Counseling Adolescents Dealing with Grief and Loss

COUN 528: Introduction to Group Dynamics and Procedures

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Adolescents and Grief 2

Introduction

Adolescents are just beginning to become aware that death occurs in every living thing. As a result, they may not realize that death will occur to them or to those they love. They tend to believe that illness and death are produced by magic, human agency, or supernatural actions (Brewster, 1982). Schoen & Burgoyne assert that American culture frequently protects and/or overlooks discussions of death with children and youth (2004). We cannot exclude them from the grieving process or pretend that they do not understand death, loss, and grief. It is important to remember that adolescents grieve the loss of loved ones in a very similar fashion to adults. They go through similar grief stages as the stages of grief outlined by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying*. It is important to allow children and teens to express their feelings of loss and give them outlets to turn to. Shielding them by limiting discussions about death may deny adolescents the right to mourn (Schoen & Burgoyne, 2004). Adolescence is a developmental period in which a youth is experiencing a great deal of change, especially as teenagers struggle with independence. Anger, depression, withdrawal, acting out, noncompliance, frustration, and confusion are typical grief responses (Metzgar, 2002).

Death and Bereavement

Death and dying is a very difficult topic for most adults to discuss with each other let alone to discuss with young people. It is common that discussions of death bring up anxiety, discomfort, and an avoidance reaction by some. Talking about death may help people accept it as part of life and allow them to cope with the loss and eventually move on with their life (Brosi, 2006). It is very common for children to be affected by the death of a pet or a grandparent. It is possible that they may also be affected by the loss of parents, friends, or siblings.
Counselors need to be prepared to help children work through their grief and to accept death as a reality of life. In an effort to best meet the needs of the clients served, the counselor must examine his or her attitudes toward death so that he or she can fully understand the needs of the child who is experiencing the steps in the grieving process. Children differ from adults cognitively, emotionally, physically, and psychologically, and these differences require special knowledge and sensitivity by the counselor (Erdman & Lampe, 1996). A child’s experience of grieving and letting go of pain when loss occurs is different than that of an adult. Perceptions of death are directly affected by age and maturity level. This is why it is so important for the group counselor to be aware of the level of cognitive and emotional development of the children who will participate (Smead, 1994). Older children usually understand that death is final, but may wonder whether or not the dead person may return. They may understand that death is final, but they are just beginning to comprehend at this point that death occurs in every living thing. Their thinking is not logical which in a sense may protect them from feelings of helplessness and anxiety.

If a child has been through a previous crisis and has emerged without serious emotional difficulties, the experience of participating in a grief group will likely be more successful (Smead, 1994). Many children have not had a major emotional crisis up to this point in their life so it will be difficult to determine what their level of coping skills. A group can be a beneficial opportunity for children to develop social skills while simultaneously working on individual and group goals.
Stages of the Grieving Process

Sciarra (2004) outlines the stages many who experience grief may go through. These stages include shock and denial, anger and resentment, despair and depression, and finally, acceptance and incorporation into their world.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) worked with terminally ill patients and is one of the major contributors to defining the stages of grief that someone experiences when a loved one dies. The stages she outlined include: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Each of these stages has its own individual characteristics. People do not necessarily experience every one of the stages below and sometimes they may go back and forth between them or skip a stage.

Denial

The stage that Kubler-Ross asserts comes initially in the grieving process is denial and isolation. The first reaction of many people to the experience of loss is denial. During this stage, the person does not want to admit that this is happening to themselves or to others. The most common reaction to the situation is, “This is not happening to me.”

Anger

Anger is the next stage. During this stage of grief, the patient and family experience anger over the situation. They may ask the following question: “Why did this have to happen to me? How dare God do this to me.”

Bargaining

In the bargaining stage, people try to bargain with God. They vow to be a better person if God will allow them or their loved one live. The conversation that they have with God may sound something like the following: “Just let me live to see _________,” or “I’ll be a better person if…”
Depression

Depression occurs when the harsh reality and inevitability of death sets in. The person who is grieving feels overwhelmed and experiences hopelessness and defeat. They may express themselves in a manner similar to: “I can’t bear putting my family through this,” or “I don’t care anymore!”

Acceptance

Acceptance is the final stage of grief. During this stage, the patient comes to realize that death is inevitable. They peacefully accept their mortality and prepare for it. Their response may be: “I am ready, I don’t want to struggle anymore,” or “I’m ready for whatever comes.”

