

GOOD GRIEF! LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY GRIEF PROCESS IN CHILDREN & YOUTH

This workshop will provide an overview of best practice approaches for supporting a healthy grief process in kids who are grieving the death of someone in their life. Common challenges and barriers to supporting grieving children and teens will be identified, including the complexity that comes with navigating providing grief support through a pandemic. Current literature on the topic will be touched on and practical strategies that can be used in a variety of settings for supporting young people who are grieving will be shared. Important messages from children, teens, and their families that illustrate “best practice” guidelines will be woven throughout.



Andrea Warnick,
RN, MA Registered Psychotherapist

Andrea is a Registered Psychotherapist and Registered Nurse whose passion lies in helping individuals, families and communities support people of all ages who are grieving an illness or death in their lives. With years of nursing and counselling experience both in Canada and abroad and a Masters degree in Thanatology (the study of dying and death) Andrea brings to her work a rare mixture of medical and psychosocial expertise. Andrea developed and teaches the 5 Day Certificate Program in Children’s Grief and Bereavement at SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health. She was also the lead content developer for KidsGrief.ca and KidsGrief for Educators. Once a month Andrea hosts a free monthly forum through Canadian Virtual Hospice, KidsGrief Q&A, where she responds to questions from families and professionals from across the country about supporting grieving children and youth. Andrea lives with her family in Guelph Ontario, from where she and her business partner Colleen Mousseau run Andrea Warnick Consulting.

Simone is currently a Masters of Social Work student at the Factor-Inwentash School Of Social Work at the University of Toronto, specializing in the Children and their Families stream. For over ten years, Simone has worked with children and youth developing accessible and inclusive arts and recreational-based programming. She has spent the last six years applying this passion to the pediatric hospital settings with Camp Ooch, The Hole In the Wall Gang Camp, and Crescent Foundation throughout Canada and the US. Her work with these organizations has allowed her to support children, young adults, and families affected by chronic and life-threatening illnesses by developing and facilitating psychosocial programs and educational resources. Simone approaches her work from a culturally responsive lens to cultivate inclusive experiences. She is passionate about accessibility for all to quality mental health services, and the empowering role education plays in circumnavigating barriers to access these services.



Simone Kurup,
Education Coordinator (MSW student)

WHEN GRIEF & ANXIETY INTERSECT: WAYS TO IDENTIFY ANXIETY SYMPTOMS AND STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING GRIEVING CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO ARE ALSO EXPERIENCING ANXIETY

Lisa Robinson, MSW, Registered Social Worker

The events that lead someone to the experience of grief can often trigger anxiety symptoms. Overwhelmingly, research shows that a mindful approach to minimizing anxiety symptoms can not only support individuals in calming their nervous system but can help us to gain a deeper awareness of the ways in which grief and anxiety live in our bodies. Providing developmentally and cognitively appropriate psycho-education can also empower grieving individuals to identify their own anxiety triggers and reactions. In addition to exploring the impact of mindfulness and psychoeducation on anxiety in grieving individuals, creative interventions for children and youth experiencing anxiety will also be explored.



Lisa focuses her professional and creative energy on supporting children, youth and adults through tough situations. In addition to working as a grief therapist at Andrea Warnick Consulting, she is also a cancer support group facilitator at Gilda's Club. Lisa is currently working towards her certification as a trauma integration clinician. With over 10 years of experience working with children and families affected by life-threatening illnesses in organizations including Camp Oochigeas and SeriousFun Children's Network, she has seen the impact that therapeutic intervention can have on children's ability to engage in life. She uses narrative therapy as her primary therapeutic framework while incorporating elements of CBT to develop a collaborative understanding of the individual experience. Lisa practices in Toronto and Guelph.

GROW-VID 19: WHAT WE'VE LOST, WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: HELPING YOUTH PROCESS THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THESE UNIQUE AND UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Petra Kovacs , BHSc (MSW student)

This session will provide an overview of GROW-vid 19, an informative and interactive resource that can be used in schools and other settings to help children and youth process their experience of COVID-19 in healthy ways. This resource, created by the AWC team, fosters grief literacy while acknowledging and honouring the lived experience of the audience through COVID-19. A GROW-vid 19 resource guide booklet will be provided to support participants in engaging with youth in interactive and fun discussions about what COVID-19 has meant to all of us as well as ways to foster wellbeing as we approach the “next normal.”



