

Activities for Grieving Children

Memory-Making Activities

1. MAKE A MEMORY BOX

Purpose:

The child will make a box in which to keep special things that remind him/her of the person who died and the relationship they had together.

Materials needed:

- Cardboard box with a removable lid
- Colored paper
- Spray paint
- Glue stick/tape
- Colored markers
- Scissors
- Magazines
- “Stick-on” items to use for decorations (e.g., buttons, ribbon, stickers, etc.)
- Optional: a picture of the person who died

Directions for younger children (4-6 years):

Preparation: Adult should pre-cut different shapes from colored paper and spray-paint the box ahead of time, allowing time for the paint to dry

Implementation: The child can decorate the box with markers or with shapes and “stick-on” items using a glue stick.

Directions for older children (7-9 years):

Preparation: Assist the child to either spray-paint or cover the box with paper. The child can cut out pictures and/or words from magazines. The pictures and words should have some significance to the child concerning his/her relationship with the person who died.

Implementation: The child will glue words and pictures from magazines on the box to give it meaning. A picture of the person who died may be glued on the box or placed inside it after the box is completed. Allow the child to use markers and “stick-on” items to further decorate the box.

2. MAKE A SCULPTURED MEMORY

Purpose:

The child will make a sculpture of a tangible memory, something he/she enjoyed doing with the person who died.

Materials needed:

- Modeling compound. (Any product can be used)
Model Magic is an excellent product for all ages because it comes in different colors, is light weight, very soft, easily molded, does not stick to things, and air-dries.
- Play Dough is a good product for all ages. It is heavier in texture, is soft and moldable, comes in various colors, and air-dries.
- Sculpy works better for older children because it is firm in texture and must be worked hard with the fingers to soften it for molding. It comes in many different colors. It does not air-dry but can be baked in a conventional oven to harden the finished product.
- Potters' clay or modeling clay can be used. Both are messy. Potters' clay must be fired to harden it. Modeling clay does not dry out.

Directions:

Instruct the child to make a sculpture that reminds him/her of something special that he/she used to enjoy doing with the person who died.

Examples:

- A child who played ball with the one who died might sculpt a baseball or a bat.
- A child who baked with the one who died might sculpt a cookie or a brownie.

3. MAKE A HANDPRINT

Purpose:

The child will make a handprint that memorializes the person who died, the date the loss occurred, and the size of the child when it occurred.

Materials needed:

- Small paper plates
- Tempra paint
- Colored markers

Preparation: Contact the child's parent or guardian to find out the name of the person who died (you want the "relationship name" the child uses for the person (e.g., Grandpa, Nana, or Aunt Susie), the date the loss occurred, and the child's age.

Directions: Help the child by coating one of his/her hands with paint. Assist the child to press his/her hand on a paper plate to make a handprint. Allow paint to dry. Assist the child as needed to write on the plate. Use markers to write the "relationship name" of the person who died and the date of the loss above the handprint. Write: "I was ___ years old" under the handprint.

Grief Processing Activities:

1. GRIEF IS LIKE A MAZE (for ages 6-9)

Purposes of activity:

- To illustrate that the process of moving through grief is not easy
- To help the child know that it is normal to “hit walls” and sometimes to “get stuck” in a feeling for a little while.

Materials needed:

- Reproducible Maze sheet at the end of the Activities section.
- Pencil

Preparation: Explain that getting through grief is a lot like moving a pencil through a maze. Sometimes we move forward. Sometimes we have to go around a wall. Sometimes we have to back up and start forward again. The important thing is that we keep moving toward the end of the maze.

Directions:

Let the child find his/her way through the maze. Talk with the child about whether it is easy or hard to find the way through.

2. MATCHING GAME (for ages 4-6 or 7-9)

Purposes of activity:

- To help the child understand that feelings can lead to actions that do not help to get his/her needs met.
- To help the child to differentiate between self-caring actions versus actions that push people away or keep him/her from getting what he/she really needs.
- To help the child match feelings with self-caring choices and behaviors.

Materials needed:

- Reproducible Matching Game at the end of the Activities section
- Pencil
- Blue and Orange markers

Preparation: Explain that when we have feelings, we will often act the way we feel. Some actions help us care for ourselves. Other actions push people away from us or keep us from getting what we really need. Talk about, “What do we really need when we sad, happy, mad or scared”

Directions:**Ages 4-6:**

You will need to read the feeling words and the action words to younger children. Ask, "When I feel feeling word, what do I do?" and "When I feel feeling word, what can I do to take care of myself? Help the younger child identify which actions can help or hinder getting his/her needs met. Help him/her identify actions that don't help and those that do.

Ages 7-9:

Let the children draw lines from feeling words to actions that might happen when the feeling happens. There may be more than one action for each feeling. Some actions are subjective because different people act differently when they experience particular emotions. Ask the child to put a blue checkmark beside actions that help to get needs met in a positive way. Ask the child to put an orange "X" beside the actions that might push people away or keep him/her from getting needs met.

Other Suggested Activities for Grieving Children

1. Press flowers from the funeral in a book. You can keep the flowers in a memory box or you can make something special out of them..
2. Make a special card to say what you wish you could say to the person who died.
3. Write a letter to someone and tell him/her about the person who died and the things you miss most.
4. Draw a picture of the person who died or of your family now that a special member of the family is no longer here. (Use Reproducible page with an empty frame)
5. Make a memory book or scrapbook of pictures and other things that remind you of special things about the person who died.
6. Write a letter or draw a picture for the person who died. Get a parent or teacher to make a copy of it. Keep one copy in a memory box or memory book, and leave one at the cemetery.
7. Make a Christmas ornament in memory of the person who died.
8. Make up a story about the person who died. Tell it to someone who also knew and loved the person who died.

Matching Game

(for ages 4-6)

The child needs an adult helper to play this game. Read the sentence, supplying a feeling word. Read the possible action words. Ask the child to choose actions that match the feeling. Discuss whether the chosen actions help the child get his or her needs met or not.

“When I feel _____ I can _____ to take care of myself.”
FEELING WORD ACTION WORD

FEELING WORDS

Sad

Happy

Mad

Scared

ACTION WORDS

Laugh

Kick my brother

Get a hug

Play

Cry

Hide under my bed

Hit my pillow

Matching Game

(for ages 6-9)

The child needs an adult helper to play this game. Read the sentence, supplying a feeling word. Read the possible action words. Ask the child to choose actions that match the feeling. Discuss whether the chosen actions help the child get his or her needs met or not.

“When I feel _____ I can _____ to take care of myself.”
FEELING WORD ACTION WORD

FEELING WORDS

Sad

Happy

Mad

Scared

Lonely

ACTION WORDS

Laugh

Ask for a hug

Hit my pillow

Talk to someone
who loves me

Cry

Go in my room

Ask to leave a light
on in my room

Tell somebody

Play with a friend

Run really fast

Kick a soccer ball

Hit my friend

Act grumpy

Fuss at my best friend

Hide under my bed

Play outside

Draw a picture

Listen to music

Maze

Help Dave find his way through the grief maze



START



FINISH