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Importance of Grief and Loss Support

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Importance of Grief and Loss Support

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Collaborative Health & Human Services

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I. Abstract

The capstone was implemented at the Safety Nest, a wellness center that provides socio-emotional and mental health services to all students within Everett Alvarez High School through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports multi-tiered system. The school serves 2,664 students; 90.2% of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and it is part of the Salinas Union High School District. The social problem addressed by the project is that “There are too many high school students in California experiencing emotional distress, which can result in academic failure, substance use, or suicide”. The project consisted of collaborating with the NEST’s Behavioral Intervention Specialist to implement an eight-week long Grief/Loss Counseling group for EAHS students who have experienced a recent death/loss of a loved one. The group provides a safe space to support students experiencing grief/bereavement, learn about grief, coping skills, and how to express their emotions in healthy/constructive ways in order for the healing process to begin. The positive experience from the groups suggests the NEST continues to facilitate the Grief/Loss Counseling group through the practice of Ligia M. Houben’s book, “Counseling Hispanics Through Loss, Grief, and Bereavement: A guide for mental health professionals.”

Keywords: *Socio-Emotional Support, Grief and Loss, Emotional Distress, Middle & High School, School Social Work.*

II. Agency Description

The Eagle Safety Nest (NEST) is a wellness center based within the Everett Alvarez High School (EAHS) in Salinas, California. EAHS has a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) system, which is a “multi-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day” (PBIS, n.d.). There are three tiers in the PBIS system, ranging from Tier 1, which is the low intervention level and accessible to all students, to Tier 3, considered to be more intense intervention/s for selected students. However, in order for a student to typically reach a Tier 3 intervention, school personnel must first try Tier 1 and 2 interventions/supports to address a student’s concern, unless there is an emergency service needed, such as suicide intervention. Services support students with their academics, social/emotional concerns, and mental health through different activities.

At the Safety Nest, there are 2 Behavioral Intervention Specialists (BIS), a School Social Worker (SW), a Community Human Service (CHS) counselor, a PBIS/NEST Clerk, an intern from California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), and an assistant principal. The NEST staff also collaborates with other outside agencies and school personnel who contribute to various support/intervention groups that are held twice a week. The NEST offers social/emotional support groups such as Mending Matters, Joven Noble (an indigenous, youth leadership development group), Saturday school, substance abuse, and individual therapy. The NEST’s mission statement is as follows: “As each student is confronted with different challenges daily, the Eagle Safety Nest is dedicated to supporting each student’s academic and personal development with the adequate and caring support on a case by case basis. The students are also provided tools to empower them on how to manage their mental health and academic achievement. The NEST strives to engage and empower educators to positively impact students

through the promotion and implementation of research-based strategies for supporting the whole child.”

III. Communities Served by the Agency

According to the California Department of Education (CDE) (n.d.) for the school year 2018-2019, EAHS had 2,664 students from grade levels 9th-12th, in which the NEST was able to offer support to students and teachers in need. The school is located in a region where there is a high population of Latino residents, 90.2% of the school population are Hispanic or Latino, 5.3% are White, 0.6% are African-American, and 3.9% Other (CDE, 2019). In terms of services provided, the NEST gave services to 184 students in August of 2019, where 77.71% of these students were referred by school personnel, underlining the importance of teachers and staff being the first to notice a concern with a student.

IV. Problem Description

There are too many high school students in California who experience emotional distress. While the issue is recognized in schools, there are little-to-no interventions to support students with their needs on school campuses. What can be found in schools are academic counselors who see students for academic purposes and a shortage of school psychologists. Even with a school psychologist in place, the population a school psychologist typically works with are those who have a learning disability, but not necessarily students with emotional distress. Emotional distress can be defined as “feelings of anxiety, anger, depression, and demoralization making distinctions regarding the expression and suppression of angry feelings” (as cited in Zafar and Mubashir, 2012). When a student is unable to manage their emotions, they can express it in various ways, including negative behavior, lack of participation in school activities, low attendance, and substance abuse, to name a few. While there are certainly various emotions a student may experience, environmental situations, death/loss, unfortunate events, and interpersonal problems can cause a student to experience emotional distress.

Death or loss of a loved one can have a severe impact on a student's mental, social, and emotional health. More so, students will experience the symptoms of grief, the psychological-emotional experience following a loss of any kind (relationship, status, job, house, game, income, etc.) (Meek, 2012). There are five stages of grief, as the Kübler-Ross model shows, which include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2005). In present times, there are families being separated due to deportations of non-US citizens, which can and will lead a student to be physically detached from their loved one.

Environmental factors is another reason why a student may be experiencing emotional distress. Such external contributions include poverty, violence in the community, homelessness,

and cultural pressures. Financial strains, which is economic stress and lack of economic support, impact a student’s psychological symptoms, academics, and social integration (Adams, Meyers, and Beidas, 2016). The temptation to dropout of school and seek employment is more likely to be true for low-socioeconomic students, as observed at the NEST, than those whose families are financially stable. There are other factors that need to be considered, such as culture in this highly Latino populated community. It is seen that these students have or will work in farming during the weekends or during school breaks to help their family financially.

A student is likely to experience distress due to unfortunate events, resulting in trauma and negatively affecting one’s psychological well-being over time (as cited in Beck, Acevedo-Polakovich, Lyons, Estevez, Sevecke, Rossman, ... Fisher, 2018). Discrimination, prejudice, and hate crimes cause negative effects on mental emotional, and physical health.

Figure 1: Problem Model

Causes/Contributing Factors	Problem statement	Consequences
Death	Too many high school students in California experience emotional distress.	Academic Failure
Environmental: Financial Strains; neighborhood		Suicide
Events: Traumatic events (discrimination;Prejudice), sexual abuse, physical abuse		Substance Abuse
Interpersonal: Break-ups, coming out, relationship issues (friends),		Physical Health is affected
Family: Family Break-up/Separation, Divorce		Psychological well-being is negatively affected over time.

V. Project Description and Justification

This Capstone will address the consequence EAHS students may experience, specifically due to a death of a loved one. The approach to address the consequences of emotional distress was chosen, because an unexpected death or loss is unpreventable. The purpose of the Grief/Loss Counseling group is to provide a safe space to support students experiencing grief/bereavement, learn about grief, coping skills, and how to express their emotions in healthy/constructive ways in order for the healing process to begin.

Throughout life, these students will experience other losses and through the sessions of this group, they will be able to utilize what they have learned for the future and in the present. For example, students will learn how to identify which emotion they are experiencing in order to best address it, depending on what works best for each student. If they feel sad, some may go for a walk or freshen-up. If it's anger, then they can exercise or throw eggs at a tree. It is important for the members to understand that there is no right or wrong way to grieve, but healthy and unhealthy ways to cope with their individual grief. Each will be at different points in progress and some may not experience what others do. Some students will be more skilled and knowledgeable about their grieving process than others, and that is perfectly fine. This project's intentions will do it best to prevent a student from experiencing the consequences of emotional distress.

