



## Grief-Related Activities for Your Classroom Grades 3 - 4

- 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 1-2, 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
	<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>	2
Grades 3 - 4	<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>	4

## Grades 3 - 4 Activity: Grief Waves

Story Based Activity	
Name	Grief Waves
Brief description of Activity/Theme	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'.
Purpose of the activity	Provide the opportunity to explain grief in a different way. Furthering kids' understanding of what grief may look like, feel like, and how to cope. The facilitator can tie in mindful breathing exercises, social-emotional learning, or detective skills work into this activity.
Target Age/Grade Range	Ages 5 - 10
Target loss/losses	Any type of loss; targeting experience with grief and bereavement
Calendar connection	Not applicable.
Logistics	
Number of Participants	1 - 15 children per facilitator
Setting Requirements	A quiet, comfortable space for story time
Suggested Materials/Supplies	Pillows, blankets, yoga mats for story time A copy of <i>One Wave at a Time: A Story About Grief and Healing</i> by Holly Thompson
Estimated Time required	30minutes
Number of sessions	1 This activity is intentionally created to lead into the next activity. Reading the book to the group could be split between 2 sessions if needed.
Supplemental Resources	Not applicable.
Supplemental Resources for Parent/Caregiver engagement	Not applicable.
Facilitation	
Set-up & Activity Introduction	Set up the space for a comfortable story time, making sure it is appropriate for the size and accessibility of the group.
Instructions	The facilitator is to read the book out loud to the group. Take opportunities throughout the book to ask questions to gauge the groups understanding at various parts throughout the book. Go at a pace appropriate for the group.
Debrief/closing	Use this opportunity to open some discussion and insights about what the kids thought of the book. Follow the direction of kids conversations and questions that they may have; if a question comes up that the facilitator does not know the answer to/is not comfortable answering, be open and honest with the kids. Let them know that you are not sure, you don't know what to say, and you're glad that they asked because now everyone can wonder about it together.
Notes	Adaptations:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perhaps offer some kids some fidget toys to use while they listen to the story</li></ul>
Sequencing	This activity will lead into the next Art Based Activity. The next activity is heavily focused on a sensory experience and engagement.

## Grades 3 - 4 Activity: Wave Catchers

Art Based Activity	
Name	Wave Catchers
Brief description of Activity/Theme	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. Children will have the opportunity to customize a trinket in which they can carry on them at all times; using this trinket as a coping mechanism and grounding tool for overwhelming or intense moments.
Purpose of the activity	The goal is to provide these children with a coping mechanism in which they can find a sense of safety and peace in remembering their loved ones and coping with grief waves. The kids will be instructed to create a calm down trinket and a container. With creating a container, this is a physical space to keep their trinkets safe. Kids can carry these trinkets with them and reach for them (perhaps rubbing them, blowing on them, kissing them, or performing any other ritual with them) to help make them feel calm and grounded if experiencing a grief wave, or feel connected to their loved ones moments of sadness or loneliness. These trinkets can be used in combination with deep breathing or other special rituals for spontaneous moments of being reminded of your loved one, or if experiencing a wave of intense feelings.
Target Age/Grade Range	Ages 7+ *this is suggested if working with clay and a variety of small art materials
Target loss/losses	Any type of loss; targeting coping with grief and big emotions
Calendar connection	Not applicable.
Logistics	
Number of Participants	1 - 20 children per facilitator *please ensure there is enough adult supervision if children are using scissors, hot glue, or needle and thread.
Setting Requirements	Setting with enough table space and chairs for each participant. Ideal if there is also a space for painting/messy art making, a space for more delicate art materials (sewing or writing/drawing), and a supervised area for hot glue guns, scissors, or anything else the facilitator would like to oversee the use of.
Suggested Materials/Supplies	Beads, string, yarn, rocks, stone, sticks, hot glue, tape, markers, pens, paint, paper, scissors, cardboard, needles & thread, pipe cleaners, pom poms, feathers, clay, newspaper (tailor material list to what is available/accessible and age appropriate for your group)
Estimated Time required	50 - 60 minutes

