



# Grief and Loss Support Program

## Program Goal

For children and carers to understand that grief, loss and change are normal parts of life and that we grieve the loss of anything that is different from what we had before. The loss through separation or divorce, or through the changes brought about by illness and hospitalisation is one of life's most devastating changes for children to bear, in these situations strong feelings of grief are normal. Growth and healing happens when the child moves through various phases of grief, and completes the tasks of grief: understanding, grieving, commemorating and moving on into a new sense of self that is stronger than before. Research has shown that participation in support groups aids the healing of grief in a supportive and safe environment.

## Program Objectives

To recognise and label loss events such as separation or illness as personal grief experiences for the children, and to help them recognise that loss happens in the lives of others; that they are not alone in their grief experiences and that each loss is unique to the individual.

To help children recognise that grief is a natural response to loss or change of any kind and to understand and normalise strong feelings associated with illness and loss.

To enable children to move on with a new purpose of self, and feeling better equipped to manage on-going life changes.

Understanding

## Program Sessions

Over 7 sessions the children will complete the following tasks going through the phases of grieving. The psychological tasks for bereaved children can fit three distinct time frames.

### Sessions 1 and 2

*Early tasks emphasise understanding and self-protection:*

- To understand the meaning of the loss: and
- To feel safe in a secure environment.

### Sessions 3, 4 and 5

*Middle - phase tasks pertain to acceptance and reworking:*

- To acknowledge at an emotional level the reality of the loss;
- To explore and re-evaluate the relationship; and
- To bear the psychological pain that accompanies the realisation of the loss.

### Sessions 6 and 7

*Finally, late tasks concentrate on identification and development:*

- To develop a new sense of personal identity that includes the experience of the loss and some new way of identifying with the ill person or the one who has left home;
- To invest in new relationships without fear of loss; and
- To return to age appropriate developmental tasks.

Grieving

Commemorating

Moving On