Common Adolescent Behaviors in Response to Grief

Research has shown that adolescents go through approximately the same stages of grief as adults and experience the stages mentioned above by Sciarra and Kubler-Ross. Children who have suffered a lost may be responding by having consistent problems such as pain or withdrawing, intensification of symptoms over time, a dramatic or sudden behavioral change, or extremes in their behavior (Shapiro et al, 2006). According to Piaget (1960), during the formal operations stage of development which begins at the age of 11 years old, children have an increased ability to think both logically and abstractly. Some qualities of grieving children during this stage include keeping their emotions inside, being self-conscious about expressing emotions, and possibly becoming withdrawn, quiet and/or irritable. It is important to remember that all individuals grieve differently and on different time tables (Nader, 2002). Some common coping mechanisms that children may experience when going through the stages of grief include denial, regression, rationalization, intellectualization, repression, obsessive-compulsive behavior, or
sublimation. These defense mechanisms are our ways that our body and mind take care of us during a crisis (Bowlby, 1980).

Children have trouble understanding the grieving process for many reasons depending on their cognitive developmental stage (Piaget, 1954). O’Rourke and Worzbyt (1996) wrote about the fact that how children view loss and death is a matter of development, personal experiences, adult guidance, and innate abilities. As children grow and get older, they begin to question death and its causes. They may come to realize that it is final, but have difficulty understanding the process and that not only old people die. If they do experience a loss, adolescents may have trouble concentrating on their school work, they may withdraw from friends and family, and may seem angry or sad-sometimes even tired or drowsy (Sciarra, 2004). Adolescents are more cognitively capable of understanding the finality of death. They may be experiencing deep feeling associated with grief such as pain, fear, guilt, and helplessness, but they may not be sure how to express these emotions. Often their peers help adolescents cope with grief. Adolescents may become involved in sports, socializing, or listening to music to deal with the loss (Sheller & Watts, 1999).

There are many ways that children can be educated about the grief process that they can relate to. Sedney discusses the use of children’s grief process through narratives in popular films such as “Snow White,” “Bambi,” and “The Lion King.” She argues that these films reflect a range of acknowledgement of death and descriptions of grief in the young characters in these movies. These films also emphasize the availability and usefulness of support and comfort for grieving children. They show that there is hope after loss.
Interventions for Adolescents Who Are Experiencing the Grieving Process

There are some very important things for teens that are experiencing a loss of some kind. Most importantly, everyone grieves in a different way and no one way of grieving is the right way. (Appendix H). Four tasks for grieving children to accomplish are: (1) accepting the reality of the loss, (2) experiencing the pain or emotional aspects of the loss, (3) adjusting to an environment in which the significant one is missed, and (4) relocating the person within one’s life while finding ways to memorialize the person (Worden, 1996). Teens may deal with grief in different ways. Some may want to talk about the death. Others may cry when they think about the person that they have lost. Some adolescents express their grief in a creative or artistic way through the arts while others prefer physical activities such as sports.

Conclusion

A child or teen who is dealing with loss is vulnerable and the group counseling process is one way that this child’s needs can be addressed in a safe environment where other children who are experiencing similar issues are present and actively participating. Anger, depression, withdrawal, acting out, noncompliance, frustration, and confusion are typical grief responses of adolescents that we must not ignore. Sometimes it is necessary to look beyond the behaviors to the emotions and feelings that may lie underneath. With the support and encouragement of their peers, adolescents can be successful dealing with these feelings and growing beyond the grief and loss that they are experiencing in their lives.

Group Rationale

It is important for children to have three very important immediate needs met after having experienced a loss. These needs include having their emotions validated, being given accurate information, and being reassured about the future (Shapiro et al, 2006). The focus of these eight
group sessions will be to address these three very important areas as well as to work with a small group of adolescents who are experiencing various stages of the grieving process.

The adolescents in this group will be allowed to experience the emotions they are having in a safe environment. The members of the group will work together during these eight 40 minute sessions through the group process in an effort to validate their feelings whatever they may be. Secondly, accurate information will be shared. We will spend time discussing death and dying as well as reading excerpts from books and viewing a video that addresses these issues. Members will be allowed to gain insight and knowledge relating to their fears and concerns. Finally, members will be assured that they will be taken care of in the future and that these sessions will be a place to come where they can express their fears and talk about how to deal with this loss in their life.

