



*A tip sheet for the child care provider who needs a list of activities for working with a child in their care.*


## Activities Tip Sheet:

*Working with children who have experienced a trauma.*

Designing activities for child care providers to show support toward the children in their care takes on a unique twist. When a child has experienced a trauma, it is often important to the child to **not** be treated with exceptions and yet, their circumstances are reason to offer extra time and extra attention. Comfort can often be found in maintaining routines and schedules..


**The charge to this adult is:**

- To be accessible to the child
- To listen
- To allow the child to make meaning with the experience, to find hope, and to find a feeling of safe



It is suggested that a child be given a "pass for a week"...  
(Depending on age)

### Precious Gems



*Items needed:*  
~A drawstring bag  
~Lots of different colored stones

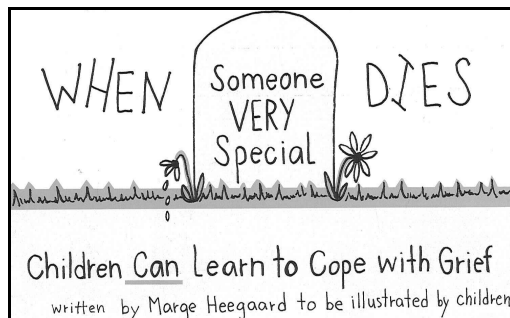
Provide a choice of stones for the child to select one to remind the child of a "person now deceased."

Encourage the child to select a different color stone for:  
" Each living person that loves you"

Have a ceremony to "put love into the stones" as they are placed in the bag.

The child will have the bag of stones for their pocket, to keep with them, and/or to put under their pillow at night.

~Consider age appropriateness~  
A memory bracelet may serve the same idea. Colorful wooden beads could be strung and knotted. Or, macaroni could be painted and stung. With each bead strung, talk about it representing the people who love this child and a favorite memory of something they enjoyed doing with their loved one.




*"This book was designed to teach children death education, to recognize and express feelings of grief, encourage open communication, and help adults discover unhealthy misconceptions the child may have."*  
Marge Heegaard





*Let's honor the child ...  
with Balloons, Butterflies, Doves*




<p><b>Design A Ceremony</b></p> <p>By discussing with the child things he/she would like to honor about the person no longer in their life.</p> <p>List these things to read aloud at the time the selected item is released.</p>	<p><b>Doves and Butterflies</b></p> <p>Are very symbolic of the change in a child's life. Discuss with the child their hope for their own future</p> <p>And</p> <p>At the time of release give these words back to the child as their wish for the future.</p>	<p><b>Balloons</b></p> <p>Offer</p> <p>A visual experience. Encourage the child to decorate a large white balloon and</p> <p>Place inside a message of love and best wishes to the person no longer in their life.</p> <p>Release and watch float into the sky.</p> 
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**Gift of Music**

Provide equipment for child's personal use of quiet time music and relaxing sounds.

Write a song together.



**Art Expressions**

"Create something to reflect how you feel inside."

Give each color a special meaning

Provide supplies for

Drawing ~ Coloring ~ Doodling

Sand Art ~ String Art

Clay ~ Dough

*Let's Preserve Memories!*



**Memory Book**

Ask the family for photos to create a small hand size book with photos of the person now missing and of happier times enjoyed with lots of family & friends. The child can share with classmates, keep with them or keep private.

**Memory Box**

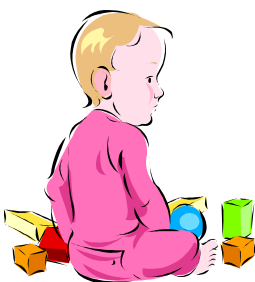
Decorate a small wooden box together for the child to take home and find small memory items to place inside.

The contents could be shared with classmates, or kept private in their own classroom cubby.

**Plant New Life**

Provide materials for planting a "classroom safe" potted plant, decorate container as a project ~ OR ~ Plant flower seeds, observe and chart/illustrate their growth representing change.

**Plant a tree** outside and decorate rocks to place at the base.



## Let's project into a make believe place...

Express Life's Dramas

### Serve as a facilitator.

Allow the child to express concerns and interest played out in a child size setting with other classmates.

