

Practical activities to support a bereaved pupil

An activity can support a child or young person to communicate. Engagement in an activity often negates the need for a child or young person to have eye contact and may help free them up to share their thoughts, feelings and memories. It also affords you an opportunity to work alongside the child to support them, to help them identify 'big' worries or issues and seek additional help if required. The following activities can be shared with teachers and parents.

Memory Box

Bereaved pupils may benefit from collecting into a special box items that remind them of the person who has died and times shared with them. Examples could be: photographs, letters, cards, perfume or aftershave, shells from a beach holiday, tickets from an outing, an item of clothing or jewellery, flowers from the funeral, etc. Every time the pupil looks over the items in the box they are remembering the person who has died and thus keeping fresh their memories.

Memory Book

This is a paper based version of a memory box. A scrapbook can contain pictures, cards, letters, photographs, postcards, tickets, drawings and certificates all of which are important keepsakes connected with the person who has died.

Memory Bracelet

Make a bracelet by plaiting together different coloured strands of wool or embroidery thread. Each colour could represent a different memory or special quality of the person who has died. This could then be worn or placed in a memory box and used as an aid to recall happy times.

Support Bracelet

Make a bracelet as above with each colour representing someone who cares about the pupil. The pupil chooses a colour to present the person who has died and then chooses other colours to identify people in his/her life who love and support him/ her. This activity of naming and identifying a support network can bring great comfort and a sense of security to a pupil.

Pom-Pom

Create a small pom-pom using different colours of wool, each colour representing different memories. The final creation can act as a small fidget toy as well as a reminder of the person who has died.

Memory Jars

There are several ways to make memory jars. The jar could be set up at a memorial service. Have pieces of paper and pens next to it. Ask family, friends and mourners to write down favourite memories and stories about the person who has died and place them in the jar for you to read later or complete the task previous to the service and read out some memories at the service.

Another way is to create a Rainbow salt jar in which each memory is colour coded. Pour salt on a piece of paper, enough to make a layer about ¼” thick in your jar, take your chosen chalk colour and rub back and forth across the salt until you get the desired colour. Pour into the jar and continue to use chalk to colour the salt and create layers of memories.

Family Record

A family record can help a child or young person gain a sense of where they and the person who has died fits into the family. A family tree can be put together. Family photographs, documents, certificates and mementoes can be included. It can be particularly powerful to include stories about the person’s life, which can be contributed by family members and friends.

Weaving

Weaving coloured threads representing different memories to create a small wall hanging piece of art can be used as a visual aid to recall happy times. This can be displayed on the young person’s bedroom wall and help the young person understand that some memories can last for ever.

Dream Catcher

Originally created by tribes of Native Americans using natural materials, these were hung above the beds of family members, particularly children. The belief is that all sorts of dreams get caught in the web of the dream catcher but only the good dreams can pass through. Bad dreams become tangled in the protective net and are held until morning when they disappear. The basis for a dream catcher can be as simple as flexible wire fashioned into a circle or cut out the rim of a paper plate. Wool or embroidery thread is traditionally wound around the frame to create the ‘web’. Add ribbons, feathers or beads to decorate.

References

[Child Bereavement UK](#)

[Barnardo’s Northern Ireland Child Bereavement](#)

[Winston’s Wish](#)