The group sessions will consist of eight 40 minute sessions for a group of 6-8 middle school girls. These adolescent females will be participating in the group experience on Thursday after lunch with the approval of their teachers as long as they agree to maintain acceptable academic standing in all of their classes. If a holiday should fall on one of the Thursday sessions that we have planned, the session will be scheduled during the same time (12:20pm-1:00pm) the Tuesday of the following week.

**Group Selection/Screening Process**

The selection process for this group will involve sending out written correspondence to teachers and other school personnel so that they can refer students who meet the following criteria:
1. Adolescent between the ages of 11-14 who are currently dealing with the loss of a parent, relative, or friend.

2. Able to function in a normal school setting on a daily basis.

3. Having difficulty grieving.

4. Depression over this significant loss as shown by withdrawal, moodiness, irritability, difficulty sleeping, eating, and/or concentrating in school.

When deciding who to include in the group, I will consider the following:

1. Gender—this group will be composed of adolescent girls.

2. Cognitive ability—group members must have normal cognitive ability and be in acceptable academic standing.

3. Maturity—participants must be in Piaget’s Formal Operations Stage and able to handle the responsibilities of following group Expectations and Ground Rules (Appendix C).

4. Duration of issue—the adolescent’s experience with grief has occurred within the previous year.

5. Frequency of issue—grief is affecting normal everyday functioning on a regular basis.

6. Intensity of issue—the adolescent’s behavior must be affected by the grief process in some substantial way.

7. Acceptance or completion of issue—group members may be at various stages of acceptance.

When deciding whom to exclude from the group, I will consider the following:

1. Level of cognitive functioning must be at least average.

2. Ability to interact in a social setting in interpersonal relationships is a requirement.
3. Ability to function at a normal level on a regular daily basis.

4. At-risk students will not be included in the group due to possible behavior issues.

Group Objectives

1. To build a support system of peers experiencing similar issues of grief and loss.

2. To provide group members a safe place to express their thoughts and feelings related to their loss as well as to work through the stages of grief.

3. To provide information and education on issues related to death, dying, and loss especially as they apply to adolescents during their current developmental stage.

4. To allow group members to express their grief in healthy ways through participation in group activities.

5. To develop tools and skills that will allow group members to effectively cope with the grief and loss that they are experiencing.

6. To assist group members in understanding and coming to a more clear understanding that what they are experiencing is normal. Death is a part of life, but there are many ways that we can keep memories of those that have been lost alive in us.
Session 1

Getting Started—Why Are We Here?

Goals:

1. To introduce members to the group experience and help them get acquainted to one another.

2. To establish expectations and ground rules for group sessions as well as to discuss issues relating to confidentiality.

3. To discuss the purpose of the group and to prepare them for the group process.

4. To help members become aware that there are other children who have similar experiences and feelings that they will get to discuss in this group.

Materials:

1. Expectations and Ground Rules for Growing and Learning from Loss Group (Appendix C).

2. Finish the Sentence Activity Handouts (Appendix F).

3. Pencils and paper.

Activity:

Icebreaker

The Dyadic Encounter

Members of the group are divided into dyads, or pairs to participate in the following activity.

Complete each of the sentences from Appendix F and discuss it with your partner.
Choose one of the sentences you discussed with the whole group.

**Activity 1**

Expectations and Ground Rules for Group (Appendix C)

Pass out copies of Appendix C and go over them with group members clarifying and allowing members to add things that they believe are fundamental to this process.

**Process:**

Welcome group members to the group, briefly discuss purpose of group, and introduce self to group. Go around the circle in a round and have members introduce themselves to each other. Break up into dyads and participate in Icebreaker. Discuss why we are all here and how we all have grief and loss in common and that we will be meeting for an 8 week period to share our thoughts and experiences with grief. We will be meeting Thursdays from 12:20-1pm. By the end of the session, each group member should have shared with other members the person they are grieving.

**Closing:**

Close the session by establishing the norm of each member sharing at least one thing that she got from group today. Remind group members of confidentiality agreement. Pass out journals that we will be using during these sessions and have each member write down the date and time of the next session. Assign homework for the next session: Complete the survey on Appendix D-Grieving and Growing: Learning from Losses and bring it to the next session.
Session 2

Losing Someone Hurts

Goals:

1. To establish the norm of reviewing what happened during the previous session, going over homework, and allowing members to discuss any questions or concerns they may have.

