



Grief-Related Activities for Your Classroom Grades 5 - 6

- 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 3-4.** (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>Name-A-Tune 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>	2
Grades 5 - 6	<p>Inside/Outside Books 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>	7

Grades 5-6 Activity: Name-A-Tune

Music Based Activity	
Name	Name-A-Tune
Brief description of Activity/Theme	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.
Purpose of the activity	To demonstrate the many layers of grief. This game will help kids understand how many feelings and emotions are associated with grief; and how many of us have experienced some of those (if not all) of those emotions at some point already. This activity is also meant to act as a conversation opener to help normalize how grief is experienced so differently by each individual.
Target Age/Grade Range	This activity is ideal for students in grades 5 - 6; also great for older kids and adults! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be adapted for younger kids: see note section below
Target loss/losses	General loss; targeting experience with emotions and grief.
Calendar connection	Not applicable.
Logistics	
Number of Participants	15 - 30 children per facilitator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having an extra facilitator or a 'referee' is a great idea in a big group of kids
Setting Requirements	A large, open space such as a gym or a field; could be done inside or outside. Since this activity requires very few materials and supplies, it is suggested to use this opportunity to change the environment and try this activity not in the classroom - or where kids might spend most of their day.
Suggested Materials/Supplies	Large paper and markers for each group. Potentially a clipboard if a hard surface is needed to write on A list of keywords for the facilitator, a watch to keep track of time, piece of paper to keep track of team points
Estimated Time required	30 - 60 minutes *depending on the size of the group, the number of keywords, and how much discussion comes up after each round
Number of sessions	1
Supplemental Resources	Could pair with any learning around 'detective work' and emotional intelligence. This could also pair well with activities around 'how to recognize emotions' and 'how to support friends and their emotions'.

Supplemental Resources for Parent/Caregiver engagement	Not applicable.
Facilitation	
Set-up & Activity Introduction	<p>The class will be split into 5 or 6 small teams; each team should be approximately 4 - 6 students. Once students are in their groups, have the groups spread out in the space to make a large circle. To get the groups acquainted, have them come up with a team name and an action to go along with their name - use these team names/actions as a call back for a roll call.</p> <p>To introduce the activity, the facilitator will first explain that this activity is in relation to grief and loss. The facilitator can ask kids to take a silent vote (with or without eyes closed) as to <i>who thinks that they have experienced grief before?</i>, as well as, <i>who has a good understanding of what grief is or would be able to explain it to their friend?</i>. Even if kids have no idea what grief is, or do not feel as though they have ever felt it, by starting with these opening questions it will get kids' minds on the idea of grief for the duration of the game. After this brief intro has been done, the facilitator can explain the rules to the kids. The facilitator should first verbally explain the rules (with visual cues), then offer a verbal example of a round, and then should also create a practice round in which everyone can participate.</p> <p>To help get kids involved in the activity - make it a little more exciting by building it up! *There is lots of room to play around with this. It could be presented as a Game Show, it could be part of a string of 'challenges', or it could be almost like a workshop where you earn a credit for participation.</p>
Instructions	<p>To play this game, the facilitator will need to ensure that every group has their designated materials, and that the groups are spread out into somewhat of an overall circle (this is important for the facilitator to be able to hear/see all of the students, but it is also important for the kids to be able to hear each out present each turn).</p> <p>To begin a round, the facilitator will give the entire group a keyword - these keywords will all have to do with grief and associated experiences/emotions. Once a keyword has been given to the entire group, the facilitator will give the entire group 5 minutes (*this time can be adjusted to fits the needs of the group) to brainstorm as many songs as they know that include that keyword in the lyrics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Groups should write down a list of the songs that come to mind ● Each small group should work somewhat quietly as other groups may overhear their answers and can also add it to their list <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is an important reminder if the facilitator chooses to do a randomized start each time, and has the starting group choose the direction to pass it as teams can then use the overhead song before the other group - more details below

