



## Grief-Related Activities for Your Classroom Grades 1 -2

- The following are suggestions and are not concrete session plans. All activities can be modified to meet any accessibility requirements.
- All directives given to children are merely suggestions. The child does not have to follow the directive exactly but may find that they are good starting points for conversation or other expressions.
- **Activities are also available for Kindergarten, Grades 3-4, and Grades 5-6.** (See the end of this document for brief descriptions.)
- For some general facilitation principles for compassionate classrooms see the document ***Guidelines for Facilitation and Creating a Climate of Safety and Mattering in Your Classroom.***
- Our thanks to Sophie Arkell, one of our expressive arts therapists, who has put together these activities and accompanying classroom facilitation guides.

Age/Grade	Brief Description	Page
Grades 1 - 2	<p><b>Foods with Moods</b> The theme for this activity is to speak about emotions and how we process them and hold onto them. “Foods with Moods” is a picture book that identifies common emotions and speaks to how people fluctuate between moods or feelings. <i>(Grief-informed or Grief-focused)</i></p>	<b>2</b>
	<p><b>Growing Garden</b> Each child will create their own garden: a garden is a beautiful metaphor of life cycles, change, and growth. In explaining the activity, the facilitator can offer optional directions of how each child would like to work in this metaphor. <i>(Grief-informed or Grief-focused)</i></p>	<b>5</b>

## Grades 1 - 2 Activity: Mindful Music Breathing

Story Based Activity	
Name	Foods With Moods
Brief description of Activity/Theme	The theme for this activity is to speak about emotions and how we process them and hold onto them. "Foods with Moods" is a picture book that identifies common emotions, and speaks to how people fluctuate between moods or feelings. The facilitator will read the book to the group, adding some questions/engagement throughout. When the book is read, the facilitator will provide each child with a food that they can decorate to show the expression of one of the moods. This activity can be modified for any younger children, or to suit the learning styles of children with mental delays or cognitive impairments, by utilizing an emotion chart and using the photos to identify various emotions.
Purpose of the activity	The goal is to encourage participants to reflect on their emotions. Within the context of the group debrief/sharing time, the goal is to normalize the experience of various feelings and how grief has many aspects or "faces".
Target Age/Grade Range	Grades 1 - 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Younger children may need additional prompts such as an emotion chart to help identify a certain emotion they would like to create</li> </ul>
Target loss/losses	Any type of loss; targeting experience with grief and bereavement. More specifically, targeting an understanding of the many thoughts, feelings, and emotions that come along with grief
Calendar connection	Not applicable.
Logistics	
Number of Participants	Maximum 15 participants per facilitator
Setting Requirements	A space suitable for reading a picture book to the group. Tables and chairs will be needed for participants to create their foods with moods
Suggested Materials/Supplies	<i>Foods with Moods</i> by Saxton Freymann & Joost Elfers, a pepper or apple for each child (this can be a real piece of food, a plush toy, a photo... anything accessible to the group), pipe cleaners, googly eyes, markers, feathers, toothpicks, scrap paper, hot glue, white glue, paint, scissors, stickers, buttons
Estimated Time required	45 minutes
Number of sessions	1
Supplemental Resources	Not applicable.
Supplemental Resources for Parent/Caregiver engagement	Not applicable.
Facilitation	
Set-up & Activity Introduction	It would be ideal to have the room set up so that there is a space where the book will be read, and a space where the activity will be done. If possible, sort and lay out materials for participants ahead of time so that

	<p>there can be a quick and seamless transition between reading and creating</p> <p>Before reading the book, inform the group that today will be focused on helping to learn about emotions. The goal is to increase emotional intelligence so that children are able to identify what emotion they are experiencing. This is particularly important when it comes to grief as so many emotions are experienced, often at the same time or overlapping. Clarifying what each emotion is individually will help build the skill for children to pull apart what they are feeling and be able to articulate what mix of emotions they are experiencing</p>
<p>Instructions</p>	<p>First begin by gathering the participants into an area in which the facilitator can read the book aloud. By reflecting back on the book that was just read, explain to the group that now they will have the opportunity to create their own food with a mood. It could be very helpful to go over a list of emotions at this point; help children to decide what emotion they would like to work with and what those emotions might look/feel like for them. After providing instructions, have participants transition into the activity space.</p> <p>Provide participants with a timeframe of how long they will have to work on their foods. Please make it clear that each participant should be able to identify what mood they are creating. Continue to provide prompts and reminders to have participants keep focused on creating a mood/emotion. Have children use a variety of supplies to create their mood; encourage the use of many materials and detail.</p>
<p>Debrief/closing</p>	<p>As a debrief, have children circle up for a group share. Have participants share what mood they have created and a personal experience of when they felt this emotion (an alternative to this is to have the children act out what the emotion is). You could also ask</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have you named your food?</li> <li>● Are you feeling the same way as your food at this moment?</li> <li>● What happens when their food feels that way? How do you experience this emotion in your body (hard to breathe, tight fists, relaxed shoulders)?</li> <li>● Does any other food have the same feelings as you? Did the food with the same feeling experience the same thing?</li> </ul> <p>One of the main goals for this activity is to improve emotional literacy - especially when discussing grief, it is important for children to be able to identify which emotion they may be feeling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is the difference between these emotions?</li> <li>● How can I tell if I'm sad or mad?</li> <li>● Can I feel myself becoming angry/overwhelmed, sad, happy?</li> <li>● How can I help calm myself down?</li> </ul> <p>This activity is helping create the skills for kids to be able to speak about grief and loss. By providing children with the ability to identify their emotions, we are helping to give them the words to help express what</p>

