IDEAS FOR NARRATIVE THERAPY AND OTHER INTERVENTIONS WHEN THE ISSUE IS GRIEF

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NARRATIVE THERAPY

- Founders:
  - Michael White of Adelaide Australia
  - David Epston of Auckland New Zealand
- According to the website www.narrativeapproaches.com

The term narrative implies listening to and telling or retelling stories about people and the problems in their lives. In the face of serious and sometimes potentially deadly problems, the idea of hearing or telling stories may seem a trivial pursuit. It is hard to believe that conversations can shape new realities. But they do. The bridges of meaning we build with others help healing developments flourish instead of wither and be forgotten. Language can shape events into narratives of hope.
According to the website www.narrativerapycentre.com

Narrative therapy is a respectful and collaborative approach to counseling and community work. It focuses on the stories of people’s lives and is based on the idea that problems are manufactured in social, cultural and political contexts. Each person produces the meaning of their life from the stories that are available in these contexts. A wider meaning of narrative therapy relates significantly to a relatively recent way of thinking about the nature of human life and knowledge which has come to be known as ‘postmodernism’ – which believes there is no one objective ‘truth’ and that there are many multiple possible interpretations of any event. Thus within a narrative approach, our lives are seen as multi-storied vs. single-storied.
MICHAEL JOSEPH “MJ”

- Identical twin born July 2009
- Born with CDH – Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia
  - 50% survival rate
  - 1 in 2500 live births
  - As common as spinal bifida
  - A hole in diaphragm at 7 weeks gestation allowing the stomach organs (spleen, liver, bowels, intestines) to travel and develop/grow in chest cavity
  - Hinders Lung and Heart development
- MJ had 3 surgeries and was on ECMO for 25 days
- MJ Passed away at 35 days
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- Facebook – Personal Page
- Facebook – Fan Page – MJ’s Memories
- You Tube
- Blog
- Personal CD’s
- Poetry
- Published Writing
- Children’s book – Shutterfly
SOCIAL MEDIA

- Facebook – 35 Days of Status Updates were used to log daily activities and to ultimately produce a scrapbook.
- MJ’s Memories Facebook Page - Used to tell MJ’s story of continued healing and activities.
- You Tube – Created a video to document MJ’s short life.
- Blogging – used to get feelings, emotions, struggles with grief, etc., in writing in raw story form.
- Personal CD’s – used to remember loved one with special songs.
- Poetry/Published Writing – Used to tell MJ’s story, our story of grief and the grief process, and help others.
NARRATIVE THERAPY IDEAS

- Journaling
- Facebook (age appropriate)
- Memory Box
- Letter Box
- Blogging
- Scrapbooking
- Letter Writing to deceased individual
NARRATIVE THERAPY IDEAS FROM CHILDREN’S MERCY HOSPITAL (KC)

- **Telling Your Story:**
  
  Age 5 years to 12 years
  
  Time 15-45 minutes
  
  Materials: puppets, can make puppets out of brown paper sacks, socks, etc
  
  Goal: Provide an opportunity for children to share the story of how the person died and how they found out about the death
Drawing what your grief looks like:

Age Level: All
Time: 30 minutes
Materials: Roll of butcher paper or large paper, crayons, markers and an open flat space.
Goal: To provide an opportunity for children to visualize the feelings of grief and to develop group cohesion.
Description: On one huge piece of paper, group members draw a picture or representation of what their grief feels or looks like.
Members then share with one another what they drew. They can discuss situations and times when they feel grief and ways that they can appropriately express it (punch a pillow, shoot hoops, run around the outside of the house, etc.)
Scavenger Hunt:
Age 3.5 years to 18 years
Time: 25 to 30 minutes
Materials: Paper
Goal: Encourage children to verbalize their feelings about grief.
Description: Prior to the group meeting hide 6-12 symbols throughout the room. The symbols will have questions or statements written on them that ask children to talk about the person that died.
Ex: Share a special memory, etc.
Next, the children search for symbols with clues from the facilitator. After they have all been found, the children gather in a circle.
Finally, children take turns reading and answering the question on the symbol that they found.
Key to Our Feelings

Age: All

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: Bowl of keys cut out of construction paper, paper, and drawing materials

Goal: To help children explore feelings, thoughts, and memories

Description: Have each child select a key from the bowl. The child then draws on the key a picture or writes a word that represents something inside them that is locked up. Discuss the picture or word the child chose and why.
Emotions in My Body:
Age: 3 years to 12 years
Time: 30-45 minutes
Materials: Long sheet of paper for tracing body outlines and pens or crayons, markers
Goal: to offer children a way to express their feelings, as well as become aware of the various places in their bodies they hold those feelings.

Description:
1. Share in group the many emotions a person can experience while they are grieving. The children may also want to share a time when they experienced certain emotions.
2. When the children are finished sharing, have each one lie down and trace around their body on the paper.
3. Once all the children are done, have them identify the emotions they experience and choose a color that represents it (ex. Red=angry, Blue=Sad) Then color the parts of the body where they feel that emotion (red on fists, blue on face, yellow on head, etc.)
4. Hand the pictures up and allow the children time to share what they drew and what the experience was like for them.
REFERENCES


- Narrative Approaches (2013)

- Narrative Therapy Centre (2013)