

Importance of community in grieving for a child



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Abstract

This paper will explore the importance of community when a child is grieving over the loss of a loved one. While I was learning about community support groups, I fell in love with this topic and decided to write a paper based on the concept. In person and online support groups will be discussed and explained throughout this paper as they both are very beneficial to a child when they are grieving. Research will be mentioned to confirm the importance of both types of support groups; in person and online. Not only will I discuss the effects of the two different community support groups, but I will also touch on how it relates to Child Life through therapeutic activities, comfort, and education and why I believe this topic is of importance to talk about. Lastly, I will reflect on this topic and on my overall learning of death and dying in HDFS 403.

Final Paper

Community support groups are beneficial to any individual who is in the grieving process; especially with children. No matter where you stand in your grief; a community support group could help through the process. Throughout this paper, I will explain and discuss why community support groups; both in person and online are important to children while grieving as well as their link to Child Life practices. Not only will I talk about the importance of community support groups when children are grieving, but I also will discuss why this topic is important to talk about, what I have learned

about this topic, as well as what I have learned as a whole about death and dying through the HDFS 403 course.

In Person Support Groups

Support groups within your local community can be beneficial for children while they are grieving over the loss of a loved one. They could be grieving over the loss of a grandparent, uncle, aunt, friend, or even a parent and they may need the support of their local community to cope. Bereavement groups such as those at local hospice centers or overnight grief camps are just two of many in person grief support groups that can help your child through their journey of grief. They are able to provide a sense of belonging and may help fill any holes the child is missing from the loss they are experiencing (Powers). Involving children in your local in person community support group can do wonders as it may help them express their emotions they may be experiencing through their grief. Through these in person community support groups, therapeutic play techniques may be offered such as painting, building with Legos, and dolls. These play activities as well as others are sometimes a child's way to manage and cope with the emotional feelings they are experiencing (Brown, 2007). If a child has a local support group to attend in person then they may be able to recognize and state the feelings they may be having difficulties with expressing through therapeutic play and also might be able to engage with the other children who may be going through a similar situation.

Online Support Groups

Online support groups are a new and different way children are starting to use with the supervision of their parents of course. These groups allow the child to express their feelings of grief no matter what time of day (Powers). They are offered on social media platforms and online forums through websites. A website I found while I was researching this topic was *Hello Grief*, they allow children from all over the world to share their feelings of grief with others going through same situations (Powers). I explored this website and found it very useful for children and their families who are experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one. Online support groups such as the ones provided above are now starting to offer tools that in person support groups offer such as therapeutic activities children can do on their own to help with their feelings of grief (Falconer, Gibson & Norman, 2011). Online groups are always there and are now a new way for children to express their feelings any time they want.

How Child Life Practices are Linked to Community Support Groups

Child Life practices I believe are very important to include in any type of support group setting that is dealing with children and expressing their grief; whether that is an in person or online community group. Some ways community support groups are linked to Child Life are through therapeutic play, providing comfort, and education on grief itself. Therapeutic play techniques are so important as they provide ways of self-expression for children going through the pain of losing a loved one. (Brown, 2007). In Child Life, we provide ways of therapeutic play to help children cope with change and the fear of the unknown. These therapeutic techniques are aimed to help ease a child's mind and provide a way for them to express their feelings

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due to the change that is or has happened in their lives. As Child Life Specialists, we also want to provide our patients with a sense of comfort. We do not want them to feel scared or as though they are alone while staying at a hospital. Grief support groups can also do just that, they can provide a sense of comfort as it is a platform children can use to help cope with the emotions of grief they are experiencing. Lastly, providing education is another link community support groups have in common with Child Life practices. In the Child Life field, we want to inform and educate individuals on the field of Child Life as well as the reason their child is in the hospital. Community grief support groups can provide education on grief and explain to children and their families that grieving is normal and that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Providing support groups to help children grieve are very important and establishing Child Life practices within these support groups will help children that much more.