	<p>they are experiencing in their own lives.</p> <p>To lead out of this activity and to tie all of the emotions together, you can introduce the topic of grief if it hasn't been discussed yet. Grief is all of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that a person may feel after they have experienced a loss. A second session can be planned to continue the conversation of emotions and grief with different activities.</p>
Notes	<p>Good to Knows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For younger kids, it can be confusing to talk about grief. By helping kids understand what emotions are will help them better understand the grief can affect all emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Be aware of any children who need further explanation of basic emotions.</li> </ul> <p>Adaptations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This activity can be done with adapting materials - some paper and markers would also work well</li> </ul>
Sequencing	<p>Not necessary but could be paired with a second activity focused more on grief (integrating the emotional learning from this activity and how it relates to grief).</p>

## Grades 1 - 2 Activity: Growing Garden

Art Based Activity	
Name	Growing Garden
Brief description of Activity/Theme	<p>*based on Margot Sunderland's <i>Museum of Loss</i></p> <p>Each child will create their own garden: a garden is a beautiful metaphor of life cycles, change, and growth. In explaining the activity, the facilitator can offer optional directions of how each child would like to work in this metaphor. They may use flowers to symbolize loss and memories of such loss, or may choose to create some other shapes/symbols to symbolize loss. They may choose to represent the 'good' things or memories in their life with flowers, plants, insects, etc.; and they may choose to represent the 'bad' things in their life through dirt, stones, wilting plants, etc..</p>
Purpose of the activity	<p>A purpose of this activity is to identify the different types of losses. The facilitator could prompt kids to identify their first/earliest loss, most painful loss, most surprising loss, most recent loss, etc. This activity will help to highlight that we all experience loss in many different ways. The connection between grieving/experiencing loss and the power of growth/natural life experiences will be highlighted.</p> <p>Again, beginning to open up the conversation and normalize life experiences will help to build compassionate communities for these children. Applying intentionality with what the facilitator is asking the kids to reflect on and create.</p>
Target Age/Grade Range	Ages 5+ (adjust language for older kids)
Target loss/losses	Any type of loss; targeting experience with emotions and identifying types of loss
Calendar connection	Not applicable.
Logistics	
Number of Participants	1 - 20 children per facilitator
Setting Requirements	Setting with enough table space and chairs for each participant. Ideal if there is also a space to create a circle at the end of session to share reflections and creations
Suggested Materials/Supplies	<p>pre-made fake flowers, paper, tissue paper, glue, styrofoam, paint, markers, scissors, tape</p> <p>*optional: plastic bug/tree figurines, clay, di</p>
Estimated Time required	45 minutes
Number of sessions	1
Supplemental Resources	Any short poem about grief and growth/healing/life cycles
Supplemental Resources for Parent/Caregiver engagement	Not applicable.

Facilitation	
Set-up & Activity Introduction	<p>Have the students take a moment at their desk to slow down, close their eyes, and make a mental list of losses they have experienced. Once they have thought about it for a few moments, the facilitator can invite them to write them down if they would like, or they can create a quick drawing of a loss that really stands out to them.</p>
Instructions	<p>Each student will be given a styrofoam base (about 10”x 12”). Using this base as the “ground”, kids can create their own growing garden. Using any assortment of materials, each child will have the opportunity to completely decide what their ‘garden’ will look like and include; use the directive as a suggestion, meaning allow the kids to create what <u>they feel conveys their meaning and reality of loss</u>.</p> <p>Throughout this working time, the group facilitator can encourage an open discussion between kids. They may discuss their experience with loss, how they would describe loss, what they want to include in their garden, what they do not want to include in their garden, etc. ...</p> <p>Providing the opportunity for casual conversation throughout the working time will also allow some kids to feel more comfortable asking questions or discussing some topics than maybe they would in a group setting.</p> <p>Provide the group warnings when there are 5 working minutes left, 1 minute, 30 seconds, and then when it is clean up time.</p>
Debrief/closing	<p>Grief and loss can show up in many different ways. Some people have varying definitions/understandings of loss, and that can come across through how they interact with this activity - all participation in this activity are valid, and normalizing these differences in experience/similarities in experience, will be a major focus of the debrief from this activity.</p> <p>The group facilitator will instruct the group to gather into a close circle (sitting or standing, whatever is accessible). They will extend the option for anyone who would like to participate to place their garden into the centre of the circle. As a collective whole, the group will take a few moments to witness the collective garden of loss and growth. Incorporating this ceremonial component into the workshop will provide participants with a feeling of closure from the activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After a moment of recognition (not commenting/judging) of what everyone has created, the facilitator can debrief with a few closing questions. This will give the opportunity for kids to share their loss experience and grieving process with a group who can relate to their experiences.</li> </ul>

