

WORKING THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS THROUGH ART



Grades 8

Working Through Grief and Loss Through Art Health and Physical Education & Visual Art

Purpose of the Lesson:

Grief and loss impact all of us; it's an unfortunate but inevitable part of the human experience. Whether we have experienced it directly or supported a friend or loved one through it, grief is one of the most challenging things to grapple with. Through this lesson, your students will learn more about exactly what grief is and how it affects people. They will watch a video where teens vulnerably share their experiences with loss and grief. They will learn about the 5 Stages of grief and participate in an arts activity where they will create a visual representation of each of these stages. The lesson closure explores how grief and loss can impact our mental health and provides the students with further learning and support if they are experiencing grief themselves or supporting someone through grief.

Curriculum Competencies:

Visual Arts

- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through arts activities and experiences
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts in relation to the arts
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts
- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences
- Experience, document, choreograph, perform, and share creative works in a variety of ways

Health and Physical Education

- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others
- Describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others
- Explore and describe the impact of transition and change on identities

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First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Video

Grief Out Loud: Teens Talk About Loss - Hospice of the Chesapeake

Guiding Questions:

- What did you learn about grief and/or loss through this video?
- How did the teens in the video work through their grief?
- What ways were they supported by their community while they were grieving?
- How did watching this video make you feel?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Queue up video/set up projector

1. Have the students watch the video “Grief Out Loud: Teens Talk About Loss”. This can be found [HERE](#).

2. Pause the video and use the Guiding Questions to spark discussion.

3. Share this definition of grief with your students: Share this information with your class:

"very great sadness, especially at the death of someone" (**Cambridge Dictionary**). Explain to your students that this is a very simplified definition; grief is extremely nuanced and complex. Sadness is the closest emotion that can be tied to grief, but anyone who has experienced grief will tell you that it is deeper and more profound than any other form of sadness.

- a. Have your students reflect on this definition of grief. Do they feel it is sufficient? What is it missing, if anything?
- b. Ask that each student writes their ideas on a piece of paper and then split them up into groups and have them share their ideas with their peers. This conversation should be reflective and meaningful. Ensure that your students know that they are not required to share any of their personal experiences with grief or loss if they are not comfortable.
- c. Finally, have your students come up with their own collective definition of grief based on the ideas they have shared with each other

4. Discuss the definitions your students have come up with as a class. Once each group has come up with their own definition of grief, either write the ideas down on the board or have one representative from each group do so. You can read these definitions out loud and have the students share how they came up with these definitions.

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5. Explain the 5 Stages of Grief. Inform them that grief can take a very long time to work through and process. For most people, it is not a straightforward process. In 1969, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a Swiss American psychiatrist created the Kübler-Ross model, the theory of the five stages of grief and loss. They stages are as follows:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance (**PsychCentral**)
 - Share with your students that these 5 stages don't always happen sequentially. You can move from one stage to another and back again over the healing process.
 - Grief is also not usually something that has an end date. Most people carry the loss with them in some form or another throughout their lives. How it looks and the impact it has may change, but missing someone or something rarely goes away for people.

6. Explain the curriculum connections to your students. As most of the young people in the video acknowledged, art can be an extremely supportive tool for working through grief. Finding a creative outlet for the powerful emotions associated with loss can be one way many people heal from loss. Inform them they will be creating visual art pieces that represent the stages of grief. They can create one large art piece that incorporates all 5 stages, or 5 smaller art pieces depicting how they would visually represent each stage.

Accommodations/modifications:

- If students are visually impaired, you can get them to explain to you how they would represent the 5 stages OR find 5 songs that represent the different stages of grief to them

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

7. Explain the curriculum connections to your students. Reflect on how grief and loss impact mental health. It may seem obvious to your students, but it is important to acknowledge that our mental health can be greatly impacted by the experience of loss. Grief is a powerful emotional response that can overwhelm us and send our mental health into a very dark place. However, as was depicted in the video, there are ways to work through grief and loss. It is important to know that you are not alone when you are experiencing these feelings. Reaching out for help can do so much good for processing the feelings associated with grief.

Here are some crisis line resources you can share with your students if they are experiencing grief or loss

Kids Help Phone:

1-800-668-6868

www.KidsHelpPhone.ca

Text 686868

Crisis Centre BC

1-800-SUICIDE, 310-6789

<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca>

Crisis Services Canada

<https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/thinking-about-suicide/>

24/7 Crisis Line

Phone: 1-833-456-4566

Text: 45645

Child Helpline

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/mental-health-support-in-bc/children-and-youth>

24-hour phone number that children can call to get help for their mental health or other challenges.

Phone: 310-1234