	<p>Once the brainstorming time is up, the facilitator will choose a group to start. The facilitator should decide beforehand how they would like to choose the starting group for each round: it could rotate between groups clockwise, it could be the winner of the previous round/the first group out of the previous round, it could be randomly selected (dice, drawing straws, asking who's birthday is next up, etc. ...). If there the starting group rotates in order, it is suggested to keep the direction of flow for each round the same. If the starting order is random or inconsistent, it is suggested that the starting group gets to choose which direction the flow of turns will go, in other words, which way the starting group will pass the turn.</p> <p>In the decided order of turns, each group will have to sing a few lines of one of their songs from their brainstormed list. Each group will have to sing <i>as a group</i> in order for it to count; the song must include the keyword to count; and the group must start singing within 5 seconds of their turn beginning for it to count. When a group successfully sings a song with a keyword, the facilitator will give them thumbs up or a checkmark to let them know that the song counts, and the facilitator will then call on the next group to go. As the rounds unfold, each group must present a new song for their turn; if the song has already been sung and counted, then that will not count as a point. If a group cannot think of a new song to sing for their turn, they will be out of this round. The round will continue to go from group to group (skipping over groups as they are eliminated from the round) until there is only one group remaining. This group will be the winner of this round - facilitator can reward/track wins as they see fit.</p> <p>At the end of every round, the facilitator should begin by asking, “Does anyone know why/how {blank keyword} relates to grief?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitator can also ask questions like: Has anyone experienced this emotion? How do you know you are angry (for example)? What does that emotion feel like in your body? What makes you feel better when you feel that way? Have you ever noticed someone else experience that emotion/experience? ● Suggested to do 2 - 3 debrief questions per round <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators should follow the direction and flow of conversation that kids bring forward. If there is some good discussion around a certain question at the end of the round, they can ask further questions to explore that topic with the kids - feel free to break away from prepared questions and follow the conversation with the kids <p>Number of rounds will depend on how engaged the kids are, how much time is allotted for the program, and how long each individual round will take for the specific group of students. Suggested to plan 6 - 8 keywords; adjust program for number of rounds as needed.</p>
Debrief/closing	<p>An open discussion amongst peers can help to normalize the differences in emotions and thoughts. It can also normalize the differences humans encounter throughout each individual grief experience. Starting this</p>

	<p>conversation among peers will also highlight that many people have experienced grief in some capacity - and have likely experienced many emotions associated with grief individually.</p> <p>To close this activity, the facilitator should loop back to how they introduced the activity - that it is about exploring an understanding of grief and loss. The facilitator can ask kids the same opening questions: <i>Who thinks that they have experienced grief before?</i>, and, <i>Who has a good understanding of what grief is or would be able to explain it to their friend?</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The facilitator can then explain the concept of Detective Skills - the kids have been working on these throughout this entire activity! ● Detective Skills: recognizing what is happening in your body, being mindful of your emotions, and connecting these things to emotions. Being able to identify various emotions, how you experience them, what makes you feel better when you experience them, and recognizing that it is healthy and normal to experience a wide variety of emotions. ● This activity is created to provide kids an opportunity to become detectives. Now that the group has gone over so many emotions and how individual experience with each emotion differs, kids will be better detectives for when those emotions start popping up for them, and their friends and people around them. Part of this detective work also includes how to be a good support to different people when feeling various emotions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A good place to start for kids learning how to support other people, is to encourage them to ask <i>What do I need when I feel {blank}? What might they need right now?</i>
Notes	<p>Good to Knows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The debriefing questions can be used as guides - feel free to follow the flow of conversation of children and dive deeper into some of the comments brought up ● The number of teams and team sizes can be adjusted depending on the size of the class. It is suggested that there are at least 3 teams, and 3 people per team ● To re-ground participants before transitioning out of the activity/space, complete one 'bonus round' that also includes some moving around. ● This activity could include an additional individual reflection activity. The facilitator can ask the class to write out 2 paragraphs about what they learned about grief, and how they can use their detective skills to better access emotions. <p>Adaptations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To adapt this activity for some younger kids; instead of having the kids come up with songs with a particular word in them, have the group of kids create as many of their own original sentences as they can with the word.

	<p>Suggested List of Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Happy ● Rock ● Sad ● Confused ● Wild ● Okay ● Love ● Heart ● Missing ● Time ● Memory / Memories
Sequencing	Not applicable.