The Importance Of Community Support Groups

I decided to talk about community support groups and how important they are to children while grieving because I believe there needs to be more of them established and within driving distance to every major city. While I was researching information for the previous assignment in this class, I found it difficult finding local support groups in my area. I only found two local groups and I thought that was not many which is why I decided to choose this topic as I believe this lack of grief support groups needs to be addressed because if there is no way to address our feelings of grief, then they will just stay bottled up inside us. This is important for children as they need an outlet to feel comfortable in while addressing their feelings of grief

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so their emotions do not stay bottled up. Finding that outlet for a child is very important and will help in guiding their grief process. As this paper states, in person and online community support groups can be beneficial to a child's wellbeing when they are grieving. By bringing more awareness to the effect these groups have on children and establishing more of them in our local communities, I believe the children who are grieving can receive more help reflecting on the challenging feelings they are experiencing through their grief process.

What I Learned About Community Support Groups

When I was learning about this topic during class and through my own research, I have gained so much information. I learned that children tend to express their emotions through play, so by including Child Life practices such as therapeutic play interventions in community support groups are very important, especially when a child is grieving. In person and online support groups are beneficial to a child's needs when they are grieving as they may feel more belongingness since they are sharing their feelings with other children who are going through a loss of a loved one as well. We also as a community need to try and establish more community support groups in all major cities, especially those that involve grief and bereavement as these will be helpful for all who are grieving and not just children. Children who experience grief at such a young age carry that grief with them throughout the rest of their lives, so establishing more community supports groups that talk about grief would be very valuable to each community and help with the healing process.

What I Have Learned Throughout This Course

Throughout the past eight weeks in HDFS 403, I have learned a plethora amount of information. We have talked about how the different stages of development affect how children understand death as well as cultural and spiritual influences. Not only did we touch on these two topics, but we also talked about the role of the school and the effect communities have when children are grieving. Each developmental stage reflects on how children view death. An infant does not really show emotions toward death as they cannot communicate verbally, but when they sense some sort of fear or worry they cry. A toddler views death as not being permanent whereas a preschool aged child may ask questions such as why or how and may feel guilt or shame. A school aged child on the other hand is more concerned about what happens to the body after someone dies and starts to view death as more permanent. Lastly, an adolescent recognizes death as permanent and that everyone will have to go through it at some point of their life. Cultural and spiritual influences are important to the grieving process just as much as how each developmental stage perceives the term death. Knowing how to talk to a child and their family about death or a dying individual is important; especially when you work in a hospital setting. Having each cultures beliefs in hand will help when addressing the topics of death, dying or grief. School is a third topic we discussed throughout the course. We learned that the school has a huge role in the lives of children grieving. They provide many ways children can cope and express their feelings. These ways include meeting with a school counselor, finding a teacher that is trustworthy in which the child feels comfortable going to, and in

circumstances in which a teacher or child has died, offering school wide activities to express the feelings the children at that school may be experiencing. Lastly, we have learned about how useful communities are when children are grieving over the loss of a loved one. Involving your child in your local community can be very beneficial for them especially when they are grieving. Attending a community grief support group in which the child can partake in therapeutic activities to help express the challenging emotions they may be experiencing can be so helpful to that child's grieving process. No matter whether that support group is in person or online, it can be beneficial to get a child involved in one in order to help cope with their grief. I have learned so much information from this course and will use the information I have gained in my future career as a Child Life Specialist as well as in my own personal life, especially when raising my future children.

Conclusion

The knowledge I have gained from this course is definitely beneficial for my future career as a Child Life Specialist. From learning about how each developmental stage perceives death, the different cultural and spiritual beliefs toward death, the important role the school plays, and the importance of the community, all prove to be such useful information. During this course it was brought to my attention how much community involvement means when an individual is grieving. Being involved in one's community helps take the mind off of their loss even if it is just for a short second. This involvement can help in the grieving process as sometimes being around other people, especially those who are grieving a similar situation can do wonders. Establishing more support groups that address <https://assignbuster.com/importance-of-community-in-grieving-for-a-child/>

the topics death, dying and grief can be very valuable to anyone coping with a loss, especially children. These support groups can be even more beneficial if they involve therapeutic activities for children and adults the same to engage in. These activities allow the children especially to express their feelings they may not know how to express in other forms, whether that is through painting, building with Legos, playing with dolls and so much more. Providing different activities for each developmental stage is very important as well because we do not want the activity to be too difficult or too easy for a child to complete thus not addressing the feelings they really want to express. Having an outlet for your grieving child to go to can be so valuable as it can help them cope with their grief. This is why in person and online support groups can be beneficial to a child as these are ways in which they can express their feelings they are experiencing through their grief.

References

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