EAHS Grief/Loss Counseling Group

Schools are focused on meeting academic criteria from the state but have no courses that teach students how to deal with their emotions. How are students supposed to deal with catastrophic situations, such as when a family member passes away or is taken physically out of the country? The capstone project targeted this need by aiding with the implementation of the

EAHS Grief/Loss Counseling Group, which focuses on providing a safe and open space for students who have or are experiencing symptoms of grief/loss. This emotional support group ran for eight, alternating weeks where students were able to identify different phases of grief, learn how to use tools and coping skills when dealing with grief and emotional distress. The support group also provided a safe space where the students could share about their loved ones, the impact left on them, and opportunity for students to support one another.

The goal of this support group was to identify, validate and to encourage members to express their feelings in constructive ways, as well as “to commemorate the life of the departed and to inspire the bereaved individual to continue to live, love, learn, knowing that time will bring healing” (Greg and Goodman, 2008).

In collaboration with BIS Danny Lee (Internship Field Mentor at the NEST), the capstone contributed with the delivery and evaluation of the eight-week Grief and Support Group. This grief and loss group is necessary for students who are dealing with a death or loss. Students suffering a loss are often left alone with a single parent, family relatives, or in an institution and must go through the experience by themselves. This group informed students how to cope with grief/loss through knowledge of what grief is, its phases, symptoms, how people react differently to grief, how to create a support system, opportunity to talk about their loved ones, understand the importance to express one’s emotions in a healthy way and to seek for help, regardless of gender or ethnic background. Students from this group will have tools and skills to cope with their occurring situation, as well as prepare them for any future loss or death as they progress throughout life. This group lines up with the mission, in which the NEST will meet the student where they are at and provide the necessary tools to empower them on how to manage their mental and emotional needs.

VI. Project Implementation

The Grief and Loss Support Group curriculum is part of an evidence based practice and has been converted by EAHS from a book into eight different google documents. This conversion was accomplished by a previous Collaborative Health and Human Services student, which facilitated the information to be straight forward and accessible (typically 2-3 pages long), as well as providing a list of the materials needed for activities, short description of each session's topic, and how to prepare before running a session. It is also noted that due to the fact that a student is going through grief stages, facilitators are to remain in a calm, empathetic character while keeping their voices low and soft instead of cheerful, which can confuse members on the purpose of the group. The participants for this project include 4-8 students per group, Danny, Hayley Newman (SUHSD, PBIS Coordinator), the attendance department from EAHS, school counselors, teachers, and a California State University, Monterey Bay Student/Intern (Omar I. Cortez).

Before the group began, Hayley provided training to both Danny and Omar on how to facilitate the group, give examples of activities and the materials the capstone could use. This also included necessary tools, such as a binder with all the instructions and course plan for the entirety of the group. The next step was to start screening each potential student to see if this group is the best intervention for them or if they need a different intervention. The screening process was initiated and completed by Danny for the first cohort.

After the screening process was completed, a parent consent form was sent out to students' legal guardians, which explained what the purpose of the group is and what it's for. This form had to be signed and returned to the NEST if the legal guardian did not want the student to take part in the group. This approach was implemented due to students forgetting to

bring in the form while the first session had taken place already. It was also necessary to contact academic counselors and teachers ahead of time since students had to be removed from the classroom when in session. The attendance department was contacted immediately after each session ended to inform the whereabouts of the students. Not doing so would have resulted in the student's attendance being marked absent or truant which can, overtime, cause legal consequences. After all paperwork was initiated and all participants were contacted, Danny provided the pre-survey for each new participating member.

Since the NEST is based within EAHS, the Grief/Loss Counseling Group has accommodating access to the school campus' classrooms and conference rooms for the facilitation of the group. The group met every other Monday and there were two sessions being facilitated on Thursdays, due to two conflicting holidays for Veteran's Day and Fall break (please refer to Appendix A for Fall 2019 schedule). The group also used resources provided by Hayley and through the NEST's budget for materials, including big Post-Its, butcher paper, and writing supplies.

Some challenges that we encountered in the implementation included scheduling the time and day to facilitate 2 sessions when there was no school. However, the schedule was adjusted to facilitate the sessions on different days in order for the members to benefit fully from the group. The second challenge was the absence of students. Because grief is such a challenging experience, it can drain students out, making it difficult for students to get out of bed, focus on academics, or not want to participate in the group after a few sessions.

Communication is one of the biggest key factors within a school setting. This is because a lot of people who are involved with the student play an important role. This includes contacting legal guardians, counselors, attendance department, teachers, and any other collaborators within

the school. Knowing the whereabouts of a student is very important in general, and it is critical to know that students within our group are in a safe environment, whether at school or not. Table 1 below shows the scope of work and implementation timeline for each activity that took place before, during, and after the facilitation of the group. As mentioned, there are many components to create a group in general. This includes the creation of a pre and post survey in order to understand the knowledge of grief/loss and ways to cope with it from our population, creating consent forms, screening for potential candidates, training, and collaboration and delivery of the support group (facilitation).

Table 1: Scope of Work and Timeline of the Capstone Implementation

Title: Grief/Loss Counseling Group at the NEST			
Project description: Implementation of an evidence-based curriculum			
Goal: To learn how to facilitate a grief/loss support group, learn the process of creating the group, and supporting and providing students the skills to address their emotional needs during a time of grief/loss.			
Primary Objective of the Project: To provide support and encourage students to express their emotions in healthy ways when dealing with Grief/Loss.			
Activities		Deliverables	Timeline/deadlines
1	Discussion of Capstone Ideas with Field mentor	Brainstorming capstone and implementation.	Aug.-October 7th, 2019
2	Training for Facilitating Group	Understand how to deliver the facilitation of the Grief/Loss Counseling Group	October 7 th , 2019
3	Screening Students	Field mentor is to screen potential members for the Support group	October 18 th , 2019
4	Group Schedule	Setting up the schedule to take place every other Monday, and alternatives to holidays taking place	October 21 st , 2019

5	Translate Consent Forms in Spanish for participation	Translation of participation consent form from English to Spanish.	October 23 rd , 2019
6	First Session (First Cohort)	Facilitation of the first cohort's session to take place.	October 24 th , 2019
7	Second Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	October 28 th , 2019
8	Third Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	October 31 st , 2019
9	Fourth Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	November 4 th , 2019
10	Fifth Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	November 14 th , 2019
11	Sixth Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	November 18 th , 2019
12	Seventh Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	December 2 nd , 2019
13	Eighth Session (1 st Cohort)	Facilitation of the group	December 9 th , 2019
14	Provide Post-Survey	Participants take a survey to assess what they have gained from the group as well as to measure the success of the intervention.	December 9 th , 2019
15	Activities 3-10 for second cohort	Activities were implemented by BIS and Intern but unable to finish the 8-9 week support group due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.	Jan.2020-March 2020
16	Complete Reports	Final Agency and Capstone Reports	May 2020
17	Prepare Capstone Presentation in Selected Format	Instructor approval and dress rehearsal of final capstone	May 2020
18	Final Preparation for capstone festival	Final presentation at capstone festival	May 2020

Conclusion of Implementation

There is a need to provide interventions, at EAHS, that support students who are experiencing a recent death or loss of a loved one. The NEST, in collaboration with the capstone, was able to provide the necessary support and skills for students to use now and in the future. In doing so, the NEST is living up to its mission, in which they provide support for the betterment of students' academics, personal growth, and mental health. This capstone was about learning how to facilitate a Grief/Loss Group for high school students, since there is no course that teaches them how to deal with emotions, life stressors, or loss. Like the facilitation to support students, it is just as important to learn the process in creating a group, which includes overcoming challenges, finding alternative solutions, communicating with different staff, and understanding the importance of implementing quality time to plan out activities for an entire cohort.