Petra has over ten years of experience working with children worldwide who live with, and are affected by, a life-threatening illness through organizations like SeriousFun Children's Network and Camp Oochigeas. She's also worked with Camp Erin Toronto, a bereavement program for children and youth grieving the death of a significant person. Through these experiences, Petra has developed psychosocial programs to support children's emotional well-being. She has an innate ability to connect with people of all ages who face tough challenges due to illness, grief, loss, and bereavement.

GAMING & GRIEF: CREATIVE WAYS TO BRING GAMING INTO GRIEF WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Brian Douglas, MSW, Registered Social Worker

There are many creative approaches that we can take when working with children and youth but what happens when we attempt to bring in the world of gaming? This brief introduction to gaming and grief will provide you with some insights into how gaming can be used in a therapeutic setting for opening conversations, exploring problem-solving and so much more. We will also have a short demonstration of a therapeutic, grief-specific Minecraft world in the making.



Brian obtained his Masters degree from the University of Toronto and has over a decade of experience working with children, youth and families. Drawing from a variety of therapeutic models (Narrative Therapy, Solution Focused Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) he believes that you are the expert on your life and his role is to facilitate conversations; to ask questions that bring out your strengths and that challenge you to get supportively uncomfortable. Brian is a school social worker providing support to children, youth and their families through a variety of struggles. He is also a member of the Critical Events Response Team providing students, families and schools with support during times of crisis. Brian also has experience facilitating grief groups for youth.

VIRTUAL PLAY THERAPY & GRIEF: EXPLORING THE OAKLANDER MODEL, ONLINE SAND TRAYS, DOLLHOUSES AND PUPPETS WHEN WORKING WITH GRIEVING CHILDREN

Nicki Gallo Affleck, Certified Play Therapist (CPT), Registered Psychotherapist (Qualifying)

Using creativity, images and metaphor, these free interactive play therapy modalities help children to express themselves. Learn how to use the online sand tray, dollhouse and puppets when working with clients virtually. Examples of how these modalities can be used to support grieving children and their families will be explored.



Nicki came to psychotherapy through her belief in the intersection of creativity and healing and the transformational benefits of play as a therapeutic tool. She has supported children and families through organizations such as Gilda's Club, Camp Oochigeas and Camp Erin. Nicki helped create and facilitate the first-ever child and youth day for the Healing Broken Hearts Bereavement Conference. As a Play Therapist, Nicki has provided individual and group therapy sessions in various schools across the Toronto District School Board. In her role as Soleil, a therapeutic clown at Toronto's SickKids Hospital, Nicki used humour and play to provide emotional support and learned that joy and sorrow can exist together. This led to her current work as Emerald the clown, creating educational videos for young children on YouTube.

GRIEF & COMPLEX NEEDS: WAYS TO COMMUNICATE AND SUPPORT GRIEF IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Colleen Mousseau, M.Ed, Registered Psychotherapist

In this session, Colleen will provide an overview of considerations for supporting young people with a developmental disability, such as Downs Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder, when they are grieving the death or dying of someone close to them. Session attendees will receive helpful strategies for communication, important tips for talking about death and grief, and creative ideas for supporting a variety of emotional responses of grief throughout childhood and early adolescence.



Colleen, a Registered Psychotherapist with a Masters in Counselling Psychology, is the clinical director and co-owner of Andrea Warnick Consulting. Over the past 20 years Colleen has worked in agencies such as Dr. Jay Children's Grief Centre and Woodview Children's Mental Health and Autism Services. Colleen has extensive experience helping people of all ages and abilities face challenges related to serious illness, grief and bereavement. She also possesses the rare expertise of helping those with Autism Spectrum Disorder navigate grief. She is trained in a variety of modalities including cognitive behavioural therapy, art therapy, play therapy and EMDR. Her private practice is located in Hamilton.

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