

Grief Role Play Assignment: Facilitator

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For my group's first session, I was one of the co-facilitators. For this session, we chose to role-play session 7 titled thoughts and feelings. After discussing the assignment requirements and making a formal introduction our group began the assignment. The other facilitator in the session started the introduction. She explained that this was a safe space to share information and self-disclose information without judgment. During the talk time of this activity, we explained that this was going to be a silent activity. We explained that we were going to be reading a list of topics in regard to our thoughts and feelings and if this was true to raise our hand. We started with a practice round where we all shared something we liked and raised our hands if it were true. After we got comfortable with the practice we jumped into the deeper questions that had to deal with death. Everyone at one point or another raised their hands to the various questions. We thanked the participants and then asked the participants to brainstorm what feelings they associate with the topics of loss and deaths we had just talked about. The participants shared feelings like anger, depression, sadnesses, hopelessness, and confusion. For the final activity in this session, we gave the participants a prompt to think about themselves and the life they are living. We asked the participants to share their own perceptions of thinking about death. Words such as legacy, fear, and anxiety, were all brought up in this discussion. After reflecting as a group on what the participants shared we closed the activity and thanked them for sharing their feelings and thoughts in regard to grief.

I learned a lot through facilitating this session about grief. The first thing that I learned about listening to one of the participants in the third activity of the session when brainstorming what we want our life to look like before death, she shared how she worried about her toddler and

the attachment and relationship they have and how that would impact their development. Grief affects many individuals. The anxiety and fear that can be brought to an individual and a child when they lose something is something to consider. The reading *Exploring children's understanding of death*, it expands on the idea that children will be affected by the loss. A child will have to grieve the loss of the individual and experience many feelings and thoughts they might not be able to understand and express (Searlight 2005). Another aspect that was discussed in the final activity was how one can leave a legacy. Before one dies, knowing death is inevitable now, you can make decisions in life to try to live a meaningful life. A life without regrets and a life without fear of dying and hurting others (Rothaupt 2007). For example, knowing how grief and loss can impact someone might influence one to live their life a certain way to bring joy to others. One participant shared this example of how they want to help others and be remembered by their peers for all the good they have done so they want to start making those choices now as death is inevitable. I also was able to learn about the complicity of loss.

Everyone had something different to share about how grief has impacted them and listening to what was said from a facilitator standpoint was harrowing. Anxiety, depression, hopelessness, concern, confusion, and uncertainty were all discussed. Grief is complicated and unique. Everyone handles it differently. The article *Attachment, loss, and complicated grief* discussed the complicity of grief that the participants shared. How different thoughts and feelings can arise and how it will impact one life (Shear 2005). Grief is a part of life, those who shared their feelings of grief younger versus older were in line with what we learned in class. Children could not fully understand the complexity of what happened but adults can't understand what death is and be able to take that with them into the grieving cycle (Granek 2010). When going

through the talk session and sharing our experiences of maybe losing a pet to almost dying ourselves and expanding and sharing the thoughts and feelings of this our group was able to see the complexity of death and how grief might look different through development.

I think that this session went pretty well. For it being our first session I think we were all able to communicate our thoughts and feelings on grief and expand on them. This activity would be a great tool to keep with us as we pursue our careers. Specifically for myself, pursuing child life is a career where I will be dealing with loss and grieving children, siblings, and parents. Being the facilitator helped me learn to listen and respond when talking about these hard topics. So often this topic is not talked about so being in the facilitator position and listening to the participants and talking with them was very helpful to me. Everyone in our group was open to sharing as we created a safe space to share, this was very helpful. Going into our next two sessions I think we can maybe spend a little more time and dive deeper into the topics we talk about in the readings. As a first session, we kind of kept it short rather than going into a full discussion. This is something I would like to see in the next activity. Everyone did not know each other going into our meetup as well so the more we get comfortable with one another the more natural these activities will feel. Overall this activity taught me a lot about grief and what we have learned thus far in the course. This assignment was very helpful to me in understanding how thoughts and feelings impact grief and how it may affect an individual.

Resources

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Searlight, H. & Gafford, J. (2005). Cultural diversity at end-of-life: Issues and guidelines for family physicians. *American Family Physician*, 71 (3), 515-522.

Shear, K., & Shair, H. (2005). Attachment, loss, and complicated grief. *Developmental Psychobiology: The Journal of the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*, 47(3), 253-267.

Rothaupt, J. W., & Becker, K. (2007). A literature review of Western bereavement theory: From detecting to continuing bonds. *The Family Journal*, 15(1), 6-15.