It is important to note that the implementation of creating a group can be challenging within a school setting. With all the work one typically needs to complete, Danny took the initiative to facilitate the group during his own work schedule and showed me how to do it. Learning all the necessary skills and procedures to implement a group was rewarding and useful for my future, I also gained valuable knowledge on how to help others when dealing with a delicate topic.

VII. COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Agency and Population Served

Too many California students are experiencing emotional distress and are being challenged with the shelter in place order. The list of reasons why a student may be experiencing such distress is endless and yet are extremely limited on how to cope with it. The Safety Nest, as well as other support services worldwide, are not able to deliver services to the full extent. This includes support groups, performing Suicide Risk Assessments, and alternative interventions that were once provided within school campus. Overall, the quality of support services for socio-emotional and mental health had gone down because of the alternative, virtual substitutions taking place of the "in-person" experience. It will be no surprise when we see that this social problem increases within our population after the Shelter-In-Place is uplifted.

COVID-19 impacted everyone and every organization in one way or another. California public schools closed down, resulting for the staff at the NEST to work from home.

Unfortunately, CSUMB interns were unable to complete their internship hours, which is a requirement for graduation, and no virtual online hours were offered. Regardless of the school being shut down, the NEST team was quick to request permission from district officials on providing services. There are currently two phases on how the staff is to deliver services if students are not present in school.

Phase 1:

- Staff meets once a week for 30 minutes for updates, check-ins, and protocols via virtual meetings.
- Waiting for the school district to give staff access to zoom/google meet with students.
- Emailed students but for the majority, there was no response. (same with teacher to students contact).
- For those who do respond, check-ins were done as needed.
- The online intervention request form is inactive, but the administrator refers students who visit the website seeking food assistance to staff to check in on them.
- Attendance department has been rigorously contacting inactive students, but unfortunately, the only contact information is through student email or parent phone number (which some do not work or pick up).

Phase 2:

- District approves google meet.
- Attempt to continue Grief/Loss group but only received one response from participating members.
- For support groups, since there is about a 10-20% response when members are contacted, BIS are offering 1 to 1 check-ins with themselves or another facilitator they might have a closer relationship with.
- As of now, students are able to “check-in” with a behavior intervention specialist via phone call for new students and existing caseloads. Teachers are able to refer a student if they believe they might need services.

According to Danny and Jessica Rodgers (school administrator), the Nest is receiving very little contact responses from students at the moment. The reason for this is currently unknown, but for those who are being connected, Danny is reporting that “students are more comfortable having that face to face interaction (Via google meet) when compared to communicating through phone call or email.” It is very unfortunate that students are unable to easily access the Nest at the moment. Some students were able to utilize the space whenever they needed a break from being in class due to anxiety, student-teacher conflict, or simply just to vent and talk to someone. Some of these students live in communities that are in poverty, are housed in a small living space, or are homeless. Currently, there is a shelter-in-place order that restricts individuals from going to city parks, which is a popular coping skill student used to distress or get some fresh air while enjoying nature. According to Afterschool Alliance (2016), students who are living in concentrated poverty, face higher levels of stress, depression, and behavioral problems. Just when students were able to receive services for socio-emotional and mental health support, the pandemic made it extremely hard for students to reach out and for the Nest to check-in on students.

The future of the Safety Nest will be in place and active for many years to come. SUHSD was able to provide data and the need for such services that they were fully funded to place a wellness center in each of their schools. Everyone has been impacted by the pandemic in one

way or another, and it is without a doubt that many students will need and seek services from the Nest. The nation was not prepared for such a crisis at hand, resulting in adaptation and learning as they go. It would be outstanding if the Nest were to have open doors for students, but there will be other challenges that would arise, such as transportation and distancing from one another. It is recommended for all school sites to update contact information to better service students in the future. This pandemic was a surprise and the experience itself is causing many educational leaders to prepare for now and the future.

VIII. Recommendations

The Grief/Loss Counseling group has benefited the members and is encouraged for others to partake in the support group if they have experienced a recent loss. As the NEST knows, socio/emotional and mental health support is important and vital for student success in academics and their personal lives. From the perspective of the mentor and the intern, it was noted that this specific support group is necessary and very rewarding for the participants and should be continued.

Because the group's population are all from Latino background, it has brought attention to the staff that there needs to be more content that can relate to these Latino students and the way they share their experiences within the group. It is recommended the agency continues providing the support group with the evidence-based practice from Ligia M. Houben's book "Counseling Hispanics Through Loss, Grief, and Bereavement: A guide for mental health professionals," as it was done so for the second cohort. This practice will educate the participants on posttraumatic growth, readjustment period, self-esteem, healthy expressions of grief/loss, and coping strategies/resources. More importantly, it creates various opportunities for students to share their experiences, which is what the group encourages from participants in order for the process of healing to start. Along with providing this new practice, it is strongly encouraged for internship mentors to be the primary facilitator while the intern assists and observes how to facilitate the content for the intern's first semester at the agency.

While there were many challenges that arose, Danny did outstanding work with this project. It is only advised that he shares and recognizes his great effort in helping these youth during a critical time in their lives. To please continue to self-care as it can get intense when

working with death or loss, and know that his contribution to the NEST overall is helping hundreds of students be heard of their socio/emotional and mental health concerns, as well as improving their academic and personal success. His work has left a staple and awareness of the necessity to have a grief/loss counseling group in each school. As he mentioned, he is the first or only support some of these students have. The community is grateful that Danny is present to provide his services to the youth as there wasn't much support in these areas in the previous years.

Although we are providing services to a certain population, we are limited to voicing out the support group to school personnel. Yes the NEST wants to help all the students experiencing grief or loss, and at the same time, the NEST might not be able to provide services if it were to receive such a large demand out of the 2,600 students in EAHS. Allowing previous members to rejoin the group next semester is encouraged and continuing to ask school personnel if they know students who might benefit from the group will help us provide this service to more students.

