much they understand is determined by each child's place on the developmental continuum. Children are aware of the changes that loss brings, and are sensitive to the changes it brings about in the adults around them (Corr, 2004). Children often react like a mirror to the emotional state of those around them.

In my own experience as a teacher of young children, there have been many times that I have students who are sad and grieving a loss, who are struggling to manage everyday life in the classroom. The emotional responses to loss are varied, from inattentiveness during lesson time to physical ailments throughout the day, but it most often becomes evident that something major has happened when behaviour and academic performance changes. What then do we do in the school setting to support these grieving children? Access to a counsellor is sadly not available to all children, as some schools do not have a qualified counsellor on site. With limited time and resources, only the most prominent outward behaviors tend to be the focus of school-based counselling.

In some instances, schools try to refer children to outside help to the realm of professional grief counsellors. Sometimes hospice organizations in communities offer support groups and resources for parents. But in a time of crisis and emotional upheaval, many parents want the care of trusted and known professionals like the classroom teacher and school staff. Thus, a set of activities geared towards a specific developmental group would help teachers and school counsellors support students more effectively through their times of crisis.

These activities, done in a class or group setting, would not highlight the loss of any one child, but would encourage coping skills for all, provide opportunity for dialogue among all the children, and foster empathy towards one another. Equally useful as individual activities, these can be done one-on-one with a caregiver who will help the child express his or her grief in healthy ways, and offer opportunity to dialogue.

This project takes on special significance for me in that the topic of grief work and supporting bereaved people was a major part of my mother's life before she died. She was involved in bereavement ministry in her church, and began a chapter of *The Compassionate Friends* in her community. She walked beside many people as they grieved the loss of a loved one. Though not a trained counsellor, she embodied the essential traits for the therapeutic relationship described by Rogers (Corey, 2009) of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding which assisted many people through their grieving process.

When she was dying of cancer in 2010, it was important for me to help my own children have healthy experiences related to her dying and death. My mom was a strong advocate for honesty and awareness of the reality of death as an important part of life. She encouraged people to talk about the elephant in the room, and not be afraid of sorrow or grief. Encouraging my children to understand death as a natural, though emotionally painful part of life has certainly helped them in completing their own grieving tasks. I hope that some of the things I have learned and incorporate into this project do justice to that belief, and to her memory.

Section Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The experience of loss and grief is an important aspect of life for many children. The purpose of this literature review is first to understand and define the various types of grief that children experience. Second, my goal is to come to a better understanding of what children's grief and grieving looks like. Third, I will look at the research that has been done with understanding the importance of dealing with childhood grief. Fourth, an awareness of culturally sensitive issues about grief and loss will be explored. Lastly, I will look at the various types of treatments available and show the need for a guide for parents and educators to support children throughout their grief.

The Many Faces of Grief

> Grief involves your total reactions and responses to any loss, not just bereavement. Grieving occurs for some aspects of every major life change. (Reeves, 2001 p. 17)

Children in western society face loss despite the intentions of well meaning adults who try to protect them. Some of the grief one will experience over the course of a lifetime is unexpected, what Corr (2010) refers to as non-normative transitions. These are events that occur contrary to normal or expected order in life, and as such leave people unprepared. For example, the death of a child goes against the normal process of growing into adulthood.

Grief and death tend to be taboo subjects that adults shy away from until confronted with the reality of a child's loss. In western culture, many people tend to feel uncomfortable with sadness and open expressions of grieving, such as tears, and tend to want a quick resolution to the grief of others, including young children (Hooyman, 2006). Then, in the

midst of their own emotional response, many adults may be uncertain what to do for a grieving child. For children, grief and loss may come in a variety of ways. Christ (2000) contends that children as young as three years of age do, in fact, experience grief. Currier, Holland and Neimeyer (2007) state that children as young as 4 will show expressions of grief, though not in the same manner as adults. Regardless of the type of loss, the severing of an attachment bond can seriously impact a child (Branch & Brinson, 2007).

A definition and clarification must be made when referring to grief and bereavement. The Oxford Online Dictionary (2013) defines grief as "intense sorrow, especially caused by someone's death," and bereavement as " the action or condition of being deprived through death." The two words are used often interchangeably within the literature to describe the emotional experiences after a significant loss, not just the death of a loved one. According to James and Friedman (2001) "Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by a change or an end in a familiar pattern of behavior p.18)." Grief has also been described as the reaction to loss (LeCount, 2000). It may be experienced emotionally or physically, and may even resemble a physical injury in some. It is a process, not a state of being. It is a mandatory part of the human experience. Reeves (2001) likened grief to a spider web with many interconnected strands to travel on, but without a clear beginning or a finite end, a process of continuing circles.

Primarily we think of death as the most significant loss a person can experience. Children may experience the death of a family member or friend, or even that of the family pet. The nature of the relationship between the child and the deceased has a significant impact upon how the child is affected by the loss (Massat, Moses & Ornstein, 2008). The closer the relationship of the deceased to the child, especially that of a parent or sibling, the

more profound the loss (Webb, 2011). If the death causes a disruption or change in daily life, its impact becomes more profound.

The death of a parent, in particular, the primary caregiver, is an especially traumatic event for any child. The attachment relationship to this person has been permanently altered, as the secure base is permanently removed and unavailable during future development (Sekaer, 1987). A child's sense of security and safety has been unimaginably altered with the loss of a parent, whether expected or accidental. This type of loss can affect the child's perceptions of self, the very parts that make up her or his own identity (Holland, 2008). Some would argue that the death of a parent, regardless of circumstances, would warrant a traumatic event for a child. Children may then experience grief symptoms as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (McClatchy, Vonk & Palardy, 2009). The loss of the emotional connection to a parent, especially the emotional caregiver is particularly difficult for a child. Some research indicates that the nature of the mother-child relationship makes the loss of this parent more difficult than the loss of a father due to the emotional bonds between mother and child (Hooyman, 2006). Children who have experienced the death of a parent often experience a wide range of emotions, including extreme sadness and sorrow, fear of losing the remaining parent, helplessness with the situation and anger at the situation. Connection to this caring adult must be re-sorted and reorganized for the child to maintain a bond with them after death. The inability to complete this kind of mourning may mean delays in maturity and the natural progression into adulthood (Field, 2006).

To make the loss of a parent potentially more difficult, the remaining parental support system that a child would normally turn to in times of crisis is often in the midst of crisis themselves (Kirwin & Hamrin, 2005). When parents are not emotionally available to support

their children, children may become "forgotten mourners." This may leave the child vulnerable and isolated in their feelings of grief (Holland, 2008). In the case of a traumatic loss, which some would argue the loss of a parent under any circumstance is, there are more persistent PTSD symptoms in some children (Massat, Moses & Ornstein, 2008; McClatchy, Vonk & Palardy, 2009).

Rolls and Payne (2007) conducted a study interviewing children with regards to their experiences with childhood bereavement services in the U.K. They noted that children often had complicated and confused feelings regarding how to talk about the loss with their remaining parent. Children often felt guilt or anxiety about causing further distress to the remaining parent. They may ignore their own need to talk about the loss to help "protect" the remaining parent. Parents reported not knowing how to respond to their children as they themselves were overwhelmed by their own emotional response. Parents often find the grief experience and expression of their children difficult to respond to (Christ, 2000). Sometimes when consumed by their own process, parents have limited ability to support their children. The consequences of this may mean the child learns parental style of grieving as the pattern to adopt in their own adult life (Reeves, 2001).

Children's reactions to the loss of parent are varied. Due to their vulnerability, they may be especially susceptible to psychological disturbances (Currier, Holland & Neimeyer 2007; Kirwin & Hamrin, 2005). Increased reports of behaviour changes, from attention seeking behaviours to withdrawing from previously enjoyed activities as well as changes in sleeping patterns have been noted (Currier, Holland & Neimeyer, 2007; Holland, 2008). It is not surprising that a child will have a variety of responses to such a dramatic shift in both their external and internal world order.

Another dramatic loss that an estimated 2 million children in the U.S. face each year is the loss of a sibling (Charles & Charles, 2006). The death of a sibling changes family dynamics and presents a host of complex situations and emotions for any child. The grieving child has lost an important attachment, and a piece of his or her own identity (Charles & Charles, 2006). A sibling is a marker of life events and a constant in a child's world; they have shared experiences unique to their specific family; they are often the first playmate and friend of a child. When a sibling dies, the child is left holding the legacy of all that shared life alone (Koehler, 2010). Loss of a sibling can change one's self-perception (Schoen, Burgoyne & Schoen, 2004). For example, the child must now consider whether the identifying words of sister or brother continue to apply as a description of self.

The close bond between siblings can make the loss a deeply traumatic event, impacting the ability of the child to grieve (Webb, 2011). A child may experience not only grief and sadness, but also guilt and regret for past wrongs or unresolved issues (Schoen, Burgoyne & Schoen, 2004). In the circumstance of a child's death, parents and children are often hesitant to engage in discussion about the loss, for fear of further distressing the other party (Rolls & Payne, 2007). Parents are often consumed with their own grieving process, making them less accessible to their grieving child. This may mean the child is not able to fully experience and incorporate the changes in life due to this loss (Kirwin & Harmin, 2005). Children often feel embarrassed, isolated and alone, especially since few friends are able to understand their experience. To complicate matters, the type of death, like suicide or drug overdose, may also bear social stigma for a child to overcome (Koehler, 2010).

Children who witness the death of a loved one, or children who witness violence and the subsequent loss of parental figure with the arrest of a loved one, are impacted differently

than children who do not witness such events (Massat, Moses & Ornstein, 2008). The fear, shock and confusion experienced when the police or other professionals are involved in situations of violence can only serve to further complicate the experience of the loss itself. Negative social stigma may also be connected to the loss of a parent due to involvement with the police, further isolating the child and making them vulnerable (Bockneck, Sanderson & Britner, 2009). This often makes the emotional response more complex for a child, as they also experience grief-related trauma (McClatchy, Vonk & Palardy, 2009). McClatchy et al. (2009) suggest that children who experience trauma may later develop posttraumatic stress related disorders, including depression, anxiety and behavioural disturbances. Childhood traumatic grief prevents children from fully experiencing their grief and processing through it.

A more ambiguous type of loss that affects many school-aged children is that of the incarceration of a parent or close family member. This is a complex situation because it may also bear negative social stigma, making the grieving process a shameful time (Bockneck, Sanderson & Britner, 2009). The qualitative study by Bockneck, Sanderson and Britner (2009) of 35 children indicated that these children often lack the emotional support they need to cope. This sample of children showed a great deal of internalizing behaviour, possibly due to limited support systems. This group of children also demonstrated signs of posttraumatic stress like guilt and hypervigilance. These children are likely to experience learning difficulties and act out inappropriately. Very young children also have difficulty understanding why the parent left, depending on their developmental stage, and may not fully understand what has happened or where the parent has gone (Branch & Brinson, 2007). It may be difficult for children to visit or maintain contact with parents in the prison system due

to distance and the inability to visit. This makes maintaining an ongoing relationship even more difficult, where the parent is gone, but not entirely removed from the possibility of relationship with the child (Branch & Brinson, 2007). It can be very confusing for children.

