

SEASONS OF GRIEF

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OPENING



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THE NEED

- Supports are present at CHOP during treatment and end of life
- Feelings of abandonment and resentment
- Lack of outside support, isolation

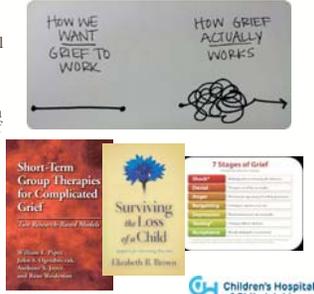


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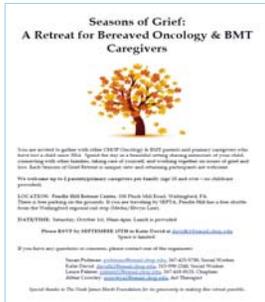
RESEARCH SUPPORTING THE NEED

- Professional support by familiar team members after death shown to be helpful in moving parents through the grief process
- Bereaved parents have identified gaps in care after child's death, including loss of contact with staff, lack of continued support, and lack of connection with other families
- Hospital programs for bereavement support have been shown to increase coping, decrease isolation, and help parents feel cared for by staff.



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Invitations
 - Up to 2 caregivers per family
 - Child died >3 months ago, <3 years ago
 - Initial outreach by family's social worker or chaplain
 - List obtained from hospital's bereavement coordinator



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Team members: 2 social workers, an art therapist, and a chaplain
- Location choice: off campus, serene, centrally located
- Funding



BEING IN NATURE



- Families often not ready to return to the hospital.
- Healing and peaceful environment.
- Seeing the seasons change makes a statement about grief and the constancy of loss and renewal.
- Families are free to wander the grounds.
- Being able to appreciate beauty in life again is a gift of nature.
- Cranaleith is Gaelic for "Sanctuary of Trees" and we hope our retreat is also a sanctuary for our participants.

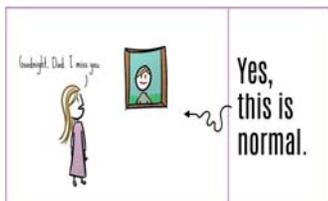
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PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

10am-4pm

- Large group (2hrs)
 - Welcome
 - Introductions
- Lunch (1hr)
- Electives (1hr)
- Small Groups (1.5hr)
- Closing (.5hr)



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PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Morning: Large Group

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Welcome | • Evolution in framing introductions <i>Huge shift in the tone of the day</i> |
| Purpose of the Day | • Ask returners why they come back |
| Introductions | • Meaning in being able to talk about their child |
| Staff | • Difficulty and struggle of their grief |
| Participant caregivers | |
| Child | |

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THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES



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JOURNALING

- Writing is private, intimate, and safe.
- Writing is often a way to connect to the subconscious
- Writing, and especially journaling, is a log of the healing journey and a way to look back and appreciate change and growth.
- Writing is a way to give voice to feelings that the writer may be unable or unwilling to share and yet need to be expressed.
- As Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth: "Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the overwrought heart and bids it break."
- Writing is healing in ways that are sometimes hard to name but impossible to deny.



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PET THERAPY

- Source of unconditional love.
- A way to interact with other retreat participants.
- Elicit stories and laughter that families have shared with their pets.
- Trained to be patient and are calm, non-demanding and attentive.
- Being able to love again is integral to healing. Connecting with a Therapy Dog can be an important first step that they may be unaware that they're taking.



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TIBETAN SINGING BOWLS

“Tibetan Singing Bowls are ancient instruments which produce vibrations that are both healing and peaceful. They are said to align chakras, stimulate energy centers, reduce stress, and relieve pain. The sounds have a centering effect, producing deep relaxation while activating the body’s natural ability to heal. The mystical sound help us to get out of our heads and into our hearts.” – Phyllis Strock



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SPIRITUALITY GROUP

- Writing letters to God that are not shared with anyone else which we then burn outside.
- Discussion of topics based on short readings on themes like “Letting go of Guilt” “Being Angry at God” “Questioning God”
- Sometimes, although not always, praying together at the end of our session
- An Episcopal priest who lost a child and has two other children with the same disease, spoke about her struggles with faith and God before answering questions.



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ART THERAPY WITHIN SEASONS OF GRIEF

- Strength based art making
- Connecting to grief or loss
- Reinforcing themes
- Reflective distance
- Tangible object



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ART THERAPY INVITATIONS

- Seed Paper
- Cyanotypes/Ink Prints with Mindfulness
- Matchbox Affirmations
- Wind Chimes
- Grounding Stones
- Shrinky Dinks



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SEED PAPER (SPRING)

- Papermaking
 - Process of breaking down and creating new
 - Ritualistic process with metaphor woven throughout



- Write messages/generate images on scrap papers
- Turn into pulp
- Create small sheets of new paper
- Add seeds and let dry
- *When ready*, plant and watch flowers grow



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CYANOTYPES (SUMMER/FALL)

- Printmaking
 - Process of creating a lasting image
 - The impression stays even when the object goes



- Take a walk and notice your surroundings
- Chose natural objects that you're attracted to
- Arrange on treated paper and leave in the sun
- After some time, remove the objects to reveal the silhouettes
- Ink printing offered as a more involved process



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MATCHBOX AFFIRMATIONS (WINTER)

