



Creative Interventions for Bereaved Children

Liana Lowenstein

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When children enter therapy because they have experienced the death of a family member or close friend, they are at a very vulnerable time in their lives. They are often anxious about the therapeutic process and reluctant to talk directly about painful feelings. Activities that are creative and play-based can engage children and help them to express their thoughts and feelings. This book provides grief counselors with creative interventions to engage, assess, and treat bereaved children and families. A range of innovative activities are presented, including therapeutic games, art, puppets, role-plays, and stories. The first section of this book, which contains guidelines for practitioners, lays the foundation for effective grief counseling with children. Section Two presents a theoretical overview of childhood bereavement and it incorporates some of the latest literature on childhood bereavement. The third section provides material for use with caregivers, including a social history questionnaire to be used as part of the clinical assessment, and a reproducible handout to educate caregivers on the impact of grief on children. Section four offers a variety of engagement and assessment activities providing clinicians with strategies to build therapeutic rapport and assess bereaved children. Sections five through eight presents creative activities to help children express feelings of grief, diffuse traumatic reminders, address self-blame, commemorate the deceased, and learn coping strategies. Special sections have been included to assist children in dealing with specific kinds of loss, namely cancer, suicide, and homicide. In addition to activities for use in individual and family sessions, there is also a ten-week curriculum for use in support groups. The appendix includes a sample letter for the practitioner to give to the child upon termination from therapy, a treatment plan, and a handout on bereaved children to give to school personnel. The interventions in this book have been specially designed to engage children in counseling, and to help them approach their grief within the context of a safe therapeutic environment.

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