2. To encourage children to talk about their feelings with their friends and family.

3. To reinforce the idea that it is healthy to talk about feelings and that group is a safe place to do so.

Materials:

1. Chart Paper
2. Markers
3. Recommended Books for Adolescents Dealing with Loss (Appendix E)
4. Several books from the above list
5. Journals

Activities/Process:

Setting the Stage-Goals for the Group

Briefly give an overview of the long-term plan for the group including the group goals that have been established. Discuss what setting a goal means and have members give specific examples as they are written down on the chart paper. Emphasize the importance of not only setting group
goals, but also setting individual goals for these sessions. Have members write one or two individual goals in their journals.

Books on Grief

Pass out the list of Recommended Books for Adolescents Dealing With Loss (Appendix E). Show the group members some of the books you have from the list. Have students choose one of the books from above and read the book, or a section of the book to the whole group. Then have each member choose a book to take with them and read as their homework between this session and next.

Closing:

Group members share the book they chose and why. Remind group members of the norm to keep confidentiality as well as of their homework assignment to write 1-2 goals for the group in their journals and bring them with them to the next session. Remind of date and time of the next session.
Session 3

Remembering Our Loved Ones

Goals:

1. To facilitate thinking about memories of the person who has died.

2. To encourage the realization that memories are a special legacy.

3. To understand that it is important to share their memories and feelings of grief with the people they love.

Materials:

1. Paper Chain Activity (Appendix G)
2. White Construction Paper
3. Scissors
4. Pen or marker
5. Tape
6. Journals

Activity:

Paper Chain Activity

Group members cut their paper into strips and write the names of people who care about them as well as all their memories of their loved one on each strip. Members can make as many strips as they need and then tape them together to make a chain. They are instructed to hang the chain in a place where it will remind them of their loved one and all the people who care about them.
Process:

As group members are sharing the books that they checked out and read last week, the group leader takes individual members aside to go over their individual goals. Then members of the group make a paper chain using the directions in Appendix G.

Closing:

Group members share their experience of the Paper Chain Activity. Then they are given a homework assignment to write about their favorite memory of the loved one they have lost in their journals. Members are reminded of confidentiality, date, and time of the next session.
Session 4

Why Me?

Goals:

1. To help members understand their feelings of stress as a result of their loss.

2. To help members understand that they are not alone and that support is available.

3. To help members cope with the fears and anxieties that they will face.

4. To help members understand that death is not something to be feared.

Materials:

1. How to Help Grieving Teenagers (Appendix I)
2. Share Some Statistics (Appendix L)
3. A hat or bucket
4. A pretend microphone (a hairbrush can be substituted for this if necessary)
5. Journals

Activity:

Share Some Statistics from the Hat

Cut apart the statistics from Appendix L and put them in a hat or bucket. Have group members take turns pulling out a slip of paper from the hat or bucket and reading it aloud to the group using the “microphone,” or hairbrush. After all of the statistics have been shared, discuss whether or not members had heard any of them or experienced any of them before.
Process:

Group members participate in the Share Some Statistics from the Hat Activity and discuss what they got out of it. Discuss the fact that sometimes we think that we are alone, but then we listen to what someone else has to say, and we realize that we are not alone. If there are others who are going through similar experiences, then there must be things that we can do to assist them through their grief.

Closing:

Members are given a Handout on How to Help Grieving Teenagers (Appendix I). They are given an assignment between now and next session to read the Handout and share it with at least two other people. Then they are to write about their experience of this in their journal and come to the next session ready to share. Remind members of date and time of next session.
Session 5

Is What I Am Feeling Normal?

Goals:

1. To help members come to terms with how they are feeling and express this.

2. To help members understand that what they are feeling is normal.

3. To help members become aware that others may have similar feelings.

Materials:

1. Common Feelings and Experiences of Grief (Appendix J)
2. Chart paper
3. Markers
4. Video/DVD Player
5. Journals

Activity:

Video

Watch video: “A Teen’s View of Grief” (20 minutes). This is a video on teen grief that shares clips from bereaved teens.