	<p>If time permits, the facilitator can close the activity with <i>Roses &amp; Thorns</i>. Each child will have the opportunity to share what their <i>rose</i> of the day was (the best part), and their <i>thorn</i> (a part they might not have liked). This is a good grounding activity for kids to then feel safe enough to transition out of the activity.</p>
Notes	<p>Good to Knows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The facilitator should be intentional about trying to engage kids in conversation as they work             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It is helpful for some kids to share as they work, and other may not like to chat at all as they are focused on what they are creating</li> <li>○ If kids do feel open to chatting, try to connect some of the kids in conversations with their peers as well as with the adult facilitator</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Adaptations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This activity has lots of room to offer permission for kids to create and express their current understanding and experience with loss</li> <li>● The general theme/idea of this activity can be adapted to suit the resources and materials that are accessible/available</li> </ul>
Sequencing	Not applicable.

**Other resources related to Grief in the Classroom** can be found on the Lumara website.

Highlights of the resources include a series of videos for teachers for deeper understanding of what a child might grieve and how that grief might show up in the classroom as well as a set of grief-informed and grief-focused classroom activities (including facilitation guides) targeted for children in Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Age/Grade	Brief Description
Kindergarten	<p><b>Mindful Music Breathing</b>            Simple activity in which each individual participant will focus on their own breath. Overall theme of mindfulness: some education for younger kids about how the brain works and how breath is connected to our decisions and emotions. <i>(Grief-informed)</i></p>
	<p><b>Memory Boxes - Sesame Street</b>            Create a physical container as a safe space for holding kids' special memories/meaningful items. This memory box can be created for someone who has died, or even to help kids who are having a tough time with moving homes or schools. <i>(Grief-focused)</i></p>
Grades 1 - 2	<p><b>Foods with Moods</b>            The theme for this activity is to speak about emotions and how we process them and hold onto them. "Foods with Moods" is a picture book that identifies common emotions and speaks to how people fluctuate between moods or feelings. <i>(Grief-informed or Grief-focused)</i></p>
	<p><b>Growing Garden</b>            Each child will create their own garden: a garden is a beautiful metaphor of life cycles, change, and growth. In explaining the activity, the facilitator can offer optional directions of how each child would like to work in this metaphor. <i>(Grief-informed or Grief-focused)</i></p>
Grades 3 - 4	<p><b>Grief Waves</b>            Reading the book <i>One Wave at a Time</i>, will be the starting point to open some class discussion about what grief can feel like. This activity will lead into another that will further explore 'grief waves'. <i>(Grief-focused)</i></p>
	<p><b>Wave Catchers</b>            This activity is designed to follow the <i>Grief Waves</i> activity. This art-based activity is an opportunity for kids to further explore what waves of grief might mean to them, and to create a container and calming tool to help them through any bouts of grief waves. <i>(Grief-focused)</i></p>



Age/Grade	Brief Description
Grades 5 - 6	<p><b>Name-A-Tune</b>            This is a ‘game show’ like activity where kids will work in teams to try and name as many songs that include a specific word in the lyrics of the song. The facilitator will have a list of keywords that relate to grief and loss; each word will be considered a ‘round’ of the game. There is an opportunity to have a discussion about grief, and the related emotion/word of the round, at the end of each round. <i>(Grief-informed or Grief-focused)</i></p>
	<p><b>Inside/Outside Books</b>            Create booklets/cards/boxes/ any content in which there is an “inside” and an “outside” (this could even be simplified to a piece of paper, inside on one side and outside on the other). Basic theme working here is self-reflection and what is presented/seen to the outside world, and what is kept private/not seen by others. <i>(Grief-informed or Grief-focused)</i></p>

*Lumara Grief & Bereavement Care Society is a charitable organization that helps children, youth, adults & families cope with serious illness, grief, and bereavement. Through education, support, and counselling services we bring light to grief and sorrow, nurturing healing, and hope within the strength of community. We also provide educational services to organizations and institutions.*

<https://lumarasociety.org/> or contact [info@lumarasociety.org](mailto:info@lumarasociety.org)