

A Picture Paints A Thousand Words



Children do not always use words to describe their feelings. Expressive therapies give them the opportunity to work through their emotions in a safe way and can be a powerful healing agent for a grieving child.

These therapies are offered through the following creative mediums and activities:

- **Painting & Drawing**
- **Clay**
- **Sand Tray**
- **Telling their story**
- **Puppets**
- **Play**

The greatest gift you can give your children is not protection from change, loss, pain or stress, but the confidence and tools to cope and grow with all that life has to offer them. (Wendy Harpham 1998)

Grief Support for Children

The **Hospice Library** has many excellent resources that you and your child can access.

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Grief Support for Children

Alternative Expressions for Children in Grief



Nanaimo Community Hospice Society

PROVIDING COMPASSIONATE CARE AND SUPPORT

If children are old enough to love, they are old enough to grieve.

Children grieve in 'waves'. The intensity, duration and frequency of these waves are not linear or predictable.

Children instinctively switch their focus to play when they become overwhelmed with intense thoughts or feelings as a way of regulating their emotions.

This can lead to adults thinking that they are not grieving. It can be helpful to remember that grieving is the internal process, whereas mourning is the externalising of that process.

A child's grief may be expressed in a variety of ways including:

- through their five senses
- their actions or behaviours
- symbolic & creative play

As with adults, the emotions experienced by children in grief may include sadness, frustration, anger, guilt, loneliness, vulnerability, or even relief. Despite these emotions, children also experience long periods of happiness as well.

For children, play and other expressive activities are comfortable and familiar. They are often some of the best ways to support them in organizing and expressing the chaotic and conflicting emotions of grief.

Working with clay helps release some of the feelings of anger that arise around the death or dying of a loved one. This can prevent it from being stored in the body only to come out later in some inappropriate or unhealthy way.

Miniature figures and objects can be used to create a 3D picture or world in the sand tray. The particular choice of a miniature is guided by an innate wisdom that we all have, allowing an expression of what is on the inside to come out.

For children, a picture paints a thousand words and actions speak louder than words.

Hospice offers a safe, comfortable, and non-judgemental place that is designed for children and is ideal for self-exploration and understanding.

This program allows the children to show us what they need. Following their lead, using whatever medium feels most comfortable to them, is how a session unfolds.

Our goal is to normalise the pain that is a natural part of the grief process.

Staff provide a supportive witness and guide as the children acquire *the tools they need to live with the death of a loved one*.