Process:

Members come to group and share their journal entries from the previous session. Then they watch a video and discuss how they can relate to the teens who shared their experiences on the
video. The group brainstorms common feelings and experiences of grief and lists all of these on the chart paper with a marker. Possible words are included in Appendix J.

Closing:

Members are given the following assignment to complete in their journals: Draw a picture of what it means to you to feel and experience grief. Use the words we came up with during our session to give you ideas. Members are reminded of date and time of next session.
Session 6

Understanding How to Cope with Death

Goals:

1. To explain the cause of a loved one’s death to self and others.

2. To promote understanding that members are not responsible for their loved one’s death.

3. To learn that there is nothing that they could have done in the past or nothing that they can do now to change the death.

Materials:

1. Randy’s Story (Appendix K)

2. Important Things to Remember (Appendix H)

3. Pencils

4. Journals

Activity:

Randy’s Story

Read Randy’s Story aloud to the group and then have each member complete the activity on the second half of the page by circling all of the statements that they can relate to. Each group member shares 2-3 statements that she could relate to from the list with the whole group.
Process:

Members listen to Randy’s Story and share what they could relate to from it. Hand out a copy of Appendix H to each member and go over it reminding group members that everyone grieves differently and your way is unique to you.

Closing:

Members briefly discuss the way in which they grieve. They are given an assignment to draw a picture and write about the way that they grief in their journals.
Session 7

Talking to Grieving People

Goals:

1. To assist members in understanding that others feel similar to them when they experience a loss.

2. To encourage members to respond empathically when helping others through grief.

3. To give members the opportunity to practice this skill in group.

Materials:

1. Draw a Picture Activity (Appendix M)
2. Pencil
3. Markers
4. Crayons
5. Journals

Activity:

Draw a Picture Activity

Students are given a copy of Appendix M and they follow the directions at the top. They draw a picture of something that represents grief to them and then they include 2-3 sentences about their picture. When they are done, they share their picture with one other person in group.
Process:

Members participate in the activity and then share one thing that they got from drawing their picture in addition to one thing that they got from sharing their picture.

Closing:

Members are given a homework assignment to look through their journals and evaluate their experience of the group. After they have done this, they are to write a page about how they are feeling knowing that the group will soon be coming to an end. What do they think that they will take with them when they leave the group? What is something that they learned about themselves by participating in the group?
Session 8

Closure and Saying Good-bye

Goals:

1. To give members the opportunity to review and process group sessions.

2. To reflect on all of the work that has been accomplished during sessions.

3. To teach children that saying good-bye can be a positive way to end a relationship.

Materials:

1. The Bill of Rights of Grieving Teens (Appendix N)
2. Evaluation of Grief and Loss Group (Appendix O)
3. Helium Balloons of various colors

Activity/Process:

Members will come to group and share their journal entries that were homework from the last session. Leader passes out The Bill of Rights of Grieving Teens and has them put it in a safe place in case they every want to take it out and read it. Members discuss the fact that this is the last session and that saying good-bye can be a good and positive thing. Members fill out an evaluation form and share a special treat. Then each member gets to pick a helium balloon of their choice to represent themselves. We take them outside and release them up into the sky.

Closing:

The session ends with a group hug. Members get to keep their journals as a reminder of group.
Dear Parent/Guardian:

During the school year, your school counseling staff will be offering students in need of services the opportunity to participate in group counseling. About six to eight students from your child’s school are selected to be in the group which is called Growing and Learning from Loss.

Group Counseling is an excellent opportunity for some students to learn new skills, develop self-confidence, and become more aware of how others see them, practice new behaviors, and better understand how to deal with the many problems life presents.

Enclosed is a form that asks you to give your consent for your child to participate. He or she will not be considered until you give your permission. Only a few students will be able to have this opportunity at this time. Participation in this group is completely voluntary and will not affect your child’s grades in any way.

Please read the Parent/Guardian Consent Form thoroughly and return it by Friday, December 21, 2007. If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please call me at the number listed below.

Thank you very much for considering this opportunity for your child.

Sincerely,

Ms. McLean
School Counselor
(972) 772-7272

Adapted from Smead (2000) p. 268
Appendix B

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Your permission is requested for your child, _____________________________ (child’s name), to participate in group counseling activities at Jones Middle School. The group counseling will run for approximately 8 weeks, from January 10, 2008 to February 28, 2008. A total of 8 sessions of 40 minutes each is scheduled. The group is entitled Growing and Learning from Loss and will include a discussion of ideas, behaviors, feelings, attitudes, and opinions.