Of special note here is also the unique demographic make up of people who experience this kind of loss. Although only representing 4 % of the Canadian population, Aboriginal people represent a large portion of the population within the criminal justice system. According to Juristat, the Canadian Centre of Justice Statistics (2006), the proportion of Aboriginal people in sentenced custody was 2 to 6 times that of their proportional representation in the general populations. 28% of all males incarcerated, and 35% of all females incarcerated were of Aboriginal descent . This means that though the population of Aboriginal people is not high, a large number of children of Aboriginal ancestry will experience the loss of a loved one due to incarceration. This appears to be an area of loss that is prominent within one particular culture, but largely unnoticed and unaddressed within the larger context. Aboriginal people also report high incidence of violence, with 39 % of those surveyed reporting family violence a concern in their communities (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003). As stated previously, children who witness violence are impacted differently, and more likely to show signs of PTSD (Massat et al., 2008; McClatchy et. al., 2009). The intergenerational affects of trauma and loss may be significant when working with people of Aboriginal ancestry (Duran, 2006).

Connected to this type of loss, and what may be as a result of parental incarceration, is the child who loses their parental system and enters foster care. This may be a temporary situation of loss, but may in fact endure for months or even years. Sometimes these children have been unable to develop strong attachments to their parents for various reasons, such as

abuse, violence and neglect (Hooyman, 2006). Similar to the incarceration of a parent, the loss of home and parents may happen abruptly, with the involvement of government officials, complicating the already extremely stressful situation for the child. Children are often denied information about what is happening, and their confusion can cause a variety of emotional and behavioural responses (Bockneck, Sanderson & Britner, 2009). Because the foster system is a temporary remedy, many children experience multiple losses when moved from home to home. These children may grieve multiple losses; the stigma of losing their birth family, stigma of multiple foster placements, losing friends and significant others, and the loss of security familiarity brings. This type of ambiguous loss may develop into a state of chronic loss, further complicating the meaning of the loss as well as strategies for how to grieve and how to cope (Bockneck e al., 2009; Hooyman, 2006).

Changes in family structure and family life through separation and divorce affect millions of children each year. The vulnerability of children with this type of loss is affected by many factors, including age, development, information and circumstances. Children experience a variety of emotional and behavioural responses to this type of loss. Many children experience guilt and self-blame for the end of the marriage (Branch & Brinson, 2007). Children may entertain magical thinking and believe they are the cause of the difficulties, and that if they change some aspect of themselves, the situation will be resolved, and the family reunited (Graham, 2004). There may also be feelings of disloyalty to one parent when a child is in the care or custody of the other. Children may also react with anger and fear of the change in the family dynamic, and the uncertainty of the relationship changes as well. Loss of security figures largely into this type of loss, as many families are also affected by changes to economic circumstances with divorce (Pomeroy, 2011). Changes in

homes, schools or communities is disruptive and further unsettling to children who are in the midst of their once certain and predictable worlds being reorganized. It is often difficult for children because they have no say in the changing state of their worlds, such as when their parent develops a new relationship. The sense of powerlessness may lead to anger and acting out types of behaviour (Hooyman, 2006). As with the death of a parent, often the emotional support that is needed from a parent is absent. Feelings of guilt, anger and stress due to the divorce or separation may lead a parent to underestimate the feelings of the child and not adequately respond to their emotional needs (Hooyman, 2006).

Loss of security is another ambiguous type of loss. This type of loss comes sometimes in the form of economic hardship when employment or income is lost in a family. Losses of jobs and homes are major destabilizing events in a family that affect children (Pomeroy, 2011). Although children may not understand the cause of the stress, they are sensitive to the emotions of others around them (Corr, 2010). When families move, through necessity or desire, it may result in a loss of security for children. For example, changing schools means a loss of friendships and the security of familiar faces and routines. Children are particularly affected by changes to their routines, location and familiarity (James & Friedman, 2001). Sometimes adults miss the cues to their children's emotions and give them well-meaning platitudes such as "don't feel bad" and "you'll make new friends." This may devalue the child's feelings and create unrealistic expectations of how to cope.

One of the least explored areas of childhood loss is that of the family pet. For many children, this is their first experience with death of any kind as the life span of a pet is significantly shorter than a human. It can create a profound grief experience (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2006). The companionship and constancy of a family pet are the bonds of a

meaningful relationship. The loss of a pet is a meaningful loss for a child, as it often directly affects their daily life and routines. Many families consider the family pet to be a member of the family itself, with deep and abiding love binding the relationship. Children will grieve this loss in different ways, depending on their developmental levels. But is important to note that this type of grief is very real for many children and can impact their emotions and behaviour. It may heighten a child's fear over the possibilities of others dying, as growing awareness of the temporary nature of life is understood (Corr, 2010).

Grief Tasks

While there are many types of loss in life, the unexpected or unacknowledged experience of loss can create difficulty for children. Helping them to understand and normalize their experiences is key to future mental health. Resolution of childhood grief, of any kind, is critical to adult psychological wellness (Field, 2006; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2006). Worden (2003) has suggested that there are tasks of mourning that one must complete. Rather than thinking of the grieving process as a stage model or phase model that one passively moves through to resolve grieving, Worden (2003) asserts that there are tasks of grieving that require work on the part of the individual. With work, the individual becomes active in moving forward, and the mourner may also be influenced by outside intervention to assist in this process. Worden describes four specific tasks that must be moved through in order to successfully mourn a loss, not just a death.

Task one according to Worden (2003), is to accept the reality of the loss. In this task, the person grieving must accept the finality of the situation. Cognitive understanding of the permanence of death, or the permanence of a move, separation, divorce etc., must exist to

complete this task. This task also requires an emotional acceptance of the loss. One may experience phases of belief and disbelief during this time as they come to terms with a new reality of change. Worden (2003) suggests that participation in traditional rituals like funerals or ceremonies may be helpful in moving toward acceptance. Saying goodbye in letters, or saying goodbye to the home a child is moving from are options James and Friedman (2001) suggest as ways to help a child come to accept the loss in their lives.

Task two is to work through the pain of grief (Worden, 2003). This is a unique experience for each individual, and children's responses will be as varied as they are. For many people there is both physical and emotional pain associated with a loss. Stomach pain, lack of energy, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest or throat are possible physical symptoms. Children do not always process their grief in a linear way, and may have moments of extreme emotional upheaval followed by moments of calm as they work through this task (Goldman, 2004). Grief may cause a variety of feeling; hopelessness, guilt and fear that may coexist with feelings of sadness and loneliness. Making sense of these emotions is important for the griever. The ability to experience the pain of grief can be impacted by society's response to grief. There is a tendency in western culture to minimize expression of emotion. Accepting that it hurts to suffer a loss, and that one cannot care deeply and feel no pain is key to this task.

Worden's task three is to adjust to an environment from which the person is missing (Worden, 2003). This comes about in making adjustments in three areas. The first is the external adjustment, where the everyday reality of the loss in the physical world is met. Accepting the change of physical world due to a loss, like moving to a new home, being in foster care or no longer living with both parents are examples of this external world change

for children. Sometimes children will have to take on new roles in this adjustment, like helping to get younger siblings to school. This adjustment may not happen for several months after a loss. The second area is the internal adjustment. This is when one comes to terms with how the loss impacts one's sense of self. For example, if a sibling has died, how does the child describe him or herself now in relation to that person? If the child experiences a divorce, the child must reorganize his or her definition of family. It may impact areas of self-esteem, where a child's sense of being different is magnified by the loss. When a parent or close attachment figure is lost, the child may devalue themselves with feelings of guilt and helplessness. That helpless feeling may impact one's feeling of control over the outcome of events. Children often have very little say in major life changes and a loss may magnify negative feelings. The final adjustment that must be made to complete this task is the spiritual adjustment. A loss is likely to challenge one's beliefs about order, security and safety. A child may experience this fear of their changing world and not have the developmental abilities to comprehend the causal relationship or the event itself. Children's development could become "stuck" in this place if they are unable to move through this task (Bowlby, 1980). This may mean future issues related to security, anxiety and inability to mature in all areas.

The final task Worden (2003) refers to is emotionally relocating and moving on. This final task allows the mourner to still have a connection to the lost person that still allows for healthy living in the present. For children, this may be a belief that a deceased relative is watching over them from heaven. The concept that one can love a person after they have died and still have love left for those who are living may take some time to adjust to. Being able to bear the emotional connection to what was lost is the completion of this task.

For children, the task model allows for revisiting the event as they grow and develop. Children or adults need to be able to complete certain levels to move on to the next. This model allows for the cyclical nature of grief, it is fluid and may be revisited from time to time as needed. Using this model, a child who experienced a loss at a young age, can revisit the emotions and relationships as they grow in understanding of the loss at later ages.

Cognitive Development and Grief

John Bowlby's work on attachment theory (1969) describes the process by which infants are connected to their primary caregivers and defines this bond as attachment. His work has been the foundation for our understandings of how people develop connections and relationships in early childhood. Simply put, healthy attachments will provide the infant with security, called the secure base attachment, and confidence to encounter new situations in their life experiences with less anxiety and stress. Less healthy attachments may be called insecure and fall into the categories of anxious-ambivalent, avoidant or disorganized-disoriented. Infant attachment behaviours are predictors of some later psychosocial development (Corey, 2009). The early systems a child develops to connect with and relate interpersonally to others are the model by which future relationships are formed. Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory helps us to understand the strong emotional reaction that happens when these important bonds are severed (Kirwin & Harmin, 2005).

Young children continue to grow and develop their attachment behaviours. Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory proposes that mourning or grieving can only be resolved when recognition of the permanence of the loss has been accepted, and life is reoriented to this reality. Thus, changes to the individual's external world, with a loss of an important

attachment figure, requires a corresponding change to the organization of his or her internal world (Field, 2006). Emotional reorganizing through successful mourning would be a process an individual would undergo to make sense of the new reality.

Studying social animal groups shows that disruptions of social life early on can create PTSD symptoms in elephant populations (Bradshaw et. al., 2005). There is a link between disruption in the ability to regulate self as part of a collapse in traditional social structures and transmission of social norms. As with animals, intact functioning social connections and attachments help to buffer the effects of trauma and loss with humans. A loss or trauma can sever important social bonds and inhibit the ability to successfully deal with stressful situations (Bradshaw et. al, 2005). Bowen's (1969) family systems approach demonstrates that learned interaction behaviours can be transmitted, unknowingly, to future generations. This includes the passing on of poor coping strategies to children which may result in them having future mental health issues. Unhealthy interactions and communications early on in life can potentially impair the ability of the child to learn the necessary skills for adapting to life stressors (Gehart, 2010).

