



School-Based Grief Counseling Activities

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Children (Ages 5 - 8)

- Draw or Color - For example, draw a picture of the person who died doing their favorite activity or draw a memory that you have of the person.
- Accordion People – Fold paper back and forth, draw yourself and cut out. Draw yourself with different emotions.
- Paint a rock or shell and put in a special place
- Pipe Cleaners - bend into something that represents your current feelings or something that reminds you of the person.
- Play music (the frog song)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfFGXG2-6kg>

Children (Ages 5 - 8)

- Balloon Launch - write on balloon or on a tag attached to the balloon
- Balloon People - Make feet so the balloon will stand and draw a face of how they are feeling
- Paper Plate Feelings - On one side draw yourself with the feeling you show people, on the other side draw your picture with a feeling that you are hiding.
- Plant a seed - decorate the pot or make and decorate a plant marker.
- Make a Kleenex flower - talk about turning sad thoughts into good thoughts.

Children (Ages 5 - 8)

- Make a dream catcher (i.e., paper plate and yarn) - catch scary dreams and negative thoughts
- Puppets have feelings too!
- My Lifesavers - (a lifesaver is someone that helps you through life and brings you support). Write the names of your lifesavers on Life Savers candies. Put them on a string and wear as a necklace.
- Grief is Like a Snowflake - Make snowflakes out of paper. This activity demonstrates that no two people grief comes one flake at a time other times it can be like a blizzard. Grief also tends to melt over time.

Children (Ages 5 - 8)

- Grief Survival Kit - Everyone needs a survival kit to get through hard times! Put items in a bag that can help you deal with your grief. Items could include:
 - Paper Clip - to help you hold it all together
 - Tissue - to remind you that it is okay to cry
 - Gem Stone - to remind you that you are unique and can shine brightly
 - Pipe Cleaner - to help you with all of the twists and turns along your grief journey

Children (Ages 5 - 8)

Children's books

- 1. Sad Isn't Bad by M. Mundy
- 2. When Jenny Is Scared by C. Shuman
- 3. When Someone Very Special Dies by M. Heegaard
- 4. Alice's Special Room by Dick Gackenbach
- 5. Daddy's Chair by S. Lanton

Children (Ages 5 - 8)

- 6. Geranium Morning by S. Powell
- 7. Grandad Bill's Song by Jane Yolen
- 8. Grandma's Scrapbook by Joseph Nobisso
- 9. I Know I Made It Happen by Lynn Blackburn
- 10. I'll always Love You by Hans Wilhelm
- 11. It Must Hurt a Lot by D. Sanford
- 12. Molly's Mon Died by Margaret Holmes

Children (Ages 5 - 8)

- 13. My Many Colored Days by Dr. Seuss
- 14. Someone Special Died by J.S. Prestine
- 15. Stacy Had a Little Sister by Wendie C. Old
- 16. Tough Boris by M. Fox
- 17. Why Do People Die by Cynthia MacGregor

Preteens (ages 9 - 12)

- Write a Letter to the Person that Died - The letter could include things like what you will always remember about the person.
- Blow it Up - Take a balloon and before each blow say a thought or feeling that you have been having. Let the balloon go and release those thoughts and feelings
- Graffiti Remembrance Wall - (Butcher paper!!) Messages to person, feelings, thoughts, stories, pictures
- Feelings and Negative Thoughts Backpack - Write feelings and/or thoughts or draw pictures on rocks with chalk (the size of the rock could represent the strength of the thought or feeling). Place them in the backpack and see how it gets heavier and heavier. Take rocks out to represent dealing with thoughts and feelings.

Preteens (ages 9 - 12)

- Soccer Ball Catch - Write questions on the white spots of a soccer ball toss to the child and have them answer the question where their right thumb is when they catch the ball. Sample questions: How are you different since the death? Tell a funny story about the person?
- Put the Puzzle Together - Write or draw things on the back of puzzle pieces. Put the puzzle together and turn over to see what you created.
- Recipe of Feelings - Using a recipe format, write down your own recipe to overcome sadness. Think of all of the ingredients that help you when you are feeling sad.
- Memory Box - Cover with pictures and or art. Place special objects inside.

Preteens (ages 9 - 12)

- Memory Bracelet - Place beads on string - tell what is significant about each bead or what it represents? (i.e., purple and gold for Vikings Fan, blue for favorite color)
- Message in a bottle - Decorate the bottle and write a special message to the person who died.
- Memory Book - text or art (or for a class a memory page to add to a book) - Pages could include; My Best Memory of _____; What I learned from _____; Collage of what grief looks like to you; This is what I miss most about _____.
- Memory CD/DVD ("Mixed Tape") - Photo, video or music collection
- Feelings Masks - make out of paper mache

Teens (Ages 13 - 18)

Discussions - Can be individual or group sessions.

- What has changed for you since your (parent, sibling, friend, grandparent) died?
- How has your family changed since the death?
- How does your family deal with death?
- What are some things that people have said or done (or not done) that have been helpful since the death?
- What special gift or legacy did your loved one leave you?

Teens (Ages 13 - 18)

Music - Listen and discuss. Bring in a song that has some meaning for you or listen to a song that has loss as a theme.

- For Example: "How can I help you say goodbye" by Reba McIntire
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcP-_DxpRdw
- Discussion topics could include - Life involves changes both good and bad; It's OK to hurt when things happen; memories can help you when you have to say goodbye

Teens (Ages 13 - 18)

- Journal Writing - Write your thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary.
- Write Song Lyrics or a Poem
- Timeline - Make a which includes important milestones and when special memories took place. Project what can happen in the future - looking forward!
- Time Machine - Imagine that there is a time machine and that you can go back in time. If you could change one thing, what would it be? or think of a day you would like to relive again.

Teens (Ages 13 - 18)

Games - Many games can be adapted to help teens look at emotions.

- For Example: Jenga - Write questions on the blocks, the person would then answer the question on the block that they pull out.
- Sample Questions could include - My first experience with death was when _____?
How was the death of the person discussed at home? If you were told that you had a terminal illness, would you change anything about your life?

Teens (Ages 13 - 18)

- Take Up Their Cause - Join the group or become active in a cause that the person supported as a way of honoring the person.
- Plant a Tree - Invite friends and family to the event.
- Candle Lighting Ceremony - Invite friends and family to the event.

References

- 35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child by The Dougy Center (The National Center for Grieving Children and Families)
- Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children by Liana Lowenstein
- Great Answers to Difficult Questions About Death: What Children Need to Know by Linda Goldman
- Grief is Like a Snowflake: Activity and Idea Book by Julia Cook
- Guiding Your Family Through Loss and Grief by Duane T. Bowers
- Healing Activities for Children in Grief: Activities Suitable for Support Groups with Grieving Children, Preteens, and Teens by Gay McWhorter
- Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss by Michaelene Mundy
- When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief by Marge Heegaard