

Reflection of Group Session #2

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For our second session, our group decided to act out Session 10, focusing on identifying ways we can help bereaved family members and friends. Landry and I were the facilitators for this session, and the first thing I learned was that even though we were acting out the session, and it was pretend, it still feels uncomfortable and awkward talking about death. Additionally, as a facilitator, since you are the one running the session you have to feel comfortable being vulnerable and open with others, in order to encourage others in the group to feel comfortable enough talking about their feelings and beliefs regarding death. In fact McCue (2011), emphasizes the power of vulnerability and the impact it has on others in chapter 10. Our group also really focused on supporting bereaved individuals months after a death, when the help starts to die down and people begin going back to their regular lives.

Facilitating the group definitely felt somewhat intimidating, especially when talking about something so personal, but I feel like our group always has the best discussions, and we were able to break the ice with Activity 1 which has a list of scenarios of what to do when someone is grieving, and the group had to say whether or not they think it would be helpful to experience loss. One of the examples on the list of what to do when someone is grieving was “ignore their bereavement or loss and pretend it did not happen at all” which led to an interesting discussion of how it is important to continue to maintain the same relationship you had with someone before their loss, and try to not act too different or weird because they are already experiencing so much disruption and change. Gradually, as the session progressed, I became more comfortable leading discussions, and also felt very appreciative at the end of it, because I love getting to talk to my peers about child life related things since I do not get to do that everyday.

This session will help me in my future career to remember everyone grieves differently. There is no set timeline for processing loss. Activities 1 and 2 were also good reminders that we are not always going to know what to say, or have the answers for everything and that is completely normal and fine. I feel like most CCLSs put pressure on themselves to always have the right thing to say, or they feel like they have to leave everyone feeling better after interacting with them, when that is not always the case. There were questions and experiences that our group discussed that I felt like I did not have the “right” answer for, which at first made me feel less confident in my ability to lead something like this, but I realized it is totally normal. I also learned that just because you do not have the answer to something, does not mean your coworker will not either. While facilitating, if there was a story or question I was unsure of how to react to, someone almost always chimed in with a similar experience they had, which made me realize the same thing can happen at work, and it is perfectly okay to ask for help or other opinions when you need it. Not having the answer to everything does not make you a bad child life specialist.

Furthermore, I learned that although I believe I feel more comfortable talking about grief than other people who are not in the child life field, I still find myself becoming uncomfortable when discussing certain things. I think this is mainly because I do not want to say the wrong thing, or I feel like because I have been fortunate enough to not have experienced the loss of a parent or sibling, I am not qualified to speak about grief or give people recommendations about how to process it. However, at the same time I know that grief work is a process of helping someone acknowledge a permanent loss, and tending to the feelings that come along with it in order to avoid isolating or suppressing them (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007).

I feel like Landry and I did a good job of stressing that our group was a safe space where there are no right or wrong answers. Additionally, at the beginning of the session we stressed

how it was a judgement-free zone, and all religious beliefs were welcome. We also met before the Zoom to go over what each of us would be discussing, and I planned ahead in my head what questions I think people might ask, and tried to be prepared as much as I could with answers to those questions. This helped me feel more comfortable leading because I felt so prepared.

I feel like I need to get the idea out of my head that when someone experiences a traumatic loss their life is over. I know this is a bad way to think, because research has shown that after a loss sometimes people are able to find a new meaning in life and, “start over,” while others may begin to feel more close to their friends and family while mourning (Shear & Shair, 2005). I think my main reason for thinking this is that I have never experienced the loss of someone in my life such as my mom, dad, or sibling, so I have never had to work through that kind of grief so I do not know what to expect after someone comes to terms with such a great loss.

Additionally, since we were on Zoom sometimes I felt like we had to rush through our session before we ran out of time, so we were not able to experience what it would be like without trying to beat the clock, especially towards the end of the session. Overall, I felt like it went great, and we were able to have some very productive, and important conversations that will help me in the future.

References

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