



Fact Sheet

Strategies to Support a Child Who is Grieving

General Overview

Professional staff at a child care service can play an integral role in supporting a child who has lost a significant adult to death. This loss experienced by the child may be difficult for the adult to support. In addition to allowing the child to talk about death and what feelings are, staff need to support the child to be included and want to be included back into the community of the child care service.

Behaviour changes of the child is firstly an obvious sign that the child is trying to understand what is occurring in their world. Although it is important to allow the child to have the time to express their feeling, be alone at times and initially make their own decision to be apart from the group, the reality is that being included is important for all humans.

INCLUSION STRATEGIES

The following strategies are just a start to support the inclusion of the child back in with their peers. Staff may recognise that they are already attempting to implement some of these strategies. Keep them up. It is important that the service provides at least one consistent place for the child to be to enable them to cope with the inconsistencies which may be occurring in the rest of their lives.

- Talk to the parent/guardian in regards to what the child has been told and what they feel comfortable for the staff to talk about. Make sure you are using the correct terminology for the developmental age and that it compliments what is being used at home.
- Continue to discuss with the parent/grandparent the concerns that staff have in working with the child. Rather than saying the child is the problem, stress that you as staff need support.
- Identify what the child's interests are e.g. trucks, sandpit and allow times for that child to explore and play in those interest areas.
- Find ways to bring the child's outdoor interests to indoors e.g. provide a sandpit tray with trucks for 2 children to play at.

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- Allow the child to pick a friend to play with them at the sandpit tray.
- Acknowledge those times when the child has been on their own while reinforcing the idea that all the child's friends want the child to join in with the group activities.
- Allow areas within the room for the child to go when the child needs quiet time to himself while still ensuring safety and supervision.
- If the child is showing behaviours that are not acceptable, unsafe or not appropriate at a certain time, be firm with the child in setting the limits as with all the children but allow the child the knowledge that they may do that activity after rest time etc.
- Staff may need to have one person sit with the child as required at mat times etc. which lets the child know that there are limits and rules that all children and staff need to follow.
- Be prepared for resistance and ensure that all staff will respond the same way.
- Be honest with the child about how you feel about their behavior while still assuring the child that you like him/her and really enjoy it when the child come to day care.
- Think about creating certain routines to "do jobs" or rituals on arrivals etc to allow the child be part of the inclusion process.
- Using a reward system with a finish at the end of the week may be a bit too overwhelming at this stage of development. The child may have forgotten what he did "wrong" on Tuesday to be denied the reward on Friday. Instead, use agreed behavior such as if the child is not behaving appropriately remove reward there and then.

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