SUHSD is currently the only district in the County of Monterey with wellness centers. Danny and Omar are the only individuals who are providing a grief/loss counseling group to students in the whole district, perhaps out of the whole county. Although the group is less than 1% of the State's student population, their work and contribution has led to a "how to start" a grief/loss counseling group for the benefit of other schools and their students. The support group, and the importance of wellness centers, is being shared with other school districts in the region, meaning this project has and is addressing emotional distress that students are experiencing. Services and stories like this one, creates awareness of the need that all students in the State of California need access to services for emotional distress.

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APPENDIX

Schedule 2018/2019

Purpose: Typically, adolescents repress their feelings or express them behaviorally; consequently, school work and participation in school activities are often affected. Therefore, the primary goal of the support group is identifying, validating, and encouraging expression in constructive ways. Another goal is to commemorate the life of the departed and to inspire the bereaved individual to continue to live, love, and learn, knowing that time will bring healing.

Logistics: Students in grades 9-12 who have recently (within the past year) experienced the death of an immediate family member. Students within one to two grade levels of one another may be grouped together.

Session #	Date	Time/Room
Session 1:	Thursday; 10/24	Lunch + HR/406
Session 2:	Monday 10/28	Block 2/406
Session 3:	Thursday; 10/31	Lunch + HR/406
Session 4:	Monday 11/4	Block 3/408
Session 5:	Monday 11/14	Lunch + HR/406
Session 6:	Monday 11/18	Block 4/408

Session 7:	Monday 12/4	Block 5/408
Session 8:	Monday 12/9	Block 6/408

Session 1: Getting acquainted, explanation of journaling

Materials:

- Student Journals
 - Lined paper
 - Colored construction paper
 - Stapler

Lesson:

1. **Facilitator** introduces themselves to the group.
2. **Facilitator:** Welcome to this loss group. Each of you has experienced the death of someone close to you. It is my hope that throughout our sessions you will come to find this environment a safe place to share your feelings. We will be learning about the grief process along with constructive ways in which to cope with grief. I will stress in here that there is no right or wrong way to grieve but healthy and unhealthy ways to cope with our individual grief. Together, we will try to uncover what works for each of you and how you may implement that in your life.
3. **Facilitator:** We will start by getting into pairs and interviewing each other. You will find out the following 5 things about your partner and then report it back to the group.
4. **Facilitator:** Find out their name, where they are from, who they live with, something they makes them sad, and something that makes them happy.

Have participants share out loud.

5. **Facilitator:** Thank you all for sharing. Now we will be moving forward to talk more about confidentiality. You own what you say but not what others say. Anything others share in here should be kept among the group members and expressed only during group time. You may share what you say with whomever you choose. I will keep confidential everything any of you say. The most important exceptions to confidentiality occur if you pose a threat to yourself or to anyone else. In all other instances, confidentiality is accepted and maintained.
6. **Facilitator:** All of you are encouraged to share what you are comfortable with, but you will never be forced to share. I only ask that everyone in this room be respectful when your peers are sharing by actively listening and using non judgemental statements with each other.

7. **Facilitator:** Does anyone have any questions about confidentiality, active listening or anything we just discussed?

8. **Facilitator:** To help us throughout this process, we will be writing in a journal to keep track of our thoughts and feelings. At the end of each session, we will take a few minutes to write in our journals. Then, I will collect them before you all leave. If you would like an extra journal to take home, please let me know.

9. Hand out journals to participants.

10. **Facilitator:** For our first journal entry, please respond to the following statements:

- a. I feel... about coming to this group.
- b. Something I hope to get out of this group is...
- c. Today, I learned...

11. Collect journals.

Session 2: Trust, sharing losses**Materials:**

- None

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: “My week was ... and I would like to share ...”
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. Today, we will be discussing trust. Can anyone tell me what trust means for them? Why do you think trust is important in a group like this?
 1. Have students share what they think trust means and why it’s important in this group.
3. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. It is important that we trust each other especially in a place like this where we are all sharing things that are important to us.
4. Optional facilitator: To practice using trust, we will be participating in a trust walk activity. Please pick a partner. One of you will be blindfolded while the other is leading the other on a short walk. After a few minutes, we will alternate.

. *Give them about 2 minutes for each participant to be blindfolded and participate in the activity.*

 - a. Facilitator: Let’s all regroup together. At various times in our lives we place trust in other people. Share how it feels to have someone place their trust in you and/or be the one putting trust in another. (After Sharing, thank them for sharing)
5. Facilitator: Now that we have developed more trust, we will be talking about what loss means to us. Let’s all brainstorm together about what loss means to us.

. *Let everyone create their definition.*
6. Facilitator: Let’s brainstorm what loss is and list all the types of losses that we can think of. After this, we will take a closer look at the loss that has brought each of you to this group.
7. Facilitator: Loss is when we no longer have something or someone that is meaningful to us. We will be discussing our reactions to loss in the coming weeks, but for today, let us take some time to speak about the death of our loved ones. Let’s go around the room and

share who died, when, how, and the way in which you found out about the death. If you would like, you can also share with the group what has been the most difficult for you since the death. Would anyone like to volunteer to start?

8. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. I know that these conversations can be tough, but they help us better understand how we are feeling. Now, we will be taking some time to work on our journals.

9. Hand out journals

10. Facilitator: For our second journal entry, please respond to the following statements:

. I learned...

a. I can see that I need to...

11. Collect journals

Session 3: Stages of Grief

Materials:

- Chart Paper with Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' stages of grief:
 - Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: "Today, I feel..."
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. To begin, we will review what we learned last week. Can anyone tell me what loss means?
 1. Let participants share meaning of loss. Thank them for sharing.
3. Facilitator: Today, we are going to learn about grief. Grief is a normal reaction to loss. Theorists have created various labels and tools to help educate people about grief. I would like to show you one model and get your feedback about it.

. Show them the chart paper with the stages of grief.
4. Facilitator: Although there are five stages, not everyone experiences all of these stages. It is not a list that someone needs to complete to fully grieve. These stages are more of a tool to help you understand some of the common symptoms experienced in grieving. The length and order of the stages changes for every individual. Everyone grieves differently and there is no right or wrong way to grieve.
5. Facilitator: Which one of these stages can you identify with?

. Participants share.
6. Facilitator: How did you feel right after the death occurred compared to your current feelings?