Recent research by Schore and Schore (2008) links Bowlby's original attachment research to current understanding of brain systems involved in affect and self regulation. Schore and Schore (2008) contend that early attachment experiences are key to the neurobiological core of human unconscious in the structures of the right brain. When mechanisms of development are changed or altered, the brain structure, as well as psychic function of the brain, is altered for all stages of development. The parts of the brain that are impacted and the severity of the impact depends, of course, on the age of the developing

brain. The need exists then to recognize the possible physiological impact that grief and loss can have on the developing brain structures of a young child.

The way in which children experience grief can be just as complex and enduring as adults. Bereavement is often not expressed the same way for children as for adults (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2005). In large part, personal attributes, such as family support and communication affect how children respond to loss. However, the reactions of a child to loss are also dependent on his or her stage of cognitive development (Schoen, Burgoyne & Schoen, 2004). Webb (2011) contends that most children do not understand the basic facts about death until about the age of 8. Broderick and Blewitt (2010) reviewed Piaget's four developmental stages of childhood. The age markers are a general guideline that depicts the age and experience in the world a child requires to transition between stages, however they are not absolute markers to indicate the stage of life a child is in. Piaget held that children, and adults, continuously negotiate meaning in their worlds through interaction, so we would be best served to understand that the learning or understanding of any one stage is built upon the development previously achieved, as though on a continuum, rather than concrete and specific stages (Corr, 2010).

Children's cognitive development and, subsequently, their understanding of loss, are closely connected. Piaget describes children between the ages of 2-7 as in the pre-operational stage. In the pre-operational stage, children are likely to engage in magical, reversible and egocentric thinking (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010; Goldman 2004). This stage is generally characterized by the inability to think logically, and by the ability to focus on only one piece, or one aspect, of information at a time (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). A child in the preoperational stage of development is just beginning to understand that death and

separation can be a permanent state (Kirwin & Hamrin, 2005). Children in this stage typically engage in notions of magical thinking, egocentric thinking and have an inability to differentiate between thoughts and actions (McClatchy, Vonk & Palardy, 2009). This way of viewing the world often creates incorrect ideas that they are somehow responsible for the death of their loved one (Goldman, 2004; Morgan & Roberts, 2010). Children in this stage appear to be more susceptible to emotional and psychological responses with separation and divorce (Hooyman, 2006). They have more difficulty understanding the reorganization of the family and are less able to comprehend how a parent can still love a child but not the other parent. Fears about love ending can preoccupy the child. Their own egocentric view of the world may also contribute to feelings of responsibility for the marital issues.

These children in the preoperational stage of development are also just as likely to be openly grieving with tears and crying one minute, and completely distracted with play in another moment. Children in this stage often have less developed vocabularies as well. They may lack the necessary words to express what they are feeling, and so are more likely to express their feelings through play, fantasy and drawing (Christ, 2000). Sometimes children in this developmental stage will regress to earlier behaviours, like thumb sucking, and dramatic reactions to common things, like bumps and bruises (Hooyman, 2006). These factors may make it difficult for parents or caregivers to follow the sequence of their emotions and give them the time and attention they need to process their emotions.

The concrete operational stage of life occurs next in sequence, usually from age 6-12. For many children, the ability to comprehend the finality of loss due to death does not happen until they are in the concrete operational stage of development, sometime after the age of 8 (Webb, 2011). During this stage, children are better able to express logical thought about

death itself, but with greater understanding comes fears associated with death. Fear about something happening to remaining loved ones becomes intensified, and they need a great deal of reassurance, as the order in their world has been disrupted (Hooyman, 2006). Children in this stage often believe death assumes an external, tangible form, like a ghost or bogeyman, and that the deceased becomes a spirit or an angel who watches over them (Christ, 2000; Hooyman, 2006; Morgan & Roberts, 2010). This belief of the presence of lost loved ones may provide comfort to the grieving child, allowing them to maintain relationship with the deceased. However, thoughts of an external bringer of death may increase anxiety about the possibility of death befalling the child and the presence of malevolent forces.

Christ's (2000) qualitative analysis of 157 parentally bereaved children reviews a wide range of responses. The study indicates that children in the younger portion of this age grouping, 6-8 year olds, tend to exhibit difficulty sleeping, are more fearful and more likely to suffer from separation anxiety. The older portion of this age group, children aged 9-11, sought out more factual information about the death, indicating a greater need for understanding as they move through this developmental stage. Understanding the course of events gives them a greater sense of control (Christ, 2010). Goldman (2004) states children in this stage are very curious about death and seek information. They are better able to think about death in abstract terms (Morgan & Roberts, 2010). Children in this stage often struggle with causality, and may feel guilt or responsibility that, had they acted differently, the outcome may have been altered (Webb, 2011).

In the concrete operational stage, children may demonstrate a variety of internalized and externalized reactions to death (Schoen et al., 2005). Often they only express their emotions sporadically. Some children may retreat into themselves and avoid activities they

previously enjoyed. Withdrawing from friends or school activities may be examples of this behaviour. These children show signs of compartmentalizing behaviours as a means of controlling their grief. Other children may externalize their reactions in acting out behaviours at home and at school, or escaping into activities heavily (Christ, 2000; Schoen et al., 2005). They may express anger at parents, siblings, God or supreme being because they do not know how to manage their feelings appropriately (Hooyman, 2006). Feelings of powerlessness, guilt, anger and sorrow create a puzzling response in children. Fighting at school, crying frequently, eating disorders or a seeming preoccupation with questions about death may be behaviours that are externalized. This variety of reactions may make it difficult for caring adults to understand the behaviour as a grief response.

From the age of about 13 years, during the prepositional operation stage, adolescents understand the implications of death and see it as beyond their control (Goldman, 2004). In moving between concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage, the child is able to think logically about hypothetical situations (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Christ (2000) noted the appearance of seemingly contradictory behaviours in this stage, which were very confusing for parents. These children may have the appearance of emotional control or detachment and then have emotional explosions, or they may seek independence from family with intense dependence on peer relationships. These are two examples of the opposite developmental directions young adolescents may exhibit (Christ, 2000). The combination for adolescents of biological, emotional and physical changes during this phase of life seem to intensify and further complicate their complex reactions to grief and loss.

Each of these developmental stages impacts the child's ability to understand a loss. With a loss due to death, children of various developmental stages understand language and

vocabulary used to describe events differently as well. Use of the term "lost" to talk about a person who has died, can imply to a child in the pre-operational stage that they may also be "found." Describing the deceased as "resting" may foster fears in a child about sleep and resting and that engaging in this activity may result in death. The language that is used must be accurate and avoid words with multiple meanings to avoid confusion on the part of the child (Webb, 2011). Euphemisms can unintentionally create fear and additional anxiety for children (Hooyman, 2006). Giving children accurate and developmentally appropriate information is key to helping them process their grief (Goldman, 2004; Webb, 2011). Answering the questions they ask, and not giving them information they don't need is important. Opportunity for dialogue is important to provide the child the freedom to ask questions and make meaning for the stage of development he or she is at.

The same is true of providing children with accurate information about other types of loss. Adults may underestimate the significance of events for children because of their varied responses. Children have a tendency to fill in the blanks, or draw their own conclusions, when they are not given adequate information (Webb, 2011). This may intensify feelings of loss, fear and anxiety about the changes they are experiencing . In the case of separation and divorce, children may erroneously believe themselves responsible for the situation and feel guilt or responsibility (Goldman, 2004).

A child's perception of events is significantly impacted by their experience of reality (Sekaer, 1987). For children who don't understand the permanence of death, for example, they will not be able to process that event until they are able to understand the concept of death. A child can only understand as much as he or she has the capacity to at a certain developmental level. Limited personal experience can make the first loss in a child's life

profound (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2006). For a child, moving for the first time may invoke a grief reaction similar to what may be experienced with the first death in a family. However, a child who has not had a close relationship with a distant grandparent may not grieve the loss, because there was no change to the child's reality.

Unlike adults, children continue to grow and develop cognitively in their understanding of loss and can experience loss in a cyclical manner (Massat, Moses & Ornstein, 2008; Worden, 2003). The concept of death does develop through childhood (Seaker, 1987). A child who suffers a loss at age 5 and does not understand the permanence of the loss may need to revisit the experience again at different ages as their understanding develops. It is important to create an openness to grieve, to allow the child to understand at varying ages and levels the loss experience (Goldman, 2004).

Resilience Factors

The way in which one reacts or responds to a loss is not just dependent on cognitive development. Interactive components that are mediating factors for how a child reacts to a loss include the person who was lost; attachment to or relationship with person who was lost; type of loss; individual capacities; social and cultural variables; and other stressors (Webb, 2011; Worden, 2003). It is this unique combination of factors that can help a child successfully grieve, or throw them into emotional chaos.

The closer the relationship to the child, the more difficult it is to manage the loss. Typically, loss of a parent or the loss of a sibling, are the most significant. The secure attachment to a parent presents more work in processing through grief. The nature of the relationship and extent of contact one has with the deceased is another factor. A child who

loses a distant relative, may react significantly different to the child who loses a beloved pet. Webb (2011) notes that how the child is included in rituals and goodbyes is a factor. The type of loss and whether it carries social stigma, like suicide, homicide or incarceration, are other elements in how one handles the loss.

The personal capacities of any child to handle loss are unique to the individual, such as coping styles or emotional expression. Even within a family there are differences in personalities and as a result the children will respond to loss in individual ways. Social support systems and strong cultural ties have benefit for the grieving person. Connection to faith or religion is often helpful. Meaning making and understanding of one's place in the community with others are ways children feel supported (Rowling, 2008). Finally, other stressors, like secondary losses also contribute to making the resilience of anyone person unique. A divorce, followed by a move and a change in economic security may make the initial loss that much more difficult.

Also impacting a child's ability to understand a loss experience are family and cultural factors. Family is the first way in which a child experiences the world around them; they exist within family culture before the culture of the wider world (Rolls & Payne, 2007). How a family reacts, or does not react, is the example the child will model. In the lives of very young children who have more limited social worlds, the reactions of family is very significant to their understanding and dictates their responses (Christ, 2000; Reeves, 2001). Families who avoid the topic of loss and death, who are unable or unwilling emotionally to cope with the grief of the children will create the baseline for which children develop their own future coping skills. This may lead to unhealthy methods for addressing loss in life by suppressing emotion (LeCount, 2000).

