

## **Classroom Activities for a Time of Crisis**

Adapted from a submission by The Center for Grieving Children (Portland, ME).

### Allow Children to Choose

- Discuss what ritual or memorial the students want to create to express their grief.
- Watch for ideas that students generate themselves.
- Decide together on a project to do in honor of the person who died.

### Group Projects

- A hall mural where students and teachers can write memories about the deceased or letters to him or her. This might later be given to the family intact or cut up into a scrap book.
- Rituals of sharing – bring photos, news clippings, pass around a significant object reminding you of the loved person.
- Have a feelings box where students can write out their feelings as a way of expressing them and letting go of a piece of it. Keep it in a private/ public place like a library where students would naturally go.
- Bring flowers, pictures to the site of the death, have adults available to listen and set a time limit on how long the things will be there. Have a plan with what to do after that period of time.
- Put messages in a bottle to send to say goodbye or use biodegradable helium balloons.
- Make a memory box to put pictures and objects and memories about the deceased person. Keep it at the school for awhile to be added to. Then pass on to the family.
- Make a collage message board: with magazines to cut up, glue, stapler, paint, markers etc.
- Help students create a web site in memory of the person (griefnet.org has a free service and walks people through the process for a very simple one.)

### Communications: Circle Time

- Have more than one teacher when possible.
- Have a defined time frame for starting and finishing. Repeat if necessary.
- Talk about the facts about what happened using simple, clear language.
- Present a chance for students to ask questions.
- Allow time for the children to tell stories of other losses they have had.
- Discuss feelings.
- Share memories of the person lost.
- Talk about how to help a classmate when he or she returns.
- Talk about how they express their feelings or what makes them feel better when they are “sad”, “angry”, “confused”, “scared”.

### Craft Projects

- Make a welcome back poster or card.
- Make sympathy cards to send.
- Use clay – mashing it, making anything – use any softish clay. It's a great way to use energy.
- Make paper flowers and bouquets – tie a note to the stem – tissue paper, pipe cleaners, scissors.
- Make something to carry in a pocket: medallions out of clay, rocks, buttons to carry in pockets; a feelie heart or other shape filled with bird seed or soft stuff; stars, hearts, bells – use fabric scraps, needle and thread and bird seed.
- Write or draw a memory to put in a book to give to the family.

### Story-telling/Play Acting

- Allow children to express thoughts about death – bring stuffed animals and puppets
- Give opportunities to play out grief – puppets, dance, play, music, art.
- Playing doctor and healing.
- Role play about first responders (police, firefighters, EMTs).

### Writing

- Make a poetry book – perhaps a haiku poem format for them (5 syllables -7 syllables -5 syllables) . Have some examples available.
- Create a journal either private or to share with a trusted person.