. Thank them for sharing.
7. Hand out journals
8. Facilitator: For our third journal entry, please respond to the following statements:
I learned...
I see that I need to...
9. Collect journals

Session 4: Reactions to Grief**Materials:**

- Chart Paper
- Video on Teen Grief
- Computer with speakers (To watch video)

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: “Today, I feel...”
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. To begin, we will review what we learned last week. Can anyone tell me the stages of grief? Ball theory?
3. Facilitator: Thank you for sharing. Today, we will be focusing on reactions to grief. Let’s create a list of grief reactions and emotions that each of us has experienced. Break into small groups and come up with as many as you can think of; then we will share your responses in a large group.
 - a. One the chart paper, list the responses that the group created. Also list the following list of grief in teens:
 - i.Difficulty concentrating
 - ii.Forgetfulness
 - iii.Poor schoolwork
 - iv.Lowered grades/ performance effort
 - v.Insomnia or sleeping too much
 - vi.Reclusiveness or social withdraw
 - vii.antisocial/destructive behavior
 - viii.Negative risk-taking
 - ix.Resentment of authority
 - x.Overdependence
 - xi.Regression
 - xii.Frequent sickness
 - xiii.Truancy
 - xiv.Accident proneness
 - xv.overeating/undereating

- xvi. Experimentation with drugs/alcohol
- xvii. Seeming depressed
- xviii. Sexual promiscuity
- xix. Staying away/running away from home
- xx. Talk of or attempted suicide
- xxi. Nightmares/symbolic dreams
- xxii. Drastic change in interest/friends

4. Facilitator: When we look at the behaviors listed, we can immediately identify the majority of them as being negative. In weeks to come, I will point out positive gains we can experience from grief. However, I feel it is important that each of you is aware of all the ways in which one may react to grief.

. As the facilitator, you can also mention one of your own personal losses to help connect with the group.

5. Facilitator: Let's take a look at a video and see how some others who have experienced loss are reacting.

6. Show a video on teen grief.

7. Facilitator: Would any of you like to share how you felt about this video?

. Accentuate the healthy coping mechanisms displayed on the video

a. Ask members to take notice throughout the next week of all the ways in which they are dealing with grief.

8. Hand out journals

9. Facilitator: For our fourth journal entry, please respond to the following statements:

. I learned...

a. I relearned...

b. I need to...

10. Collect journals

Session 5: Dealing with Grief, Memory Boxes**Materials:**

- Student folders
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Paper Clips

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: “This past week, something I noticed about the way I am coping with my grief is...”
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. To begin, we will review what we learned last week. Can anyone remind me of some of the symptoms of grief?
3. Facilitator: Thank you for sharing. Today, we will be identifying constructive ways to deal with our grief. Specifically, refer to what kinds of things you can do that may be healthy.
4. Facilitator: We keep referring to the importance of memories. It is obvious that after someone we love dies, we tend to value time spend with them before the death. Things that may trigger our memories include pictures, songs, smells, being at a specific place, objects, and so forth. The activity we are about to do is making a memory box. This will take us until next session to complete. While we work on this, I would like you to spend time talking with those around you about some of your memories. For next week, please bring in a picture or written memory of your loved one, along with some music that reminds you of him or her
5. Have members cut out pictures and/or words from magazines that remind them of the deceased. Have them paper-clip them and leave them in their folders for next week.
6. Facilitator: Thank you all for coming in today and working on this memory box. As I mentioned earlier, for next week, please bring in a picture or written memory of your loved one, along with some music that reminds you of him or her.
7. Hand out journals
8. Facilitator: For our fifth journal entry, please respond to the following statements:

1. I learned...
2. One way I can use what I learned is...
9. Collect journals

Session 6: Rituals

Materials:

- Student folders
- Collage materials
- Glue sticks
- CD player/Speakers

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: "I feel happy when..."
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. To begin, would anyone like to share about how they felt about last week's session?
3. Facilitator: Thank you for sharing. Today, we will be identifying constructive ways to deal with our grief. Specifically, refer to what kinds of things you can do that may be healthy. We will be continuing our memory box and talking about rituals.
4. Facilitator: Please continue working on your memory box and adding any of the materials that you brought with you today.
 1. Allow the students time to finish working on their memory box.
5. Facilitator: Now that we have all finished our memory box, lets go around the room and share either a memory object that you brought in, or the pictures and words you chose for your boxes.

. Have everyone share what they brought.
6. Facilitator: Our society utilizes various services for memory rituals. Funeral services, memorial services, and services of remembrance are all types of ritual services that help grieving individuals obtain closure or reach acceptance after the death of a loved one. IF you attended any service for your loved one, please share what it was like, how you felt about going, and anything you would have changed about it.

. Thank them all for sharing.

7. Facilitator: Thank you all for coming in today and working on this memory box and telling us about your rituals. We really value what you shared with us. Now, we will work on our journals.
8. Hand out journals
9. Facilitator: For our sixth journal entry, please respond to the following statements:
 - . I learned...
 - a. I relearned...
 - b. I need to...
10. Collect journals

Session 7: Bibliotherapy, Preparing for Termination

Materials:

- Book about death (recommended: *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*, by Leo Buscaglia)
 - o Not in library
 - o YouTube Read Aloud Link
- List of grief-related resources available for students
- Gains from Loss handout
- Computer with speakers to listen to book

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: “Over the past sessions, I have felt...”
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. To begin, would anyone like to share about how they felt about last week’s session?
3. Facilitator: Thank you for sharing. Today, we will be identifying constructive ways to deal with our grief. Specifically, refer to what kinds of things you can do that may be healthy. We will do this by focusing on bibliotherapy.
4. Facilitator: We will be listening to *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*, by Leo Buscaglia.
5. Facilitator: What did you all think of the story? Have any of you read another story on the topic of death?
 - a. Provide a list of grief books and other resources
6. Facilitator: AS we approach our last meeting, I would like you to think about how you feel about the work you have done in these sessions, and if you wish you had done anything differently. In addition, I would also like you to reflect upon how you feel about the group coming to an end and identify individuals outside the group from whom you can receive support.
7. Facilitator: Before closing today’s session, I would like to highlight some of the long-term gains that you may experience from working through your loss. The following list is taken from research done by an unknown author; it is titled ‘ Gains from Loss.’
 - Distribute Gains from Loss Worksheet
8. Hand out journals
9. Facilitator: For our sixth journal entry, please respond to the following statements:

- . I learned...
 - a. I relearned...
 - b. I need to...
10. Collect journals

Session 8: Review, Share, Close**Materials:**

- Group evaluation form

Lesson:

1. Facilitator: Hello everyone, and welcome back. To get started I would like for us each to finish this sentence: “I hope...”
2. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. To begin, would anyone like to share about how they felt about last week’s session?
3. Facilitator: Thank you for sharing. Today will be our last consecutive session. I would like to confirm a follow up date exactly one month from now. If anyone feels that he or she would like to schedule an individual appointment with me prior to that meeting, please feel free to do so at the end of our session today or as needed.
4. Facilitator: As a closing activity, I would like each of you to close your eyes and imagine all the events during the time we have been together. Playback the most significant events in your mind as if watching them on a screen. What impressions are the strongest for you? What do you recall most clearly? What had the most meaning for you? Take a few moments. When you are ready, open your eyes and allow yourself to share with the rest of the group what you are recalling.
5. Facilitator: Thank you all for sharing. Before we complete our last activity, we are going to take a few minutes to complete an evaluation form.
6. Hand out evaluation form.
7. Hand out journals
8. Facilitator: Instead of completing a final journal entry, we are all going to share something that you have learned from being in this group.