Some of the subjects to be covered in the group are:

   How can I cope with the loss of a loved one?

   What can I do when I am feeling sad or lonely?

Participants will have the opportunity to learn new skills and behaviors that may help their personal development and adjustment. The group will be led by Ms. McLean, of the school counseling staff.

Because counseling is based on a trusting relationship between counselor and client, the group leader will keep the information shared by group members confidential except in certain situations in which there is an ethical responsibility to limit confidentiality. In the following circumstances, you will be notified.

1. If the child reveals information about harm to himself/herself or to another person
2. If the child reveals information about child abuse
3. If the child reveals information about criminal activity or the court subpoenas counseling records

By signing this form I give my informed consent for my child to participate in group counseling.

I understand that:

1. The group will provide an opportunity for members to learn and practice interpersonal skills, discuss feelings, share ideas, practice new behaviors, and make new friends.
2. Anything group members share in group will be kept confidential by the group leader except in the above mentioned cases.

**********Please return this form to Ms. McLean by Friday, February 21, 2007.**********

Parent/Guardian ___________________________________________ Date ________________

Student’s Name ___________________________________________ Date ________________

Adapted from Smead (2000) p. 269
Appendix C

Expectations and Ground Rules for
Growing and Learning from Loss Group

1.) Share the name, purpose, and goals of the group.

2.) Where, when, and how often the group will meet.

3.) Introduce group leader and share background.

4.) Discuss the number of students in the group.

5.) Members will be expected to share some personal things about themselves like ideas, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. No one will be forced to share if they choose not to.

6.) Benefits of being in the group and what is hoped to be gained through this experience.

7.) Confidentiality will be discussed including the fact that whatever is said in group is not shared with anyone outside of the group. Since we do not have complete control over all members, we can’t guarantee that another group member will not break our confidence.

8.) All group members are expected to be on time for each session. As members, we are sharing and learning together and it affects everyone when one member is absent.

9.) You may stop being a member of the group at any time, but you need to discuss this with the leader and come to one last group and say good-bye to the other members.

10.) No physical abuse, verbal abuse, or drug use is allowed in group.

Adapted from Smead (2000) p. 273
Appendix D

Grieving and Growing: Learning From Losses

Instructions: Read each sentence. Put a circle around the number that shows how you think and feel.

1 = Strongly agree  2 = Agree somewhat  3 = Agree  4 = Disagree somewhat  5 = Strongly disagree

1.) It is scary to think about dying.
   1  2  3  4  5

2.) I can remember and talk about the good things about my loved one who died.
   1  2  3  4  5

3.) I can tell my mom or dad when I feel sad.
   1  2  3  4  5

4.) I know what funerals are for and what happens in them.
   1  2  3  4  5

5.) I can share my feelings with my friends.
   1  2  3  4  5

6.) I have said good-bye to my loved one who has died.
   1  2  3  4  5

7.) I know that dying happens to everyone.
   1  2  3  4  5

8.) I can ask for help when I feel very bad about death and dying.
   1  2  3  4  5

9.) It is OK to feel sad or cry when someone dies.
   1  2  3  4  5

10.) I know the grief will not be as bad as time passes.
    1  2  3  4  5

Smead (1994) p. 224
Appendix E

Recommended Books for Adolescents Dealing with Loss

*A Birthday Present for Daniel* (Rothman, 1996)

*The Brightest Star* (Hemery, 1998)

*The Fall of Freddie the Leaf* (Buscaglia, 1983)

*Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins* (Traisman, 1992)


*Mick Harte Was Here* (Park, 1996)

*Nana Upstairs, Nana Downstairs* (dePaola, 2000)

*Say Goodnight, Gracie* (Deaver, 1988)

*Shira: A Legacy of Courage* (Grollman, 1988)

*The Sunday Doll* (Shura, 1988)

*Tiger Eyes* (Blume, 1981)
Appendix F

*Finish the Sentence Activity*

The thing that makes me feel the saddest is…

If I could talk to the person who died I would ask…

Since the death my family doesn’t…

My best memory with my lost loved one is…

If I could change things, I would…

One thing that I liked to do with the person who died was…

When the person died, I…

Since the death my friends…

After the death, school…

When I am alone…

*Choose one of the above sentences and share it with the group.*


11/21/07
Appendix G

Paper Chain
Important Things to Remember

Everyone grieves differently and no one way is the right way. Your way of grieving is right for you.

