

# FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

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# FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS TRAINING WORKSHOP 3: FACILITATING PRE-TEEN/TEEN GROUPS AGES 11-13/14 -18

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# Review of last training

- Group Facilitation Skills
- Child Group Facilitation

# Developmental Issues

- Young Teens 11-13
  - Beginning abstract thinking
  - Transiting from play to talking, but still go to activities
  - Moving from family to peers for support
  - Unpredictable emotional reactions as hormones begin surging
  - Sleeping and eating changes
  - Don't want to be different, changes are challenging
- Older Teens 14-18
  - Abstract thinking, cognitive challenges
  - Changes in body, emotions, social demands
  - Get support from peers who may not have experienced death
  - Increased risk-taking behaviors
  - Change in world view – dealing with meaning of life and death issues
  - Possible suicidal thoughts or actions

# Needs of Grieving Teens

- Routines, boundaries, and choices with flexibility
- Truth and honesty
- Modeling of appropriate grief responses
- Patience - teens are testing lots of new ideas and behaviors
- Opportunity to express the range of feelings
- Trusted adults who will listen and provide alternatives
- Normalizing their thoughts and behaviors, they are not alone
- Reassurance that they will get through their grief
- Validation of their grief process
- Privacy, some alone time without interruptions
- Basics: food, water, sleep

# Structure of Teen Group

- Pre meeting – Co-facilitators check in, get centered and ready for the group
- Opening Circle – share name, who died, one good and one bad thing that happened since last group (rose & thorn)
- Discussion – have topics ready to discuss but allow the teens to bring up things on their minds (question jar). Allow for non grief related topics - you are supporting the whole teen
- Closing Circle – light candle, share who they are lighting it for and why, share something they are looking forward to
- Post Meeting – co-facilitators share what issues came up for them during group, what they need to leave there, and their self-care plan
- Changes for Zoom groups

# Teen Groups Provide

- Knowledge that their grief is a process, a normal reaction to a loss, which takes time
- Knowledge that it is safe place to share, their story is welcomed
- Knowledge that they are empowered to find their own path on their grief journey
- Knowledge that their feelings and behaviors are not uncommon, that they are experienced by others
- Knowledge that they are not the only ones who are experiencing the grief, they are not alone

# Group Facilitation Skills

- Mindfulness – awareness of self, group, environment
- Reflective listening – be present, reflect what you hear or see (not what you feel)
- Group Safety Guidelines
  - Confidentiality
  - Be supportive of others, share time, no advice unless asked for
  - Come to group unaffected by drugs or alcohol
  - Silence and laughter are both ok in the group
  - Cell phones off during group discussions
- Communication
  - Silence
  - Questions
  - Clarifying statements
  - Summarizing
  - Expanding conversations
  - Roadblocks to communications



# Group Skills

- Connections – finding ways they are the same “we all have had someone die of suicide”
- Differences – finding ways they are different “some of you are angry with the person and others are sad”
- Remembering – provide lots of ways to remember and share stories about the person, how they lived, not just how they died
- Group cohesion – ways to bring the group together
- Shared leadership – rotate teens as leaders
- Identify common themes
  - How they found out about the death
  - Emotions – anger, relief, sadness, blame, guilt, disbelief
  - Why, understanding and making meaning
  - School problems, concentration, attendance, feeling different
  - Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
  - Outbursts, unexpected emotions
  - Intrusive or negative thoughts
  - Social media
  - Risk taking and unsafe behaviors

# Common Challenges

- Silence, no one talks
- Lack of attendance
- Suicidal concerns
- Off the grief topic
- Inappropriate language or graphic details
- Phone or devices distracting group

# Practice Group

- 6-7 people (2 facilitators, 4-5 group members)
  - Rotate roles after each section
  - Facilitator Practice group skills
  - Group members take on the role of a teen
- 1<sup>st</sup> 2 Facilitators
  - Opening Circle – 4 group members role play as teens
  - Safety guidelines, name, who died, rose and thorn for the week
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 Facilitators
  - Topic - 4 group members role play as teens
  - Share something you did with person who died
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 2 Facilitators
  - Closing Circle - 4 group members role play teens
  - Light candle, who or what it is for (virtual candle)
  - Word for the week or what are you looking forward to

# Challenges/Questions

- What questions do you have?
- How did the group go?
- What skills did facilitators use?
- What worked well?
- What were the challenges?
- What will stop you from starting a teen group?

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