Brainstorm themes! Imagination only takes a few prompting questions to get the ball rolling. We provide prop box items to support their fantasy ideas.

Encourage magical Power tools....

"power" (the super-human ability to do what is needed) "tools" (the item to use to do a task)...

to provide an element of the mystery the child may already be experiencing.

Note: (This may certainly be combined with religious based ideas as appropriate per individual child and/or program).

Everything is a mystery of sorts! Power tools give a child a way to balance their size and general lack of emotional coping skills against the size of this trauma they now have in their life. Power tools become a concept about "safe" and protective factors. It puts



something in their imagination to help give them the super natural ability to deal with the fear that comes with trauma.

Such items as *magic stones* that have the ability to change something about a person, *top hats* that can bring things back from having disappeared, *scarves* that can give a hug, and *sticks* that can write a message .....all give a child's mind a way to work out some corrective justice they may be feeling.

Pretending to be inside of a bubble may allows a child to feel extra safe and protected as it's driver.

Fantasy play may include the reenactment of many parts of a funeral ceremony. (This is natural)

Puppet shows allow a child to speak in the third person, and this often gives mystery and emotions a voice.

### Pet Magic....

Playtime with a pet provides calm and focuses on touching and often provides comfort found no other way.



### Cozy Spot Poster

Encourage the child to cut from a magazine scenes and designs to help them imagine a pleasant place or things they like. Glue onto a placemat size poster and agree where to place it in a location to serve as a private spot for the child to go as needed.

place for this and for quiet reflection visits independent of other group activities. Provide a pillow to hug or squeeze.

*Avoid encouraging any aggressive behaviors.*



## Let's Explore Feelings...

### Identify Feelings

It's OK to have lots of feelings! Talk about different feelings and explain that feelings can change depending on what is happening in our lives. Feelings can be "emotional" (how we feel inside) or "physical" (signs our body gives to us).

Ask children to make a circle, seated, as they pass a soft huggable item to each other, each child may express a feeling and give an example of a time he/she may have felt that way.

### How to calm one's self....

Dealing with anger is a natural reaction to change and new experiences.

Teach calming skills starting with breathing exercises. (Breathe in through the nose and out the mouth.) Pretend to be a balloon while letting all the air out, or pretend to be a turtle and tuck inside the shell to breath deeply three times ...and come back feeling renewed. Provide a renewal



## Let's give an example!

Note: One adult with one child activity to foster conversation and personal support.

*(Begin by placing a garden glove onto your hand.)*

Move the gloved hand around by wiggling your fingers inside the glove. The movement gives the impression of it being as one. Describe the gloved hand as representing our abilities... we move around by walking and running, we can play, we can tickle and wiggle, we can rock or rest, we can eat, we can sing or talk, we breath and touch with feeling by the function of our body... because it has *life*, or rather the "ability" of physical actions.

**Remove** your hand from the glove. Talk about the hand as being once inside the glove. (Remove this hand from sight.) Then look at the glove and how it does not move now. Explain that the hand is no longer inside to give it abilities to move and do things we understand. Now it is just a shell. It does not breath or move around any more. The shell is just there. It is not the person we once knew to be capable of physical actions.



**Lean on nature for discussion topics**



## Let's write your own story!

### Be a Scribe.

Create a scripted social story by documenting the perception of the child about their own experience. Begin by talking and writing each idea or comment from the child in descriptive factual words.



*The goal is to document this child's personal story showing their life's changes. It should also encourage hope, safety and meaning for the child's future.*

Ask the child to tell you about what they think and feel. (This may also bring out false information the child has perceived.)

Ask pointed questions about what the child was doing before the trauma, who told them about it, when, how did they feel at that time, who were the people taking care of them, and where?

Did they ask questions?

What questions do they still have?  
What do they think happened?  
What is going to happen?

Share & edit with child's guardian.

Encourage the child to illustrate each idea on a page. (Or, provide graphics/photos.) Make this into a child's storybook keepsake by organizing the storyline with the child.

The value of this social story grows. Each time it is read, the story stays the same. Everyone who reads it to the child uses the same words. It helps comfort by being consistent!