James and Friedman (2001) note that involving children in goodbyes, whether it be to the house they are moving from, or to their beloved pet at the vet's office, provides them with opportunities to acknowledge the loss and begin to incorporate it into a new reality. In this way, family is important in providing cues for children to decide how they ought to behave, and setting the foundation from which their future responses to loss are based. Cultural beliefs, including beliefs about death and afterlife, and involvement in the funeral rites, impact the way a child understands death. For children who participate in the funeral and funeral preparation rites, it gives meaning to the event (Morgan & Roberts, 2010;Webb, 2011). Participation in religious rituals and beliefs has been shown to help with the grieving process (Field, 2006; Worden, 2003). This involvement allows for the child's curiosity to be met, gives them personal connection to the events and may help them experience the loss in a more open and honest manner.

It would be remiss in this era to leave unexplored the issue of culturally competent or sensitive understanding of grief and loss. No two cultures are mirror images of one another and may have very distinct norms for handling the grieving process. Culture is the dynamic and evolving values and behaviours shared by a group of people (Johannes & Erwin, 2004). Recognizing that our own cultural background creates the lens through which we view "normal" grieving allows us to open the door to acceptance and openness of other ways of being. Cultural competence may include an awareness of the different use of language to describe events. First Nations people are less likely to use the word "dying" but rather "crossing over" as a description of an event that is viewed as part of a greater continuum (Baydala et. al., 2006). Cultural competence requires an attempt to understand the experiences of other people, and to not make assumptions based on one's own lived

experience. Baydala et. al. (2006), caution against using any one person's experience of grief and loss as the standard by which to examine another's. Each person will be as unique as the combination of all the mediating factors that create the complex world of the grieving child (Goldman, 2004; Worden, 2003). Cultural competence also involves learning about traditions, ceremonies, rituals, family and community involvement that may differ from our own backgrounds. Creating an environment in which a child can express grief related feelings is key to supporting them through a difficult time (LeCount, 2000;Hooyman, 2006).

Grief Related Problems

The range of behaviours that a grieving child may exhibit has no set pattern. There is no one way to grieve. Grief is not a state but a process (LeCount, 2000). The grieving process comes and goes in waves (Reeves, 2001). It can be reworked over time (Worden, 2003). People react differently to various losses, so treating each child's experience as unique is important to remember (Rowling, 2008).

The issue of childhood grief is significant because it can have wide reaching affects on the lives of children, and may also follow them into adulthood. (McClatchy, Vonk & Palardy, 2009). This may mean a lifetime of psychological issues if grief in childhood is unresolved. Field (2006) referred to intergenerational effects of unresolved loss, suggesting that children who do not deal with their loss effectively will transmit stressful and anxious behaviours to their children, impacting the attachment status of their own children. Bowen's Intergenerational Therapy (Gehart, 2010) focuses on addressing the interpersonal interaction styles that are developed within families. Families transmit anxiety over loss and crisis, and chronic anxiety can lead to health concerns, both physical and psychological. Behaviours

and means of coping learned early in life can be traced from multiple generations, thus showing the need to adjust coping strategies to become healthier.

The way we view the interconnectedness of the mind-body-spirit relationship helps us to understand that stress in the psyche creates stress on the body as well. Mate (2003) asserts that issues of loss have a biological component. In his work with chronically ill patients he notes a link between potential illness and early life experiences. The brain's stress response systems are programmed early in life therefore early experiences shape the way we respond and react both consciously and unconsciously, physically and psychologically. The responses of the psychoneuroimmunoendocrine super system are set in our earliest years and regulate our social-emotional responses and brain development. He asserts that illnesses like cancer, multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis in adults are often the result of a culmination of a lifetime of stressors and unresolved loss.

Grill (2005) writes of the physiological responses of the body to trauma that can be linked to learning difficulties and behavioural problems. The fight/flight/freeze response to a distressing situation activates the autonomic nervous system. This response is meant to help resolve or solve a threatening or stressful situation. If the stress is not alleviated however, this hypervigilant state remains. Elevated levels of stress hormones interfere can then interfere with normal neurotransmission. This can cause issues like memory problems, attention and distractibility issues and cognitive processing difficulties. Executive functions of the brain, including separating emotional responses from thinking can be affected. Over time, these children may be identified with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) because their bodies are responding to constantly elevated levels of stress hormones.

The loss of a parent can be viewed as a traumatic event for any child, regardless of circumstances (McClatchy, Vonk & Palardy 2009). Children who experience trauma related to grief can exhibit signs of depression as well as PTSD. They may become anxious, fearful, depressed and withdrawn. Changes in eating and sleeping patterns can also be indicators of trauma. Posttraumatic stress disorder is identified as a psychological disorder in need of treatment according to the DSM VI. Studies confirm that the adult who was unable to work through the tasks of grieving as a child is at a greater risk for developing depression and anxiety (Kirwin & Hamrin, 2005). Children with a history of trauma and neglect may also suffer from separation anxiety disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, phobic disorders and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (Van der Kolk, Roth, Pelcovitz, Sunday & Spinazzola, 2005). McClatchy et al.,(2009) indicate that many children show signs of serious problems one to two years after the loss. This further supports the need to have opportunity for children to revisit their loss as needed and as they develop and mature cognitively (Worden, 2003).

A study of 34 university students conducted by Charles and Charles (2007) indicated that the loss of a sibling can impact the development of a child. The child may have complicated feelings due to the inaccessibility of parents at this time, and not have opportunity to openly grieve. The child may take on the role of caregiver to the parent, or replace the deceased child in the eyes of the parent, and miss the opportunity to develop into a healthy adult. Subsequent ability to build relationships based on mutual interdependence rather than deferring to the needs of others may be due to hypervigilance to the needs of their parents at the time of loss. The pain of this loss may last a lifetime, regardless of healthy mourning.

Loss not due to death, but due to divorce, separation, moving or incarceration can have negative consequences as well. Young children may show signs of regressive behaviours (Farber & Sabatino, 2007; Schoen, Burgoyne & Schoen, 2004). This may be an attempt to reclaim a time of safety or security on the part of the child, before the disruption due to loss occurred. Some children will experience changes in mood and behaviour. They may have periods of depression and withdrawal. Some may even have physical complaints or psychosomatic symptoms that can affect everyday life (Massat, Moses & Ornstein, 2008). Stomach ailment and unspecified pain are often ways to receive attention from adults. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of grief in children can offer them an opportunity to explore their feelings. Validation of the loss is important to assisting a child to overcome it (Rowling, 2008).

Many children exhibit changes in behaviour within the realm of school. Difficulty following directions and becoming increasingly disorganized may be signs of a child struggling with the grieving process (Goldman, 2004). Many children may have a decrease in academic performance, as an inability to focus and concentrate often accompanies grief (Branch & Brinson, 2007; Schoen, Burgoyne & Schoen, 2004). Other children may immerse themselves in school and peer activities as a means of avoiding the painful feelings of loss. Some children show marked changes in behaviour and begin acting out as a means of coping with suppressed feelings, while others withdraw into themselves as a protective response to their loss (LeCount, 2000; Webb, 2011). The current school model often treats grieving children exhibiting such negative behaviours as having a problem, rather than experiencing complex manifestations of equally complex emotions (Rowling, 2008).

Supporting Children Through Grief

For children, the way they experience grief, and whether or not they successfully grieve, is modeled by the adults around them. Children have no personal relevance or experience with grief until it is a lived experience, they simply do not now how to behave (Sekaer, 1987). Adults who provide the opportunity to dialogue and who create an openness to grieve, allow children the opportunity for healthy grief (Goldman, 2004).

Family support is key to any grieving child, but it may be that in the time of crisis the family is unable to offer the support a child may need. Not all children have the family support or structure they need to adequately address their grief. For that reason, it is important that bereavement services be available to help children make sense of the loss experience. In their U.K. Bereavement Services study, Rolls and Payne (2007) demonstrated that the opportunity to dialogue and explore their grief provided children with relief from their emotions. They were also able to do this without the added worry of making their loved ones increasingly sad. In a small group setting, discussion helps to normalize feelings and reduce isolation. Validation of the loss experience is a powerful tool to use to support bereavement (Rowling 2008).

Reeves (2001) states that children need routine during the grieving process. Feeling different and being treated differently may add to feelings of isolation and contribute to esteem problems. At a time of emotional upheaval, maintaining some measure of everyday normalcy can give the child a sense of control in a powerless situation. Everyday normalcy often comes in keeping to routine, like going to school.

The reality of the global village, the rise in mass communication, and the increase in terrorism in recent years, has demonstrated that grief has gone from existing as a private experience to a shared community phenomenon (Rowling, 2008). Schools have the role of acting as the formal socializing agent in the lives of millions of children. It provides a unique opportunity to create secure, safe and therapeutic opportunities for children to engage in their healing and the potential to help many (Holland, 2008; Heath & Cole, 2011). There is an opportunity here for the lives of children to be enhanced, and for the experience of grief to be met with openness and thoughtful practice by embracing teaching moments within the school environment.

The Role of Educators

Messages from society at large discourage the display of strong emotions to personal loss, and yet encourage large scale mourning to events like the death of Princess Diana, September 11 and Hurricane Katrina (Webb, 2011). Our children are bombarded by media in ways previous generations did not have. Internet, social media, television and graphic video games give our children access to a wide variety of information, that previously they were protected from until they were mature enough to make meaning of it.

It is not until after the child has suffered a loss, and is in emotional chaos, that we address that loss and grief happens. Many teachers, like other adults, will admit to feeling ill equipped to helping children cope with a loss (Holland, 2008). While specialized training is available for counsellors, teachers may not have access to the same training. The impact of a loss is not always straightforward and predictable, but many teachers with their years of experience and understanding their students, are well equipped to support them (Holland,

2008). Teachers can help students by offering a warm and caring place to share concerns. Providing the time to listen in a caring environment, and allowing a child the opportunity to express emotion reduces shameful feelings, and enhances comfort and support (LeCount, 2000). A model of preventative mental health dealing with issues of grief and loss is suggested as a means of providing information and assistance to all children (Heath & Cole, 2011).

The school and classroom setting provide a unique opportunity to provide service and support to all children. Children are less likely to feel stigma associated with receiving help if it is offered in the school setting (Heath & Cole, 2011). Instead of adding to the feelings of isolation, the focus becomes helping the whole class develop understanding and skills, rather than focusing on one child who has experienced a loss. Teachers and classmates can help to fill the gap and provide emotional support for children when parental issues make them less able to support their children (Holland, 2008).

The classroom is a place in which appropriate modeling of emotional expression can be learned. This is a place where children can connect with their peers and share experiences that minimize the isolation for some. Teachers can use the daily environment to model adaptive coping strategies for those experiencing grief, and for those who share concern for a classmate (Heath & Cole, 2011). There already exists a trust relationship that can be built upon to widen the scope of how students are supported, and the willingness of teachers to take on this role and supports students will only help educate the whole child.

