

FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS



Rethink The Conversation®
Let's Start Talking

FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS TRAINING WORKSHOP 2: FACILITATING CHILDREN'S GROUPS 6-10 YEAR OLDS



Rethink The Conversation®
Let's Start Talking

Review of Last Session

- How children/teens grieve
- How suicide grief is different
- Facilitation skills
- Role of the facilitator
- Questions

Developmental Issues

- Young children (6-8 years old)
 - Concrete thinking – language important (died in sleep, expired, we lost them)
 - Begin to understand that death is permanent, person is not coming back
 - Have magical thinking, often believe they caused the death
 - Anxious about safety
 - Worry about others dying and who will take care of them
 - Often don't have words to express feelings
 - May exhibit regressive behaviors
- Older Children (9-12 years old)
 - Nightmares and sleeping challenges may be present
 - Cognitive challenges in school
 - Don't want to be different, often don't share about the death
 - Interested in details of the death, may have violent drawings or talk
 - Often don't have words to express feelings so may act out behaviors

Understanding How Children Grieve

- Play is the way children grieve and learn to make sense of the death
- Children may not talk about the grief or their feelings
- Children go in and out of grief frequently
- Some children don't seem to be grieving at all
- Children may experience their grief physically, in their bodies
- They often have challenges concentrating and paying attention
- They may believe they see or hear the person
- Children grieve at their developmental level, not their actual age
- They may have experienced trauma from the death
- They grieve as part of a family

What Helps

- Compassionate listening
- The truth, answer questions honestly
- Routines
- Choices
- Space for play and creativity
- Remembering the person who died
- A safe environment to grieve
- Allowing for many different emotions
- Healthy eating/sleeping/playing balance
- Support of peers and adults

Play Is The Work of Children

- Talking Circle
 - Talking stick
 - Lap boards, paper, drawing materials
 - Fidget toys
 - Sitting pads
- Expressive Arts
 - Drawing, painting, photography, clay, collage, glue, scissors
 - Music – drums, percussion instruments, favorite songs
 - Movement – dance, marching, yoga
- Big Energy
 - Punching bag, sports, drawing on a blackboard, stomping bubbles, balloon volleyball
- Dramatic Play
 - Medical play, emergency play – police, first responders, hospital figures
 - Car, train, plane
 - Dress up, house play, dolls
 - Sand play

Art



Opening Circle

Sitting pads

Lap boards

Fidget toys

Drawing paper

Coloring sheets

Markers

Talking stick



Fidget Toys

Squish balls

Rubik's cube



Sand Play

Coffins

Gravestones

Skeletons

People figures

Plants

Small animals

Dragons



Music

Percussion instruments

Drums

Shakers

Xylophone

Tambourines



Big Energy

Nerf balls
Bean bag toss
Punching bag
Balloons
Bubbles
Beach ball



Art Materials

White paper

Construction paper

Color sheets

Markers, pencils

Stickers

Glue/glue sticks

Scissors

Pipe cleaners

Playdough

Watercolor paints



Emergency Toys

Police cars

Ambulances

Helicopters

Fire truck

Cars

Trucks



Dramatic Play

Dolls

Puppets

Dress up clothes

Stuffed animals

Tea set

Capes



Medical Play

Medical kit
Bandages



Facilitating Play

- Create a safe place – remember the safety guidelines
- Allow the child to choose the play, doing nothing is a choice
- Take the role the child needs – ask what role you should play
- The child may want you to just witness, not join in
- Silence is ok
- Wait for the child to ask for help
- Reflect what you see and hear, don't interpret what you think
- Ask the child to share what they are doing or tell you about their art
- Their art is a process, it can be messy and ugly, it is not a product to hang on the wall, avoid judgment statements
- If the play starts to get rough, stop it, remember no hurting self or others
- Clean up is part of the process of play, expect help

Facilitating Group Skills

- Mindfulness – awareness of self, group, atmosphere
- Reflective listening – be present, reflect what you hear
- Safety – group guidelines
- Communication – questions, silence, conversations
- Connections – how they are the same
- Differences – how they are different
- Routines – be consistent each group
- Follow the lead of the child

Structure of Children's Groups

- Pre Meeting
 - Facilitators gather before group to get ready and set up group stations
- Opening Circle
 - Introductions: review safety guidelines
 - Name, who died, question for the day (ex. something you are good at doing)
- Group Activity
 - Present an activity – may be question or drawing (ex. draw a picture of your family before and now, share a favorite thing you did with the person who died)
- Play
 - In person – child chooses area – art, big energy, dramatic area, talking circle
 - Zoom group – group time is shorter, extended discussion or 2nd activity
- Closing Circle
 - Get children ready to leave group
 - Candle lighting
 - Share what they found most helpful today and something they are looking forward to
- Post Meeting
 - Time for facilitators to debrief and get ready to leave what happened in group there, don't take home things that occurred in group, clean up
 - Self-care plan for the evening

Practice Group

- 6-7 people (2 facilitators, 4-5 group members)
 - Switch roles after 5 minutes
 - Facilitators – practice group skills
 - Group participants – role play child griever
- First 2 facilitators
 - Opening Circle: introduction, safety rules, name, who died, question (favorite ice cream)
- 2nd 2 Facilitators
 - Activity: share about favorite toy or activity, draw what your grief looks like
- 3rd 2 Facilitators
 - Closing Circle: what's best part of today, what are you looking forward to

Challenges/Questions

- Your concerns
- What will get in your way when starting a group
- High energy group
- Kids don't follow rules
- Kids won't talk
- Physically or emotionally hurtful statements
- Not sharing time, monopolizing
- Kids wants to see parent, to go home before group is over

FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS



Rethink The Conversation®
Let's Start Talking