- Collage
 - Matchbox as a container
 - Simple, private reminders when "a spark" is needed
- Use various papers, precut words, etc.
- Create a small piece of art inside the matchbox
- Consider including an affirmation or reminder
- Choose to decorate the outside or keep plain
- Keep in a space for when a message is needed



SHRINKY DINKS (WINTER)

- Shrinky Dinks
 - Materials as metaphor
 - Child-like and silly; break-up the day
- Create imagery with consideration for your child
- Shrink the images to strengthen and intensify
- Engage in discussion about creating space in grief
- Acknowledge that the representational images did not go away, but became more manageable (and strong)



SMALL GROUPS



- If participants attend with their partner, we ask them to separate for an afternoon session
- Separating partners acknowledges that individuals grieve differently. Grief is as unique as a fingerprint.
- "Ask it Basket"
- Feelings pie graph

RITUAL CLOSING

Passing of tangible items

- Stones
- Feathers
- Bulbs
- Seed packets



Wishes/Hopes for each other



- What do you wish for the person next to you in this season?
- What do you see in the person seated next to you – strengths/qualities?
- What would your child's wish be for you?
- What do you want to plant to grow in the future?

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PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Sent to participants within one week of the retreat

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|---------|----------------|----------------|
|-------------------|----------|---------|----------------|----------------|

1. I'm glad I came to this Seasons of Grief retreat.
2. This retreat contributed to my healing.
3. It was helpful to be together with other parents/caregivers who are grieving.
4. I would attend future Seasons of Grief retreats.

Open Ended:

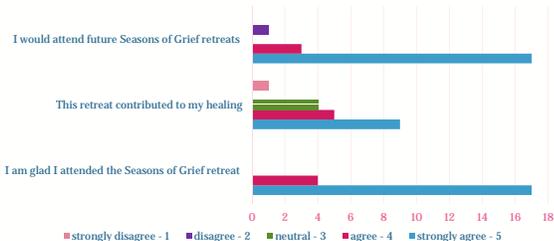
1. What was the most meaningful part of the retreat for you?
2. What suggestions do you have for our next retreat?

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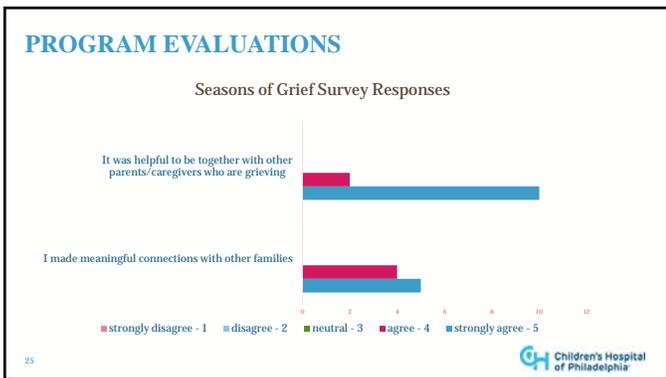
PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Seasons of Grief Survey Responses



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PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

What was the most meaningful part of the retreat for you?

"...Sharing with other families and enjoyed the splitting up of mothers and fathers."

"...I love when we sit around and just talk about our kids, and our feelings. I love just love that. And I love to be able to talk about situations and get everyone's advice."

"...I like that we didn't dwell on our children's suffering... that we were able to share some fun things about our kids. Also this was a great art project too. Oh the food rocked. Atmosphere was more cheery and comfortable."

"...Time with my spouse, connecting to other families, sharing stories.. Loved our ending together sharing our wishes for one another, powerful moment for me."

"...I felt so connected and peaceful like so SAFE...it was a really perfect day."

"...I am thankful because I realized that I don't feel angry to God, He gives me strength and my faith has been my guide, I do not feel bitterness."

"...Being able to share our son's journey within a safe environment without judgement while having a receptive audience that is willing to not only listen and sincerely attempt to understand, but also share their own experiences."

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PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

What suggestions do you have for our next retreat?

"...I think it was spot on. Maybe have different topics to focus on. Splitting groups up by years out... the new comers and old timers have different experiences..."

"...Continue to offer "alternative" activities or experiences in the future, like the singing bowls at this last retreat. Or, healthy eating class with cooking demonstration, yoga or meditation class."

"...It was Great! Maybe we can do a meeting to connect throughout the months by getting a list of phone numbers and emails to connect on our own."

"...Keep it at Cranaleith. Maybe we can each give a tool to each other on how to get through a bad day."

"...I liked the therapy pets and also breaking up into smaller groups - it seems like introducing an opportunity for a lighter mood such as the therapy pets is a great idea."

"...The only suggestion I would have is when we split up into two groups in the afternoon maybe mix the groups up not letting all the men go in one room or maybe break into smaller groups of 3 or 4 depending on the amount of people that attend. Thank you for all of your hard work to make this retreat happen."

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STAFF IMPRESSIONS

- Observing the evolution of the narrative
- Regarding faith – making the choice to believe
- Acknowledging growth in coping skills
- Recognizing when a participant is “stuck”
- Identifying newfound purpose



NEXT STEPS / CHALLENGES

- Supporting caregivers who remain “stuck”
- Managing dominant voices
- Supporting participants who are not appropriate for the group setting
- Balancing growing numbers and preserving intimacy of the group
- Clarifying the purpose – limiting group to “early grief”
- Termination - transitioning from Seasons of Grief
- Establishing a “curriculum”



CLOSING (VIDEO)