Conclusion

The review of the literature demonstrates the wide range of childhood loss that many children may encounter. While it is understood that each grief experience is as unique as each individual, it is clear that children, as a group, experience grief in a way that is related to their level of cognitive development. The way a child comprehends loss and grief is shaped by those around them, in the examples of caring adults, whether by healthy coping or poor coping strategies. As part of the reality of children's experiences, we need to have adequate means of support to help them move through this experience in a healthy manner. Schools provide the daily environment in which to offer services to children in need of emotional support through their time of grief.

For a child who experiences a loss, his or her world is changed forever. The literature suggests that children who have opportunities to explore and normalize their experiences feel validated, and move into their futures with better adjustment. Helping children make meaning from their experiences and move to a healthy sense of self is the primary purpose in supporting a grieving child (Holland, 2008).

Section Three: Lesson Series

Introduction

When children experience a loss, it affects all areas of their life. Quite often, it manifests itself in behavioural changes at school where children spend the majority of their time. Many adults feel ill equipped to support a child at this time, for fear of making things worse for the child emotionally. As a teacher, I know the classroom has become the location in which children process a variety of emotions because it can be that safe and constant place in a sometimes chaotic life. This series of lessons is designed to provide an outlet for expression for a grieving child, and provide those around them with empathy and understanding of their loss.

Using a psychoeducational delivery model and the BC curriculum to connect to Ministry of Education learning outcomes, this manual becomes a tool classroom teachers can use. This guide is divided into several sections, designed as group lessons, but may also be used individually. It is created with delivery to a whole class in mind, as part of the language arts and fine arts curriculum. The therapeutic techniques used are founded in evidence-based therapeutic practice that allow for use across a wide range of situations (Berns 2004; Dayton, 2005; ; Heath & Cole, 2011; Holland, 2008; LeCount 2000; Webb, 2011).

Overview of Guide

Each set of four lessons will address the following themes based on Worden's (2003) tasks of grief: Preserving memories, identifying feelings, adjusting to change and creating coping strategies. Activities will provide opportunities for students to express and explore their experiences of the painful moments of death and loss; accepting the reality and

permanence of changes due to loss; adjusting to changes in everyday life; and identifying and preserving positive memories of the deceased or lost relationship. It is my intention that these activities will help facilitate emotional expression and enable the child to foster better problem solving and conflict resolution. These lessons are also intended to allow for children who have yet to experience loss firsthand, to develop both understanding and empathy for peers who are experiencing grief.

This manual suits both a primary and an intermediate model, and the activities are intended to account for the developmental abilities of children at different stages along the cognitive developmental continuum. Learning outcomes are identified for grades two and five to reflect differences. The classroom teacher should use professional discretion and knowledge of student experiences and abilities when providing background information prior to the lessons, keeping the vocabulary and discussion to the ability level of the students. The teacher should select the lessons that will both meet learning outcomes for specific grades, but more importantly, the learning and emotional needs of the students.

Caring, Ethical Considerations

The activities are intended to be a starting point for discussion, developing empathy and opportunity for growth. Using therapeutic techniques may be a new approach for some teachers. The process of the activity should be closely monitored by the teacher for any signs of distress or emotional reaction of students. Should a child exhibit reluctance, offering the opportunity to observe rather than participate is one suggestion. As with any therapeutic activities, if the teacher recognizes difficulty or distress for the students, providing them with

the right to end participation, contacting parents and accessing outside counselling would be the ethical and conscientious practice on the part of the teacher.

Art Therapy

In this therapeutic approach, children are encouraged to discharge emotions by working from the inside out (LeCount, 2000). Drawing and sculpting are child friendly activities in art therapy, in that they require very little verbalization. A therapist can allow for the expression of the emotions shown within the art as a starting point for dialogue about feelings the child may be experiencing. The child may use colour or texture to depict emotion within the piece. Drawing allows the child to find acceptable ways to share emotion or experience. A child who is experiencing anger at the change in circumstances to due to parental separation, for example, may be able to produce vivid artwork that depicts this feeling.

LeCount (2000) describes several techniques that have therapeutic application. The squiggle technique is one example of unstructured art that allows for personal expression of the child. When the child "creates" from the continuous line, the underlying issue often comes to the surface and this is a starting point for further exploration.

These approaches reinforce to the child that grief is important, has a place, and does not need to be shameful (LeCount, 2000). Opportunity to have healthy grief creates a beginning for children to work through their loss experience. Using a variety of mediums, children will create art pieces that reflect both their happy memories as well as their grief filled memories. The children will complete activities without having to verbalize the feelings. Emotions brought up by loss will have expression within the work itself in colour, texture and form.

BC Curriculum (2010):

Visual Arts Grade Two Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Use a variety of image sources to create images (e.g., feelings, imagination, observation, memory)
- Create images using the image-development strategies of simplification and abstraction
- Create images featuring one or more visual elements and principles of design including colour, shape, texture, symmetrical balance
- Experiment with materials, technologies and processes to create particular effects
- Create 2-D and 3-D images to communicate experiences, moods and stories; to illustrate and decorate; that represent a point in time; that represent specific places; based on events or issues topics in their school and community
- Describe a variety of reasons people make and use visual arts
- Describe their response to artworks

Visual Arts Grade Five Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Create images using particular visual elements and principles of design including tone, value and movement to produce a variety of effects
- Create images using a range of materials, technologies and processes
- Create 2-D and 3-D images to communicate ideas; that express personal identity; that reflect aspects of art from a variety of historical and cultural contexts
- Describe their responses to 2-D and 3-D images created to communicate ideas, experiences and stories; created to illustrate and decorate; that show the use of particular elements, principles, or image-development strategies (British Columbia

Ministry of Education, 2010).

Lesson One: Preserving Memories

Objective: Through the creation of a clay symbol, the students will make an emotional connection to a past positive experience that can be tapped into in the present, allowing for the continuation of positive memories.

Duration: Primary: Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Air drying clay for each student, approximately the size of a golf ball. A card or platform for the piece to dry on when complete, labeled with students' names.

Access Prior Knowledge: Before beginning the lesson, an introduction to the task is recommended. If possible, have samples of work in clay to show to the students, or images of clay artwork from the internet with a keyword search of Canadian clay artists. The teacher asks children to recall that art is a way of representing ideas, feelings, images or real objects. Today's activity will help us connect to feelings about special people. The word symbol means a thing that stands for something else, and many of us use symbols to represent other things. Can you think of any symbols that people use? Eg. Red Cross, a heart. Today we will create a symbol that helps us to connect to a happy feeling. This will be part one of the lesson for the primary level.

The Process: Children are given a chunk of modeling clay about the size of a golf ball. Direct them to move it and soften it in their hands and on the surface they are at—desk or table. As they work to soften the clay, invite them to recall a special person in their lives,

someone whom they have lost. This could be a person who has moved away, someone who has died, even a pet, or someone they don't see as much as they used to.

When you think of this person, think back to a time that brought great joy or happiness with the person whom you have lost. What stands out for you when you recall this happy memory? Using the clay, move it into a shape that represents that memory for you. Allow the children time to manipulate the clay until it takes shape. Remind them that this is a symbol, and that art does not need to be exactly like the real object in size or in accuracy. For example, if you recall playing soccer with your uncle who moved away, creating a simple ball shape could be the symbol of that special time. Process with the whole group how that positive association feels as they work. Invite any sharing that the children would like to do as they work to create symbols of positive memories.

Discussion: Allow for children who wish to share their objects with you or with peers the opportunity to do so. Vocalizing the connection they have made is not necessary, but may be helpful to some children. Invite them to connect the feelings the memory of the past brings (eg. happiness, joy, safety) with the present in the form of the object they have created. Remind them of the connection between past positive emotions that we can recall to help us when we miss people in the present. Having created this symbol of that special connection, we can see that our feelings and memories can continue to be a positive part of our lives. We can create something to represent what we have lost. When the symbol is complete, the student place it on a stand or card to dry. Some students may wish to give their piece a title.

Extension: Invite the children who did not wish to discuss their artwork the opportunity to share at a later time. Have a place to display the creations of the students with a tag naming the artist. After the pieces are dry, the children can paint with acrylic paint if desired.

Achievement Indicators: Demonstrate a willingness to take risks with a new an unfamiliar material. Create images that demonstrate simplification and creation of a symbol. Create images that reflect personal identity.

Lesson Two: Identifying Feelings

Objective: Through the use of colour, students will identify and name various feelings from an emotionally heightened time. Students will represent those emotions in artwork that reflects both the substance and the intensity of those feelings as related to colour.

Duration: Primary: Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Class set of watercolour paints and brushes, class set of watercolour paper. Paper may be cut into smaller dimensions, like 4x6. Extra pages are recommended.

Access Prior Knowledge: Direct demonstration of the use of watercolour as a technique is recommended for younger students. The website www.canartscene.com lists prominent Canadian artists who use this media. It may be helpful to look at some of these images and the use of colour in this technique as introduction to this medium. This will be the first of the primary level lessons.

The Process: Students are directed to recall some of the feelings they have experienced when dealing with a loss. Remind them that each person experiences loss or grief in very unique ways, and there are no right or wrong words to tell about what you may have felt. Younger children may need support moving beyond the simplistic words mad and sad, depending on their language development.

Create a brainstorm list in any form of graphic organization you choose like a chart or a web of the student generated feeling words. Words like scared, sad, lonely, confused are likely to be shared, but positive words like happy and relieved may also be included. Now thinking of these feeling words, choose three to five that you can connect to for yourself. Give the children a page to copy down these words that are meaningful to them.

When you think of the first word, what colour do you think of? Assign each of these feelings a colour beside it on the page. The students are then provided with watercolour paint and paper. Direct them to use just the colours they connected their feeling words to, and to create an image with only those colours. Remember that art is an expression of the artist and there is no expectation of what it should look like. The use of watercolour here is significant because the depth and contrast of the colours can be intensified or lessened with the addition of water.

Discussion: If the students wish to vocalize about their image or the process of creating it, provide that opportunity. While the children are working to create their images, remind them that feelings exist for all of us simply because they do. There are no right or wrong feelings. Learning how to identify feelings in this way with the use of colours gives us a healthy way to express the emotions that exist for us in times of loss. Appreciating the use of colour and

shape within the piece, and validating the process of creating the piece is important feedback to offer to students as well.

Extension: Depending on the age or ability of the students, this activity may be extended for subsequent lessons. The discussion around the piece may be difficult, but the opportunity to share and normalize the feelings is important. Older students may wish to keep a journal with sentiments or images that are more difficult to share. Describing their responses to the 2-D image is a Grade Five Learning Outcome.