Everett Alvarez High School

1900 Independence Blvd, Salinas, CA 93906

PARENT CONSENT FOR COUNSELING PARTICIPATION

To the Guardians of _____

Grade: 9th

From: **Safety Nest Department**

Re: Small Group Counseling

Your student has been invited to participate in a grief group. Students are nominated to participate in small group in a variety of ways, including their attendance, grades, or school personnel recommendation.

The counselor will go over a variety of skills such as journaling, vulnerability, stages of grief, reactions to grief, dealing with grief, rituals, and resources.

Conversations between the student and the counselor are considered confidential. However, there are exceptions to this confidentiality. If a counselor has reason to believe that a student is being abused, neglected or is a danger to himself or others, the counselor has the legal, ethical and professional responsibility to report such concerns to the parents or the appropriate authorities.

This group will meet once a week beginning the week of October 24th for 8 weeks

Please contact us if you **DO NOT** consent for you student to participate.

Email: soowon.lee@salinasuhd.org (*Danny Lee, Intervention Specialist*)

Phone: 831-796-7800 ext. 2477

Everett Alvarez High School**1900 Independence Blvd, Salinas, CA 93906****CONSENTIMIENTO DE PADRES PARA PARTICIPACION EN CONSEJERIA****Para los tutores legales de _____**

Grado: 9th

De parte de: **Safety Nest Department**

Re: Grupo de Consejeria

Su estudiante ha sido invitado para participar en un grupo de duelo. Estudiantes son recomendados por diferentes motivos para participar en el grupo, las diferentes razones incluyen: la flata de asistencia de los estudiantes, calificaciones, o son recomendado por un empleado de la escuela.

El consejero cubrira variedades de habilidades que los estudiantes aprenderan, cual incluye escribir en un diario, las etapas de duelo, reacciones de duelo, tratando el duelo, vulnerabilidad, rituales, y como obtener recursos de asistencia para el duelo.

Las conversaciones entre el/la estudiante y el consejero son considerados confidencial. Sin embargo, hay excepciones hacia esta confidencialidad. Si un consejero tiene razon de creer que el estudiante esta siendo abusando: fisica, emocional, sexualmente o estan siendo descuidados, o es un peligro hacia otros o a el/ella mismo, el consejero tiene la responsabilidad legal, etica, y profesional de reportar tal preocupaciones a los padres o las autoridades apropiadas.

Este grupo se reunira una vez por semana, empezando la semana de Octubre 24, por 8 semanas.

Por favor contactanos si usted **NO** da consentimiento a su estudiante para participar.

Correo electronico: soowon.lee@salinasuhd.org (*Danny Lee, Especialista de Intervencion*)

Telefono: 831-796-7800 ext. 2477

EAHS Grief/Loss Counseling

Schedule 2020 Spring

Purpose: Typically, adolescents repress their feelings or express them behaviorally; consequently, school work and participation in school activities are often affected. Therefore, the primary goal of the support group is identifying, validating, and encouraging expression in constructive ways. Another goal is to commemorate the life of the departed and to inspire the bereaved individual to continue to live, love, and learn, knowing that time will bring healing.

Logistics: Students in grades 9-12 who have recently (within the past year) experienced the death of an immediate family member. Students within one to two grade levels of one another may be grouped together.

Group #1:

Session #	Date	Time/Room
Session 1:	Monday- 2/3	Block 2: Forest
Session 2:	Monday- 2/10	Block 3: Forest
Session 3:	Tuesday- 2/18	Lunch: Forest
Session 4:	Monday- 2/24	Block 4: Forest
Session 5:	Monday- 3/2	Block 5: Forest
Session 6:	Monday- 3/9	Block 6: Forest
Session 7:	Tuesday- 3/17	Lunch: Forest
Session 8:	Monday- 3/23	Block 2: Forest

Session 9:	Monday- 3/30	Block 3: Forest
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Schedule 2020 Spring

Purpose: Typically, adolescents repress their feelings or express them behaviorally; consequently, school work and participation in school activities are often affected. Therefore, the primary goal of the support group is identifying, validating, and encouraging expression in constructive ways. Another goal is to commemorate the life of the departed and to inspire the bereaved individual to continue to live, love, and learn, knowing that time will bring healing.

Logistics: Students in grades 9-12 who have recently (within the past year) experienced the death of an immediate family member. Students within one to two grade levels of one another may be grouped together.

Group #2:

Session #	Date	Time/Room
Session 1:	Monday- 2/3	Block 3: Forest
Session 2:	Monday- 2/10	Block 2: Forest
Session 3:	Wednesday- 2/19	Lunch: Forest
Session 4:	Monday- 2/24	Block 5: Forest
Session 5:	Monday- 3/2	Block 6: Forest
Session 6:	Monday- 3/9	Block 4: Forest
Session 7:	Wednesday- 3/18	Lunch: Forest
Session 8:	Monday- 3/23	Block 3: Forest
Session 9:	Monday- 3/30	Block 2: Forest

SESSION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Materials: icebreaker google form questions, journals, permission forms

Goal:

- To learn about one another's origin, family, traditions, and resilience

Description of Activity:

- Students and facilitator complete "Grief Group Icebreaker"
- Facilitator introduces norms and confidentiality
- Facilitator passes out journals and explains checking-in (scale of 1-10)
 - a. How did they feel when they first came to the room
 - b. How do they feel now
- Students share their check-in
- Facilitator reminds students of the Grief Group schedule and passes out permission form

SESSION TWO: CHAIN OF EVENTS

Materials: scissors, stapler, construction paper, markers/colored pencils, journals

Mission: involves disrupting the individual's assumptive world; one may recognize a trauma when the person uses narrative terms such as *before* the event and *after* the event, which can initiate the cognitive engagement that produce posttraumatic growth

Goal:

- To reconstruct a series of events around a certain aspect of the death. For example, the events leading up to the disclosure of an illness, or the events of the funeral and its preparation

Description of Activity:

- Facilitator reminds students of confidentiality and encourages free expression
- Students check-in (scale of 1-10)
- Facilitator describes activity
 - a. Student cuts 5 strips of construction paper
 - b. On each strip, they write an event and/or its corresponding feeling. For example, the first strip might say: "My dad never feels well anymore." The second strip might be: "My mom took my dad to the doctor, everyone is telling secrets, etc."
 - c. Strips are then glued, taped or stapled into rings to form a "chain of events".
- Facilitator and students share their chain of events
- Students check-out (reflection + scale of 1-10)

SESSION THREE: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN YOUR LIFE?/ WHAT DO YOU NEED

Materials: What has changed in your life handout, What do you need handout, journals

Goal: Change usually involves a readjustment period and it is important to know that these responses are normal

Description of Activity:

- Students check-in (scale of 1-10)
- Show students video “Grieving Process: Coping with Death”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsYL4PC0hyk>
- Facilitator describes activity
 - Students would put a check mark next to any of the changes that have taken place in his/her/their life
 - Students will be asked to look at the list and think about where the majority of change is taking place in his/her/their life
- Students share “What has changed in your life” handout
- What do you need discussion
- Students check-out (reflection + scale of 1-10)

When grieving, many people do not let others know what they need, because they feel they will be burdening them with their pain or they make the assumption that people should already know what they need without telling them. These two assumptions relieve the bereaved of the responsibility of letting others know what they need. When we make assumptions for others and see lack of communication as being “their” fault, we put ourselves in the role of “victim” and “victims” do not heal. A victim always assumes that someone else should know what to do or say or assumes that others just do not want to be bothered. The contrary is often more the reality. When we have a friend or family member who is grieving, sometimes we may not say or do anything simply because we are afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing. This is not done to hurt the bereaved, but instead, the intentions are to protect the bereaved. This is why it is so important, as the bereaved person, to let others know what you need.