Grades 5-6 Activity: Inside/Outside Books

Art Based Activity	
Name	Inside/Outside Books
Brief description of Activity/Theme	<p>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).</p> <p>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. Diving into the idea that everyone has an inside & outside will open the discussion and exploration of feelings, emotions, differences between people, perceptions, and experiences. When working with children who have experienced a loss, this demonstrates that everyone grieves in a different way</p>
Purpose of the activity	<p>Through personal reflection, children have the opportunity to identify what aspects of their life/personality are seen by the outside world, and what is not seen. In some cases, children may choose to keep certain things hidden from the outside world, or in other cases, they may feel as though they are not being seen or heard.</p> <p>Creating a physical reflection of this contrast between the “inside vs. outside” gives children a chance to visualize these components of their personality. This directive can be taken to look at: who I am on the outside vs. the inside; what people see on the outside vs. the inside; how I feel on the outside vs. the inside.</p>
Target Age/Grade Range	This activity is ideal for students in grades 5 - 6. However, this activity could be simplified if working with younger children.
Target loss/losses	Any type of loss; targeting experience with grief and bereavement
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	Cardstock, pens, markers, pencils, pastels, scissors, tape, glue, stickers, ribbon, crayons, pencil crayons, scrap paper, feathers, pom poms, cardboard (option to add paint to the supply list but not necessary and is dependent on the age range of participants).
Estimated Time required	45 minutes, plus 15 minute discussion
Number of sessions	1 Additional sessions could be used if you want to break the activity into 2 sessions (this would allow for more time to create, reflect, and discuss).

	The first session could cover outside creation and group discussion/debrief around that, and the second session could cover inside creation, discussion, and overall activity debriefing
Supplemental Resources	Could pair with any resource/learning about emotions or personality
Supplemental Resources for Parent/Caregiver engagement	Not applicable.
Facilitation	
Set-up & Activity Introduction	Start students off with a brief activity to introduce the idea of self reflection (spend about 5 minutes introducing the theme). One option would be to draw a quick self-portrait with their eyes closed. Guide the class in an eyes-closed meditation where they create a self-portrait
Instructions	<p>Use cardstock to create a booklet of any size. The idea is that we all have an ‘exterior self’ that we present to the world and an ‘internal self’ that we often hide from most people. This directive can be taken to look at: who I am on the outside vs. who I am on the inside; what people see on the outside vs. the inside; how I feel on the outside vs. the inside. Clients can fold booklets in such a way that the inside is ‘hidden’ and more concealed. Clients can create their ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ selves into one piece that reflects them.</p> <p>Using colour, texture, text, symbols, and pictures, students can create their representation of their inner and outer self. This is meant to be an individual exercise where children focus on themselves and how they interact with the world around them. This activity could be difficult for some children with little emotional intelligence, or understanding of how grief affects thoughts and emotions.</p>
Debrief/closing	<p>Create a space for a group discussion. If it feel appropriate, you can create a ‘walk around’ in which everyone's work is left in one space and the group has a few minutes just to walk around and observe what others have created (*this should only be done if there is some sense of safety in the group and if clear boundaries are provided before the walkaround begins; ie. no touching other’s work, just observing). Bringing all participants into a group discussion would be best to debrief the activity. Some prompts for discussion could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did you begin this activity? ● What did you find surprising about this activity? Was there anything you learned about yourself? ● How do you think experiencing a loss impacted how you did this activity? ● Did you find creating the inside or outside more difficult? ● Did you gravitate towards a certain colour/medium? Do you think this symbolizes anything/do you associate it with anything in particular? ● How was your overall experience with this activity?

	<p>An open discussion amongst peers can help to normalize the differences in emotions and thoughts. Normalize the notion that we all have aspects of ourselves that are not seen/validated by the outside world. Grief can show up in many different ways - some people show it in different ways but it is all valid and normal</p>
Notes	<p>Good to Knows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This activity can be done on smaller/larger pieces of paper depending on the fine motor skills and age of participants, as well as on the amount of time allotted for the activity ● Instead of a group share at the end, you could facilitate partner shares (this could open up more conversation as some children will feel more comfortable sharing with just one person) ● The debriefing questions can be used as guides - feel free to follow the flow of conversation of children and dive deeper into some of the comments brought up ● The debrief should be followed by a closing activity to re-ground participants before transitioning out of the activity/space completely <p>Adaptations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This activity can be broken down into working in 2 sessions if attention/focus is of concern for some kids. ● Offering a 'quiet and safe space' for kids to actually dive into the activity can be very beneficial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If there is concern with some students in particular, the facilitator can co-create a space in advance with the child. ○ *see note on <i>Creating Safe Spaces in Classrooms</i>
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>Mindful Music Breathing 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>Memory Boxes - Sesame Street 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>Foods with Moods 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>Growing Garden 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>Grief Waves 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>Wave Catchers 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>Name-A-Tune 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>Inside/Outside Books 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