

Khululeka

Grief Support for Children and Youth

Information on Grief for Social Workers

As a social worker you will have had some training on dealing with grieving families and it is wise to refer to what you have learnt. A lot of what you know on how to deal with difficult situations still applies.

However sometimes when we are confronted with grieving children we feel overwhelmed and helpless. Most of us want to help and want to reduce the pain that the child is feeling or we are scared to get too close to children and remind them of the pain.

So we end up saying things like: you must forget, you must be strong, you must not let this thing make you unhappy.

But this exactly can lead children to feel that their pain has no value.

The child experiences the pain as a way of connecting with the person who has died. Many children are actually afraid that they will forget the person, because then they are really not there any more.

To help children live well with grief there are a few things you can do as a social worker:

- ❖ When the child comes back from the funeral do not ignore that something very important has happened. Ask them about the funeral and their experience.
- ❖ Talk about grief and death openly with the family and in any groups that you run.
- ❖ Do not pretend to ignore children when they have experienced a loss.
- ❖ Use some of the games and tools on our web page to foster a safe environment in your groups.
- ❖ Consider some of the physical exercises that will relieve tension.
- ❖ If there are many children in the group who have experienced loss you can also start a grief support group. Please get in touch with us to connect you to the nearest facilitator or to attend one of our training courses.
- ❖ Get together with colleagues and talk openly about coping with grief.
- ❖ Read up on grief!
- ❖ Order the book "Someone I Love Died" from Khululeka for you and your school.

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