*You may want to talk about death

*You may cry

*You may write about your experiences in a journal

*You may choose to express your grief in a creative or artistic way

*You may be physical in your grief by playing sports or doing other physical activities

Adapted from www.dougy.org 12/1/07
Appendix I

How to Help Grieving Teenagers

1.) Allow regressive behavior and offer comfort

2.) Expect and accept mood swings

3.) Allow hidden feelings unless there is risk of harm

4.) Encourage expression of feelings through writing, art, music, and sports

5.) Support relationships with understanding adults

6.) Be available to listen and talk

7.) Answer questions truthfully

8.) Share your grief

9.) Watch for high risk behavior

10.) Find peer support groups

11.) Offer physical contact

12.) Allow choices about involvement in death and mourning

www.childgrief.org

c 2004 Mary M. Lyles, MSW, LCSW

11/25/07
Appendix J

Common Feelings and Experiences of Grief

- Shock
- Numbness
- Denial
- Anger
- Fear
- Guilt
- Nervousness
- Anxiety
- Nightmares
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Jumpy
- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Tightness in Chest

http://www.childgrief.org/teenspage.htm

11/28/07
Appendix K

**Randy’s Story**

Randy, a sophomore in high school, was 14 when his dad died of cancer. This is how he describes the experience of grieving the death of his dad:

“It’s been six months since my dad died. I haven’t told my friends how I feel. I just smile and make everybody laugh so they don’t know how much it hurts. I don’t talk to my mom because I don’t want her to feel worse. Once I did, but she got all teary. I felt like crying too. No way am I going to cry.”

“Can you relate to Randy? Have you ever felt some of the things he shared?”

**Circle the statements that you can relate to below:**

I’m the only one.
No one understands what I am going through, but they think that they do.
I can’t talk to my friends about this.
I can’t talk to my parents because they get too upset.
Everyone wants me to talk about my feelings and I don’t want to talk.
I just want to be alone.
I wish I didn’t feel so different.
When is this “grief” going to go away?
I am mad. I am sad. I hurt.
I don’t know what I feel.

## Share Some Statistics

**Grief is a normal response to loss.**

**There is no “right” way to grieve.**

**There is no set time for grief to “be over.”**

**There are many unexpected feelings that come with grief.**

**When you are still, you may experience many feelings.**

**It may be difficult to concentrate or remember.**

**You may feel “different” because of the loss.**

**Over 5.4 million children and teens have a parent who has died.**

**Many teens have siblings who die.**

**Even more have friends, grandparents, and other relatives who die.**

**You are not alone... even though sometimes grief can make you feel very alone.**
Appendix M

*Draw a picture of something that represents grief to you.*

*Include 2-3 sentences that tell about your picture.*
Appendix N

The Bill of Rights of Grieving Teens

A grieving teen has the right...

...to know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances.

...to have questions answered honestly.

...to be heard with dignity and respect.

...to be silent and not tell you her/his grief emotions and thoughts.

...to not agree with your perceptions and conclusions.

...to see the person who died and the place of the death.

...to grieve any way she/he wants without hurting self or others.

...to feel all of the feelings and to think all the thoughts of his/her own unique grief.

...to not have to follow the “Stages of Grief” as outlined in a high school health book.

...to grieve in one's own unique, individual way without censorship.

...to be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at self, and at others.

...to have his/her own theological and philosophical beliefs about life and death.

...to be involved in the decisions about the rituals related to the death.

...to not be taken advantage of in this vulnerable mourning condition and circumstances.

...to have guilt about how he/she could have intervened to stop the death.

This Bill of Rights was developed by participating teens at The Dougy Center and does not represent “official” policies of the Center.

http://www.dougy.org/default.asp?pid=8497582

11/21/07
Appendix O

_Evaluation of Grief and Loss Group_

1. What did you find most helpful during the group sessions?

2. Do you have any advice for kids who are going through loss?

3. What do you want the group leader to do the same/different in working with the group?

4. Please list any changes you think should be made to the group sessions below.
References