Achievement Indicators: Demonstrate a willingness to take risks with new and unfamiliar material. Creating images that reflect a mood or sentiment. Create images that demonstrate the use of colour to create a particular effect. Create images that express personal identity.

Lesson Three: Adjusting to Changes

Objective: Through the creation of a picture collage, students will represent some of the changes that accompany a loss. Students will create a visual representation of the transformation from what was, to what is, and what will be.

Duration: Primary: Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate : One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Blank tag board paper for each student, glue, scissors and magazines.

Access Prior Knowledge: Students must have an understanding of the art form of collage. Provide the children with a description of how smaller pictures and images can be cut out

carefully and placed together onto a new page in a form that makes sense to the artist. This allows the artist the opportunity to choose images that have meaning for them and reorganize them into a new picture.

The Process: Students will be directed to think about the kinds of images they are looking for. Some pictures may represent the past, before your loss, and also those that could represent the change or transformation due to this loss. Remind them that each of us will experience an event, even the same one, in different ways. The choices we make in our pictures will reflect our differences. The students can divide the paper into sections to represent distinct time periods or phases in their own lives. Using collage items, students will be able to create a representation of life now and into the future.

Discussion: During the process of creating, students will likely negotiate the use of and share pictures with one another. Encouraging thoughtful choices, the teacher can engage individuals in conversation about their pictures and how they are arranging them. It is important to help students find a balance of items that represent the present and future. The present is a transformative time that helps us come to terms with loss. Looking to the future, what are the elements that you want? Coming to an understanding that the future, though different from the past, is positive, is the focus of this activity.

Extension: The creation of the collage may be all the activity the students need. However, with some groups, an opportunity to describe the piece or the process of creating it may be necessary. Encourage discussion on the transformation rather than a focus on the past and what was.

Achievement Indicators: Demonstrate a willingness to take risks with new and unfamiliar material. Creating images that reflect a mood or sentiment. Create images that reflect personal identity. Name and apply examples of how memory and imagination can be used to create images.

Lesson Four: Creating Coping Strategies

Objective: The students will learn to develop healthy opportunities to manage feelings. Using art as a means for coping with complex emotions, children will practice mindful breathing while completing mandala activities.

Duration: Primary: Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: Two 40 minute lessons

Materials: Coloured pens, pencil crayons or crayons. Mandala designs to colour.

Access Prior Knowledge: The teacher begins with brief discussion about the importance of healthy choices and will create a verbal list of them with the students. Children will likely come up with ideas like brushing your teeth and eating good food. What are good choices to make about taking care of our bodies? What about taking care of our feelings? Children are reminded that taking time to slowly breathe helps us to have the opportunity to focus and relax, easing ourselves from worry.

The Process: Modeled by the teacher, the children will learn about mindful breathing practice as a form of relaxation. Teachers need to feel comfortable about leading students through this exercise, and personal practice is recommended to gain confidence.

Following this script, lead students through the process of mindful breathing. You may choose to play soft music in the background while completing this activity.

Take a moment to adjust your position... Gently close your eyes if you feel comfortable enough to do so, or focus your gaze in a steady spot….find what feels most comfortable for you. Now settle into your body...Ensure your body is upright and comfortable for you.

Now, in your own way, take a few moments to relax your body... Perhaps feel the muscles softening and loosening...Feel yourself letting your body feel calm

Relaxing and releasing... Just simply letting go...

Perhaps taking a deeper breath or two helps...And as you breathe out, notice that natural feeling of relaxing and releasing a little more with each out breath...

Just simply letting go....

With your eyes gently closed, become aware of the space before your eye...Like a field of darkness...Like a field of darkness…Just simply rest your attention there...

Now pay attention to any sounds outside the room... Just listening...With a gentle curiosity... Let the sounds come and go..

Now notice any sounds that may be coming from inside the room... Notice the sound of your own breathing ...Even if very soft... Just listening...

As you bring your awareness to your breath, notice what sensations there are as you breathe in...and as you breathe out…. feel the air touch your nostrils...feel the slight movement of your chest and tummy...

Listen to the gentle sound of your own breathing... Allow your breath to take up whatever rhythm feels natural for you at the moment...Quite effortlessly...

If you notice your attention wandering or becoming distracted... Simply bring your attention back to the next breath...

Being aware of this breath... And this breath... Being aware of what it is to be breathing in... and breathing out...

Simply being with the breath...Aware of the breath. (Adapted from http://www.easy-meditation-for-beginners.com/meditation-script.html).

Open your eyes and remain sitting comfortably. Students are asked to think about how their bodies feel after this activity of conscious breathing. Take note of their relaxed state. This is the end of the first lesson.

The next portion of this lesson recalls the process of mindful breathing as a means for relaxing and calming ourselves. This time we will connect mindful breathing to art work. The teacher passes out mandala pictures to colour. Images may be retrieved from http://www.hellokids.com/r_262/coloring-pages/mandala-coloring-pages or a google search of mandala images to colour. This time go through the mindful breathing script with the students, but instead of closing their eyes and focusing on their breathing, they will relax their breathing while they focus on colouring their pictures. After the script is finished allow students time to continue colouring mandala pictures.

Discussion: Students are directed to think of the two techniques they learned with breathing and madalas to manage emotions. These are two independent ways they are able to focus energy and to get through each day while sad and experiencing loss. The final product of the mandalas are kept as a reminder of both the activity and the skills the child has now acquired.

Extension: Several sessions of mindful breathing may be helpful for relaxing and encouraging self-regulation strategies. Students can also be given a copy of the mindful breathing script and mandalas to colour independently.

Achievement Indicators: Create images featuring colour. Create images that demonstrate the use of colour to produce a particular effect. View and discuss a variety of displays of their own and others' artworks. Create images to communicate an idea (e.g., joy, peace, fear). Create images that express personal identity.

Bibliotherapy

School aged children can benefit from the normalization of their experiences by exploring issues of loss with peers. One technique shown to be effective in helping children address issues of grief and loss is bibliotherapy (Morgan & Roberts, 2010). Bibliotherapy is the use of books, stories and metaphors as part of the counselling process to bring about some kind of change in affect or behaviour (Berns, 2004). Accurately selected books will provide appropriate, honest vocabulary, and deal with issues that are relevant to the grieving child.

Children in school are well accustomed to listening to and engaging with stories. The school setting is an ideal place to encourage dialogue and connection to literature as well as lived experience. A child can relate to the story, for example, and be able to keep himself or herself safe by working on the issues in the story and move at his or her own pace (Berns 2004; Hunt, 2006). Hunt (2006) asserts that children have an innate ability to connect to the stories that offer healing to them. If the child is able to relate and share personally with a story, it opens dialogue for classmates to help the child explore that area of their life. By engaging in this type of activity in a group setting, children are able to feel less isolated or awkward and more connected and normalized. Berns (2004) calls this the "tapestry of fellowship." When children listen to and are guided in ways to engage with a story, they begin the process of metacognition, or becoming aware of one's thinking (Gear, 2006). Connecting to the feelings or characters in a story allows for a deeper understanding of those feelings, creating opportunities for camaraderie, understanding and insight (Berns, 2004). This type of activity encourages empathy among children as well, not just the person with first hand experience (Morgan &Roberts, 2010). Listening and learning from peers helps widen the limited personal experience of school-aged children.

Children will listen to several short stories and complete related activities such as a connecting puzzle and inferring the feeling of others. These activities will build on feelings with written or oral descriptions. An opportunity to create the child's own narrative of his or her experience is also included in this section.

BC Curriculum (2010)

Language Arts Grade Two Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Use speaking and listening to interact with others for the purposes of making connections.
- Use speaking to explore, express, and present ideas, information, and feeling by recounting experiences in a logical sequence, retelling stories, sharing connections made.
- Listening attentively for a variety of purposes and demonstrate comprehension by retelling or paraphrasing information shared orally, sharing connections made.
- Use strategies when interacting with others, including accessing prior knowledge, making and sharing connections, asking questions for clarification and understanding.
- Respond to selections they read or view by making text-to-self, text-to-text- and text-to-world connections.
- Create personal writing and representations that express connections to personal experiences, ideas, likes and dislikes.
- Use writing and representing to express personal responses and opinions about experiences or texts.

Language Arts Grade Five Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Use speaking and listening to explore, express, and present a range of ideas, information, and feelings for different purposes.
- Listen purposefully to understand ideas and information by generating questions, visualizing and sharing, making inferences and drawing conclusions.
- Use strategies when interacting with others including accessing prior knowledge, making and sharing connections, asking questions for clarification and understanding
- Use speaking and listening to respond, explain, and provide supporting evidence for their connections to texts
- Respond to selections they read or view, by expressing an opinion with supporting evidence, explaining connections (text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world), identify personally meaningful selections, passages and images.
- Create meaningful visual representations for a variety of purposes and audiences that communicate personal response, information, and ideas relevant to the topic, featuring development of ideas by making connections to personal feelings, experiences, opinions, and information.

Lesson One: Preserving Memories

Objective: Children will connect on a personal level to the events in a fictional story as a means for recognizing and normalizing their own feelings of grief and loss.

Duration: Primary: Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Story book The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams (1987), post it notes, class set of blackline master of puzzle piece worksheet, pencils and coloured pencils.

Access Prior Knowledge: Children will need an understanding of connecting to a story. Use Adrienne Gear's book Reading Power to introduce or review this reading/listening strategy if you are unfamiliar with it (Gear, 2006). Students are asked to relate to the events/characters or pictures on the story to previous experiences. In this way, children can recall events of loss or grief within a setting that normalizes the experience.

Process: Have the students recall what it means to connect to a story. Set the stage for reading aloud, and begin by reading aloud the story The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams. Make note as you read the notion of the love the child has for the rabbit, even when the rabbit becomes old. Read a second time through and have children place their post it notes on a page they connect to. Remind them it can be a personal connection or a connection they know for someone else. After reading, review the events of the story and how the characters behaved and felt. Next children can share aloud what their connection is if they feel comfortable with it. This is the end of lesson one for primary level.

Discussion: Lesson two for primary level and continuation for intermediate. Have you ever loved an object, like a blankie, or a toy like the bunny in the story? How did you feel when you couldn't find it or have it with you anymore? Students are invited to connect to the feelings generated by the story as well as their own personal experiences. A key concept the teacher should encourage the students to recognize is that love is experienced by everyone in many ways. Just like the boy in the story who didn't have his rabbit anymore, people can

lose objects and loved ones. The boy was able to see the rabbit and happily recall the cherished object. When we loose someone or are separated from someone we love, it is important to remember that love exists beyond the physical presence of the object of our love. Recognize that the good feelings remain and can bring you comfort after a loss.