Number of sessions	1 This activity is to follow <i>Grief Waves</i> so that kids have the understanding and metaphor of waves of grief.
Supplemental Resources	Not applicable.
Supplemental Resources for Parent/Caregiver engagement	Not applicable.
<b>Facilitation</b>	
Set-up & Activity Introduction	Remind students of the book that was read in the previous activity: <i>One Wave at a Time</i> . ask if the kids have any questions or anything they would like to chat about from the book before moving into this next activity.
Instructions	<p>Containers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide each student with a ball of clay, about the size of your first</li> <li>● When explaining what to create with the clay, explain to kids that when the clay dries, it will become a barrier for your trinket. Your trinket will be a special tool that you will create to help you re-ground yourself, focus on your breathing, and help get you through a big grief wave (or any big feelings).</li> <li>● It is suggested that kids make a pinch pot if the facilitator would like to give kids step-by-step instructions, or if this feels like a better option to ensure kids feel successful in creating something with clay. An example of a pinch pot is here - <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6jgOziQQDA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6jgOziQQDA</a></li> <li>● Kids can create any sort of barrier/container for their trinket; remind kids that if they would like the trinket to fit fully inside of the container, they will have to make the container large enough/create their trinket knowing the size of their finished container.</li> <li>● Once kids are finished sculpting their containers, set aside until clay is completely dry. Decorating and painting containers can be done when clay is dry</li> </ul> <p>Trinkets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having all available materials laid out on a table, invite kids to start with whatever material they feel most drawn to. Since this trinket is a special piece, prompt kids to put some intention behind which material they would like to use to create their trinket.</li> <li>● Instruct kids to create small trinkets that will fit in the palm of their hands; this way the trinket is compact enough to travel most places with them, and also so that they can discreetly use their trinkets whenever they feel they need.</li> <li>● Through the use of colours, textures, texts, symbols, and assigning personalities/characters to their trinkets, students can create their very own tool to help them calm down.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ An example that is helpful to show kids is a painted stone: something small and smooth that feels soothing to rub in the palm of your hand. This option would also allow the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>opportunity for the child to draw/paint an image on the stone of something that they find calming and comforting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer kids the chance to think about small, mindful activity they could do that might help them focus and re-ground themselves. Allow kids to explore creating their own little tool that they can keep just for themselves. This is designed as an individual exercise where children focus on themselves and reflect on ways they might be able to help calm themselves down when feeling overwhelmed.</li> </ul>
<p>Debrief/closing</p>	<p>The group will come together at the end and will have the opportunity to pass their trinket around in the circle (leave the container to set if the clay is still wet). Upon introducing their created trinket to the group, kids may also offer a way in which to interact with the trinket as it is passed along (this may be following their ritual they have created, or something similar to creating rules or boundaries for other people to interact with their special trinket).</p> <p>The key debriefing that should be talked about is how kids would like to soothe themselves, or make themselves feel safe and better, when experiencing grief waves. Normalizing the differences of how people think and feel about their grief waves, and that there is no one best way to self soothe or have other people make you feel better. Some key questions that can be asked to the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What did you find surprising about this activity? Was there anything you learned about yourself?</li> <li>● How do you picture a grief wave?       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do they have different colours? Sizes? Frequencies?</li> <li>○ Have you experienced a grief wave before?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● What part did you like creating more, the trinket or the container?</li> <li>● Do you have a special ritual for your trinket?</li> <li>● Do you think you have found any strategies or tools to help you cope with grief waves?</li> <li>● Do you think you could recognize a grief wave is you were washed up in one?</li> </ul>
<p>Notes</p>	<p>Good to Knows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer the children the opportunity to give direction of how they would like people to interact with their trinket       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do not touch it, only look</li> <li>○ Keep it inside of the container</li> <li>○ Feel free to play with it, flip it around, have a good look at it</li> <li>○ Follow the ritual of {blank} that I made up for it</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Prepare kids that if using clay for the container, it will need to dry overnight before they can paint it/use it in any way</li> </ul> <p>Adaptations:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This activity can be broken down into working in 2 sessions if attention/focus is of concern for some kids.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Or if all students are using clay, perhaps creating a ‘container making’ session would feel less chaotic as not all of the materials will need to be out in the same session - one trinket making session, one clay container making session.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Sequencing	Complete <b><i>Grief Waves</i></b> activity prior to this.

**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)