IN THE GROUP SETTING, discuss the typical feelings that come up as we grieve, such as anger, sadness and confusion. After defining various feelings, focus on two, such as anger and sadness. Go around the group in a circle with each feeling and ask, as an example, What is it you need from this group when you are feeling sad and tearful? Each person will then answer.

Sample responses might be, When I am tearful, I really need people to let me alone, I probably

would want to pass, or When I am tearful, I need others to ask me questions to help me get in touch with what I am feeling. If a person says they want to be left alone, a question the facilitator might ask is, Is it all right to ask you later on, after the sadness is more in control, what is happening? This is an important question as many people cannot verbalize their feelings when they are intense but do have a need to talk about them later.

Telling the group what they need is an important exercise to do by the second or third meeting. This establishes respect for others and also enforces the importance of being responsible for our needs and how we communicate.

SESSION FOUR: FOUR FEELINGS

Materials: paper divided into four sections, future fears handout, pencils, crayons, journals

Goals:

- To identify and express feelings we may have never recognized or understood
- Increased understanding of ourselves and others, especially related to grief
- Build self-esteem by validation

Description of Activity

- Students check-in
- Facilitator describes activity
 - Distribute sheets of paper and give directions. Participants go to tables to work
 - Paper is divided into four parts. Each part is labeled:
 - I feel guilty when...
 - I feel scared when...
 - I feel lonely when...
 - I feel better when...
 - They can write or draw their response on the paper
- Students share four feelings
- Future Fears Handout
- Students check-out

SESSION FIVE: KINESTHETIC ACTIVITIES

Materials: play-doh, small objects to put into clay (i.e. pencils, buttons, straws, etc.), coloring (mandala), brochures, journals, kleenex boxes, positive word worksheet

Goal:

- Frequently, our actions speak louder than our words. Grief is difficult to express at times, especially when dealing with anger and frustration

Description of Activity:

- Students check-in
- Facilitator asks what the group learned the past 4 sessions
- Facilitator describes activity #1 (Kleenex, next page)
- Facilitator describes activity #2 (play-doh)
 - a. Student experiments with the feel and shape of the clay. Ask student to think of thoughts such as anger, frustration, or sadness. Give student time to get into their feelings quietly. As student thinks, encourage student to work with the clay - squeezing, shaping, or pounding
 - b. Have student share thoughts. As student shares, be aware of body language, especially hands. See if student's body language matches words. If the two are different, share your observations and explore them with the individual. Example: Student is pounding pencil into clay as student says they are NOT experiencing frustration or anger
 - c. Have student tell you how the clay feels - texture, temperature, etc. This helps the student to really pay attention to what he/she is doing so that the student is fully present in the moment
- Students share their feelings about the activity
- Students check-out

Give a box of kleenex to each group member. Form a circle and sit on the floor. With a kleenex box in front of each person, let the group verbally express feelings of anger or frustration as they quickly pull and toss kleenex from their box for 15 seconds.

Ask the group how they felt when they entered the-room and how they feel after tossing the kleenex. Most people seem to experience an increase in energy and a lighter, happier feeling. After this brief discussion, have each person gather up his/her kleenex.

Now ask one person to sit in the center of the circle. On the count of three, all people in the circle shower the person in the center with kleenex. As they toss the kleenex they express all their good wishes/positive words (worksheet) for this person. For many young people, this is the first experience they have had where they are the center of attention in a very positive way.

Participants often comment on the softness of the tissue as it touches them and the tenderness that that evokes along with the good wishes. This is a very popular activity.

Note: Other suggested activities for encouraging the expression of frustration and anger are -- throwing ice cubes or raw eggs at a tree, or screaming in a pillow, playing with playdoh

SESSION FIVE: FACES

Materials: construction paper, journals

Goal:

- All of us wear different masks or faces with different people, depending on our immediate circumstances. A mask does not mean you are being a phony, it is merely an expression of what you feel comfortable in letting others see in you at the time. When we are grieving, we often try to present a positive face as not to burden others.

Description of Activity:

- Students check-in
- Facilitator describes activity
 - Have your participants draw a picture of a face that represents what they allow most people to see in themselves. Ask them to explain why they are comfortable exposing that part of themselves. As an example: “My face is happy. I feel safe wearing this mask because people are more comfortable around a happy person. A happy person is also more popular.”
 - On the reverse side of the paper, ask students to draw the face (that part of themselves) they do not show to others. Ask them what keeps them from sharing that face with others. As an example: “If I let others see my tears or anger, they will now want to be around me or they may judge me as being weak.”
 - The face or mask we tend to keep ourselves is very often the face that represents a very honest part of who we are. Encourage students to think about taking the risk of sharing this important part of themselves with another. When we have lost a loved one, many of our friends and family already sense the pain and anger that is within us, but are frequently afraid to say anything for fear of making things worse for the bereaved.
 - Letting others know what we need and who we *really* are is a key ingredient to having quality friendships - friendships that are intimate, long lasting and secure. Many people complain of an emptiness inside, feeling that no one really understands them. This emptiness or lonely feeling is something most of us, without realizing it, create for ourselves by not sharing the honesty of who we are. By presenting what we feel people want to see, we risk not being known by others. Instead, others are left knowing our performance rather than our essence.
 - The beauty of this exercise is that, once again, participants realize that they are not alone in the ways they deal with others as they grieve. It is an opportunity to look at their behavior and search for healthier ways to communicate.
- Students check-out

SESSION SIX: STRENGTH/PEACE + MEDITATION

Materials: journals, strength/peace survey, vocab words, youtube

Goal: For students to begin the process of resilience. Introduction of coping strategies

Description of Activity:

- Students check-in
- Facilitator describes activity
 - Students fill out a strength/peace survey and have a discussion with one another
 - Facilitator asks if anyone would like to share out loud
- Facilitator plays youtube video: “Guided Meditation for Grief & Healing”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w8VgqHL8_8
 - Before video, discuss vocab words in video
 - Inquisitive
 - Reside
 - Manifest
 - Pit of your stomach
 - Two or three dimensional
 - Perpetuating
 - Well-up
 - Dissolve
- Students check-out

SESSION SEVEN: MEMORY BOX

Materials: journals, magazines, paper clips, memory box

Goal:

- To begin the process of dealing with grief

Description of Activity

- Students check-in
- Facilitator describes activity
 - Things that may trigger our memories include pictures, songs, smells, being at a specific place, and so forth
 - Have members cut out pictures and/or words from magazines that remind them of the deceased
 - Members share out why they chose a picture for their memory box
- Facilitator instructs members to bring in a picture or written memory of their loved ones, along with some music that reminds them of that person for next week
- Students check-out

SESSION EIGHT: LETTER TO THE DECEASED/LETTER TO YOURSELF

Materials: journals, pencils/pen, paper clips

Goal:

- Writing a letter to the person who died can be helpful in expressing unresolved feelings

Description of Activity

- Students check-in
- Facilitator describes activity
 - When someone dies, we do not always have the opportunity to say “goodbye”
 - Read letter about a 50 year old man saying goodbye to his grandmother for the first time
 - Remind students that grief does not just go away in time
 - If we do not actively acknowledge our feelings of loss and take care of ourselves in the process, our unresolved and confused feelings will continue to enter into other areas of our lives without us realizing it
 - If members are having difficulty writing out the letter, they can use the outline
 - Dear....
 - I remember when you...
 - The hardest part about your death for me is...
 - It would have been nice if....
 - I'm really sorry for...
 - My best time with you was...
 - If you were here right now, I would...
 - Thank you for...
- Students share their letters if comfortable, encouraged to put clip a picture of their loved one on the journal and into the memory box
- Students check-out

SESSION NINE: FORGIVENESS CIRCLE

Materials: handout, journals, post-test

Mission: In order to see posttraumatic growth, the individual needs an active coping style, optimism, perceptions of control over life events, a strong sense of self, as well as the nature of the stressful experience itself

Goal:

- As vulnerabilities may cause individuals to have maladaptive responses to stressful events or crises, the goal is to change perception because the empowered person will heal, but the victimized person will not

Description of Activity

Begin the exercise by reading:

- ◆ Grief is often accompanied by feelings of remorse or regret. It is not uncommon to have thoughts such as:
 - ◆ If I hadn't had that fight with my dad, he wouldn't have had the heart attack.
 - ◆ If I had only paid more attention, maybe I could have said or done something that would have kept my friend from taking her life.
 - ◆ If I hadn't asked my brother to go to the ATM machine to loan me money, he would never have been shot and killed.
 - ◆ I was always jealous of my brother for getting all that attention while he was sick for so many years. Now he is dead! Am I an awful person for feeling that way?
 - ◆ We talked about drinking and driving, but we did it anyway. If I had just been brave enough to say no, she would still be alive.

It seems that we find ourselves thinking of everything we should or shouldn't have said to do. Somehow, we want to take it all back and start over again, but we can't. These feelings of guilt are very natural. You might even feel guilty for being alive, that is called survivor's guilt. Sometimes we may feel darned if we do, darned if we don't. Here are some examples of confused feelings of guilt:

- ◆ I know I need to cry, but I feel so weak and foolish when I do.
- ◆ I want to feel better, but when I started laughing with my friends, I suddenly felt guilty for having a good time.

◆ I hate it that my brother died in a car accident, but I'm glad it wasn't me!

Sometimes it is helpful to share our regrets with others who have lost a loved one. When we share these thoughts, we quickly learn that we are not alone with these uncomfortable feelings.

EXERCISE: Invite the group now to share. Going in a circle, start out by saying, I need to forgive myself for . . . Make it clear you understand that at this time they may not feel ready to let go of the guilt, but expressing their hopes for self-forgiveness can be an important beginning. It is also important before starting the circle to ask each participant, When you share your feelings of guilt, would you like a response from the group or would you simply like to move on to the next person? So often, people with the best intentions try to help “fix” a person who is feeling guilty when all a person really needs to do is let the individual express the feeling. This gives the members of the group an opportunity to make their own decision as to whether or not they want or need a response. The sharing can go around the circle as many times as needed. Remember, anyone can pass.

AS CLOSURE: Have each person write their name and who died on a slip of paper. Put the slips of paper in a basket. Have each person pick a name and write down a strength that they see in that person.

Examples: Joe You are a wonderful listener. Mary You are very courageous. Jim I love your sense of humor. It helps me a lot. At the end of the meeting, have them exchange notes as they leave. In most cases, time does not permit the sharing of their notes and many prefer to keep it private. If you would like, at your next meeting, you can ask how the group felt about the positive notes they received.

Everett Alvarez High School**1900 Independence Blvd, Salinas, CA 93906****PARENT CONSENT FOR COUNSELING PARTICIPATION****To the Guardians of** _____**From:** Wellness Center Department**Re:** Small Group Counseling

Your student has been invited to participate in a grief group. Students are nominated to participate in a small group in a variety of ways, including their attendance, grades, or school personnel recommendation.

The counselor will educate students on posttraumatic growth, readjustment period, self-esteem, healthy expressions of grief/loss, and coping strategies/resources.

Conversations between the student and the counselor are considered confidential. However, there are exceptions to this confidentiality. If a counselor has reason to believe that a student is being abused, neglected or is a danger to himself or others, the counselor has the legal, ethical and professional responsibility to report such concerns to the parents or the appropriate authorities.

This group will meet once a week beginning the week of **February 3rd** for 9 weeks

Please contact us if you **DO NOT** consent for you student to participate.

Email: danny.lee@salinasuhd.org (*Danny Lee, Intervention Specialist*)

Phone: 831-796-7800 ext. 2477

Everett Alvarez High School**1900 Independence Blvd, Salinas, CA 93906****CONSENTIMIENTO DE PADRES PARA PARTICIPACIÓN EN CONSEJERÍA****Para los tutores legales de _____****De parte del:** Centro de Bienestar**Re:** Grupo de Consejería

Su estudiante ha sido invitado para participar en un grupo de duelo. Estudiantes son recomendados por diferentes motivos para participar en el grupo, las diferentes razones incluyen: la falta de asistencia de los estudiantes, calificaciones, o son recomendado por un empleado de la escuela.

El consejero educará a estudiantes en crecimiento postraumático, periodo de reajuste, autoestima, expresiones saludables de dolor/pérdida, y recursos/estrategias de afrontamiento.

Las conversaciones entre el/la estudiante y el consejero son considerados confidencial. Sin embargo, hay excepciones hacia esta confidencialidad. Si un consejero tiene razón de creer que el estudiante está siendo abusado: física, emocional, sexualmente o están siendo descuidados, o es un peligro hacia otros o a él/ella mismo, el consejero tiene la responsabilidad legal, ética, y profesional de reportar tal preocupaciones a los padres o las autoridades apropiadas.

Este grupo se reunirá una vez por semana, empezando la semana del **Febrero 3^{ro}**, por 9 semanas.

Por favor de contactarnos si usted **NO** da consentimiento a su estudiante para participar.

Correo electrónico: danny.lee@salinasuhd.org (*Danny Lee, Especialista de Intervención*)

Teléfono: 831-796-7800 ext. 2477