Students are next given the connect puzzle worksheet. Recalling the story and your connection to it, complete both sides of the worksheet. Younger students can complete a couple of sentences in the worksheet. Older students may use this activity as a starting point for a piece of more detailed personal writing.

Extension: This activity can be repeated with other children's storybooks with different topics as the need of the children in the class determines. Some other titles teachers could choose from: When Someone You Love Has Cancer by Alaric Lewis, When Your Pet Dies by Victoria Ryan, Franklin's Bad Day by Paulette Bourgeois, Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Mud and Rainbows by Howard Binkow and Susan F. Cornelison.

Achievement Indicators: Share connections between own and others' ideas and experiences. Share and explain information about topics of interest, events and feelings with some detail. Create writing that meets Performance Standards. Identify powerful passages from texts and describe why they are personally meaningful. Demonstrates imaginative connections to personal feelings. Express a personal viewpoint with supporting details and recognize that it may differ from that of others. Make inferences about characters' feelings or the story problem. Select a personally significant idea from a text and describe why it is significant.

Lesson Two: Identifying Feelings

Objective: Children will develop an understanding of different emotions and emotional responses to events of grief and loss and connect to their own personal experience.

Duration: Primary: One 40 minute lesson

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Story Tear Soup by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen (1999) backline maters of puzzle pieces from Adrienne Gear, post it notes, coloured pencils.

Access Prior Knowledge: This activity requires the children to understand the concept of connecting to a story. Use Adrienne Gear's book Reading Power to introduce or review this reading/listening strategy if you are unfamiliar with it (Gear, 2006). Students are asked to relate to the events/characters or pictures in the story to previous experience or knowledge.

Process: Read aloud the story Tear Soup by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen. As you read, make note of the things that go into the soup. Use the illustrations, that show some of the ingredients, some of the memories, some of the places she collects her tears, and some of the people who share her soup to help show children variety in any grief experience. During a second reading of the story, children will come and place their post -it notes on the page they connect to the most. Then, the children will receive a black line master of the puzzle piece connect page to complete.

Discussion: What were some of the feelings that went into the soup? How does Grandy use both the good memories and the sad ones to make her soup? How is your story like Grandy's? Remember that each person's soup will be different because different things

come in to flavour your own soup, and each of us takes our own time to make our soup. Children may share the puzzle activity connecting to how the story is like or unlike their experience with loss.

Extension: Using the story as a model, the children could create their own recipes, or a personal narrative, for healing themselves. Remember that many feelings come to us in our grief experience, and that it is all part of what makes our own soup special.

Achievement Indicators: Share connections between own and others' ideas and experiences. Share and explain information about topics of interest, events and feelings with some detail. Identify powerful passages from texts and describe why they are personally meaningful. Select a personally significant idea from a text and describe why it is significant.

Lesson Three: Adjusting to Change

Objective: Students will develop an understanding that changes create times of adjustment that can be very emotional. Allowing themselves to experience the difficult emotions will help them to adjust to the changes they may need to make in order to move forward.

Duration: Primary: One 40 minute lesson

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Story Franklin's Bad Day by Paulette Bourgeois (1996), activity page divided into 3 sections.

Access Prior Knowledge: Ask the children to recall what it was like in June of last year to finish the previous grade. What were some thoughts or feelings for them in September as

they got ready for the new school year? Many people experience a range of different feelings when things change. Sometimes we are eager for things to end, and sometimes it is frightening or sad. How we take care of changes helps us to move forward.

Process: Read aloud the story Franklin's Bad Day. As you read, make note of the behaviours Franklin exhibits. Sometimes what we act out or say doesn't always communicate what we are actually feeling. Model what Franklin did or said and what he might have been feeling and thinking. Use the reading voice/thinking voice worksheet from Adrienne Gear with the children to identify some of the changes he was experiencing and how he coped poorly or well to them. What are some of the things you think about when you experience change?

Discussion: What are some of the reactions we can have to change that are less positive for us? Who are people who we can turn to for support and encouragement when we struggle with this? Identify that when we have thoughts that are upsetting, like Franklin, talking about them helps us to get through hard times. It is important to help the children recognize that all people experience change, and that it can be a difficult time.

Extension: A three part worksheet has been included as an extension or alternate activity. The children can write or draw about what the past was like in the first column, before they experienced a loss. In the second column, what life is like in the present, and in the third column what he future may look like. A focus for the children that change, both the desired changes that life brings and the unhappy ones, are situations that all of us have in life.

Further discussion or re-reading for older students may allow for the transform element to be introduced. The student will be able to verbalize or write about how their own thinking has

been transformed by developing a better understanding of the experiences, thoughts and feelings of others.

Achievement Indicators: Make connections to personal and shared ideas and experiences by talking in pairs (e.g., listen and add to partner's ideas). Suggest alternative ideas when problem solving. Draw simple inferences about situations (e.g., explain possible decisions they might make as the main character). Make inferences and draw conclusions (e.g., make connections between cause and effect in materials read or viewed). Respond to text by drawing or writing, making personal connections (text-to-self), connections to other texts (text-to-text), and connections to related events (text-to-world).

Lesson Four: Creating Coping Strategies

Objective: Children will develop an awareness of their own physical responses to stress or loss and develop one technique to help them better manage this response.

Duration: Primary : Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Tear Soup by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen (1999)

Access Prior Knowledge: Everyone goes through difficult times in their lives. Think about a time that was difficult for you. As you listen to this story, recall things you did that helped you to manage things and feel better.

Process: Read the story Tear Soup aloud. Discuss how Grandy worked through her grief. How did her body react, and what did she do about it? Recall your own hard times and how

your body felt and the feelings you had. You can help your body feel better when you remember those hard things, or when you come across them in the future.

Listen carefully and follow along as I lead you through some steps to help you relax when you are having tough times. First, scrunch up your shoulders really tight to your ears. Hold this tightly for 10 seconds. Then relax them down. Next scrunch up your shoulders and tense your arms at the same time. Again hold this tightly for 10 seconds. Now relax them down. This time, scrunch up your shoulders, tense your arms and make your hands into fists. Hold tight for 10 seconds. And relax them down. Can you feel the difference in your body? You can do this any time to help yourself to relax.

Discussion: The way we handle things when we are upset is very different for all of us. Grandy cried and made soup from her tears. One thing you can do when you are upset is to try to relax and help your body let go of tension. What did it feel like to hold yourself so tightly? Did you forget to breathe, or was it more difficult because you were tense? What is one good difference you can take from this activity?

Extension: Progressive muscle relaxation for the whole body could be done with the class. Play quiet music and direct the focused contracting of muscles and then relaxing of them. Begin with the face to neck and shoulders, arms, belly, legs and feet until the whole body has been consciously worked through. This will allow the children to recognize the different physical sensations they may experience when upset.

For younger children, a body map may also be helpful. Children can be directed to colour on a simple outline, where they hold on to those negative feelings the most. They can then focus on contracting and relaxing that specific area.

Achievement Indicators: Identify and develop thoughtful connections **text**-to-self, **text**- to-**text** (e.g., similarities and/or differences), and **text**-to-world. Respond to text by drawing or writing, making personal connections (text-to-self), connections to other texts (text-to-text), and connections to related events (text-to-world).

Cinematherapy/Play Therapy

Play therapy is also shown to be useful therapeutically for dealing with grief, especially for young children, who may lack the necessary vocabulary to express their emotions. Webb (2011) contends that this methodology is adaptable to various age and developmental levels. Various materials, including dolls and art supplies can be incorporated to assist children in acting out their anxieties or fears. In this manner, the child is able to play out the sentiments that are causing anxiety, allowing their concerns to be expressed. It also provides a measure of distance that may create safety for the child, as the doll, puppet or reenactment are other characters. In the wake of large-scale disasters, like Hurricane Katrina, play therapy has been shown to be portable and effective (Webb, 2011).

Dayton (2005) describes gesture and acting to be one of the earliest forms of communication. This predates the use of language and allows for expression of emotion through action. Psychodrama activities in play connect the emotional, intellectual and sensory parts of the person, and can be adjusted to any place on the developmental continuum. Psychodrama is a means of connecting to rituals associated with grief and with recovering from grief. For example, The Magic Shop created by J.L Moreno is a popular and effective technique (Moreno, 2005). This technique allows the child to negotiate and gather in the magic shop the things he or she needs to be relieved of pain. This may bolster confidence for children to take ownership of what will support their own process of healing.

These activities are connected to watching segments of children's movies that deal with the issues of grief and loss. Brother Bear examines the issue of sibling loss, due to death. Activities in this section examine issues of guilt and anger related to the loss through

discussion, journaling or reenacting. This segment also uses play therapy in recreating the scenes of loss, depending of course on the ages and needs of the children. Psychodramatic activities will also be incorporated into this segment.

BC Curriculum (2010)

Dramatic Arts Grade Two Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Share ideas that can be used in drama work
- Use imagination and exploration to create drama
- Reflect on classroom drama experiences
- Use voice to express a range of ideas and feelings while working in role
- Use movement and their bodies to express a range of ideas and feelings while working in the role
- Use imagination, exploration and reflections to create drama

Dramatic Arts Grade Five Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Express a variety of ideas and perspectives through drama
- Assess how drama can affect personal and societal beliefs and attitudes
- Use a variety of vocal elements and movement elements to communicate meaning
- Participate in a variety of drama forms

Lesson One: Preserving Memories

Objective: The students will create a symbolic totem to reflect their own inner strength after viewing the movie Brother Bear.

Duration: Primary: Three 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: Three 40 minute lessons

Materials: Movie Brother Bear (2003), movie player.

Access Prior Knowledge: Children will need to understand the significance of animals in First Nations Communities. Northwest Coast First Nations People use Totem Poles to celebrate and mark special events in communities and clans. Family groups belong to special animals clans, such as frog or blackfish. These animals have characteristics that are special and valued. Review again the importance of symbols and how people use other objects or things to represent or connect to something else.

Process: Before viewing the movie, direct students to be looking for the connections between animals and humans. Look for ways that the characters show respect for the animals around them, and how important the animals are to their way of life. Watch the movie in segments as time allows.

After viewing, what can students recall of the different kinds of animals? What were different animals like? Recall the different animal totem the brothers were given, the bear of love, eagle of wisdom etc. Take time now to think of an animal you relate to, your own animal totem. Keep in mind the unique talents and characteristics of different animals as well as those of yourself. What is a special gift or talent you have that can be represented in animal form? If you cannot think of a talent or gift yourself, think of ways others have described you, what they see in you, or think of a gift you would like to have.

Being respectful of others and their totems, move through the room as this animal or find a space to make a statue of this animal. Present your totem in a way that you feel comfortable with, using only your own body. Go around to the various students and give them the opportunity to share what animal they have chosen. Some may also want to give a reason why, the characteristic of the animal that they connect to.

Discussion: What was the importance of the animal totem being given to the brothers? How does this totem connect to the real animal characters in the movie? How does this relate to the totem you chose for yourself? When you connect to your animal totem, what does this help you do/feel? What is the process of connecting to your strength or talent like for you? When you take that hidden part of yourself and it brings you strength, you will find you are more than you thought, just like the brothers in the movie. It is important to emphasize here, that within each child will be a strength, a gift, that helps them to be resilient.

Extension: The teacher can take this starting point and use it for an art lesson where the students can create an actual object out of clay to be their totem. Teachers could also use this as a writing activity that allows for personal writing to reflect on the feelings brought up by this activity, or the process of moving their bodies as the animal.

Achievement Indicators: Demonstrate willingness to contribute ideas. Use movement elements to depict roles. Explore a variety of issues and themes verbally and non-verbally. Demonstrate willingness to explore ideas (eg. Silence and sound, tension and conflict) through drama games and activities. Mime to transform the invisible into the

visible. Represent abstract concepts through movement (e.g., create a dance drama to represent concepts such as of belonging, outcast, friend, or home).

Lesson Two: Identifying Feelings

Objective: The students will identify and connect to feelings by miming actions that demonstrate those emotions.

Duration: Primary: One 40 minute lesson

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Jar, slips of paper

Access Prior Knowledge: Children will have previously viewed the movie Brother Bear.

Process: Recalling the events of the movie, the children will create a list of feelings the characters experienced. The teacher will elaborate or explain the feelings for the larger class, and perhaps offer other vocabulary words to elaborate on students' contributions. The teacher will write each of these feeling words on a slip of paper and put into a jar. The students will pull one each and act/mime the word for others to guess. The children may be divided into small groups to do this activity with peers.

Discussion: Students are invited to connect to the emotions that the characters from the movie experienced. Have there been times for you that you have either felt or seen another person expressing those kinds of emotions? Relate different reactions to emotional responses back to the movie characters—did Kenai and Denahi behave the

same way when Sitka died? Validate that it will be different for different people, and that it is ok to have complicated feelings. Allowing for students to recognize, or draw them to the conclusion, that many different responses can come from one situation will help them develop empathy for the responses of others to grief and loss.

Extension: This activity can be repeated with the use of other children's movies that deal with the issue of loss and grief. Some examples may be Finding Nemo (2003) and The Lion King (1994).

Achievement Indicators: Demonstrate willingness to contribute ideas. Explore a variety of issues and themes verbally and nonverbally. Demonstrate ways to show cooperative effort in drama work such as by, recognizing that different people react to the same event in different ways, supporting and respecting classmates' thoughts, feelings, abilities, ideas, and efforts. Use movement to depict a role. Represent abstract concepts through movement (e.g., create a dance drama to represent concepts such as of belonging, outcast, friend, or home).

Lesson Three: Adjusting to Change

Objective: After viewing a section of the movie Brother Bear, students will identify how Kenai and Denahi react to the death of Sitka differently. The students will recognize that there are many ways to cope with change and loss.

Duration: Primary: Two 40 minute lessons

Intermediate: Two 40 minute lessons

Materials: Movie Brother Bear (2003)

Access Prior Knowledge: Students will have previously viewed the film Brother Bear.

Process: After viewing the movie, children will have a brief discussion about the various ways the brothers manage their losses. Reenact scenes from the movie, in small groups, that shows an emotional reaction. For example, Kenai charging after the bear when the fish basket was destroyed. Then, change the behaviour that demonstrates the emotion the character was exhibiting. The first lesson ends here.

Lesson two. The students will be asked to recall the scenes they acted out previously. What might the outcome have been if Kenai had used his anger differently? Generate a list or identify ways in which emotions are dealt with in healthy ways and ways that are less positive. Drawing attention to a connection between feelings and behaviours is important here. Providing the students with practice of alternate ways to respond rather than react to situations gives them coping tools for managing their own feelings in the future.

Extension: With an idea of extending the story, ask the students to act out the future. With knowledge of the characters, what would the next scenes look like. How might Denahi use his experiences with the death of Sitka to manage the loss of Kenai as well? What are the ways we can learn from difficult times to help ourselves, or others, when they are faced with similar situations?

Achievement Indicators: Demonstrate ways to show cooperative effort in drama work such as by, recognizing that different people react to the same event in different ways, supporting and respecting classmates' thoughts, feelings, abilities, ideas, and efforts. Use

movement to depict a role. Represent abstract concepts through movement (e.g., create a dance drama to represent concepts such as of belonging, outcast, friend, or home). Apply a variety of forms to express feelings, intentions and attitudes of particular characters. Provide examples of how drama can be used to explore multiple perspectives.

Lesson Four: Creating Coping Strategies

Objective: Students will develop belief about their own ability to manage difficult situations.

Duration: Primary: One 40 minute lesson

Intermediate: One 40 minute lesson

Materials: Decorative containers labeled with words: love, patience, forgiveness, strength, deep breathing, drawing, colouring, hope, prayer, joy, faith, kindness, generosity, blessings, wonder, laughter, quiet time, power, and peace. Some decorated containers with no labels on them. Papers with those same words written decoratively on them. Empty containers for the students to label and decorate. Items for decorating and labeling the containers, like stickers, markers, glitter pens and scrapbooking items.

Access Prior Knowledge: Teacher would benefit from a basic understanding of the concept of the magic bag/container (Lowenstein, 2006). The idea is the use of invisible characteristics that students are able to figuratively transfer from one place to their own storage to help them cope with difficult situations. Feeling comfortable modeling the imaginative filling of a container a necessary demonstration.

Process: Set the stage for this activity by decorating a table with colourful scarves and decorations for the activity. A visually appealing presentation will help create excitement for this activity. The teacher introduces the magic container activity to children by reading and reviewing the labels on the containers. The children can move around and examine the table while soft music plays. The students are invited to observe as the teacher demonstrates the imaginative pouring, shaking, scooping, piling, and sprinkling of the characteristics that she needs or wants to help her when she is sad or struggling. Remember to choose one unlabeled jar and create a help, like listening to music, so that the children understand the purpose of this kind of container. An emphasis on the way one is filling the container, the action, helps engage the children in the process. If desired, there may be a particular word the person connects with that they would like to insert into their container or attach to the outside.

The children are then given the opportunity to move among the objects and select for themselves what they need. The opportunity to decorate the container at the same time allows for children who are a little more reluctant to still participate. Encourage the focus on the pouring in of characteristics the child needs. Also encourage the sharing among peers of what one has lots of, that another might want to share. For example, Susan has lots of joy, she can pour in some for her friend June.

Discussion: While the children are filling their containers, the teacher moves among them gently enquiring about what the children have chosen and validating their choices. The children are encouraged to engage in discussion of the contents of their containers as they complete this activity. What are the things you know you have lots of without needing to pour into your container? What are the things you need? What wasn't labeled that you

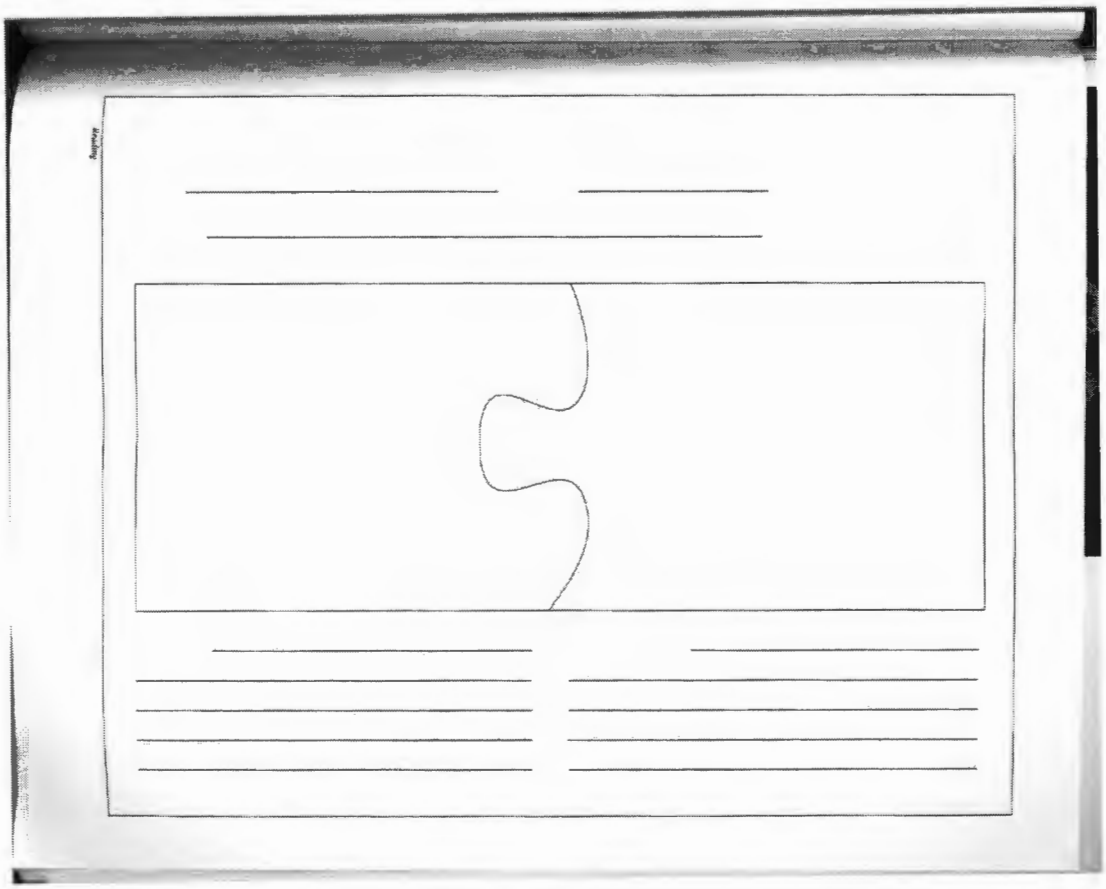
used your imagination for? Did you put things into the container in different ways, and what did that mean for you? How will you use this to help you in the future?

Extension: The children could create magic containers for their peers, and include inside words and sentiments that share their belief about invisible inner strength of a classmate. This allows for children to see the strengths in themselves they may overlook, and give them a greater sense of their own power.

Achievement Indicators: Provide examples of how drama is used to tell and explore stories about the past and the future, celebrate special events, and communicate aspects of culture. Reflect on and respond to specific aspects of a drama work or performance. Demonstrate that others have different responses to a performance. Participate in a variety of drama forms and strategies for various purposes. Reflect on and share their experiences.

Appendix

Connect worksheet



Gear, (2006).

Adjusting to the Change Worksheet

Past	Present	Future

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