

Staff and Parent Information Session Notes

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The *Seasons for Growth* program is underpinned by the understanding that grief is a normal and natural human response to all losses, not just bereavement. Other significant losses that children and young people may experience include moving house, state or country, family illness, natural disaster, the loss of pets, etc.

Seasons for Growth aims to teach ways of understanding and coping skills that children and young people can apply to any change and loss experience in their lives, in the present and in the future.

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Seasons for Growth is an education program, not therapy. It provides the opportunity for children and young people to learn some more about the impact of the experiences of change and loss they may be having, and normalises the experience for them – they learn “I’m not the only one”.

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Seasons for Growth is based on the work of J William Worden. Worden is an internationally renowned psychologist, researcher, and author. He believes that by being able to take an active role in their grief experience, people are empowered and given a sense of hope.

Metaphors are a powerful tool for learning. In this case, the rich metaphor of the seasons provides a treasure trove of images, concepts and ideas to draw upon in relation to change within life. This is especially important for children who need concrete learning tools to help them understand abstract concepts and experience (like grief).

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Artwork and music have been highlighted in the 3rd edition, and are key supporting features in the new edition of the program.

Different styles of artwork, design and layout for program materials; and also for accompanying music have been showcased in Level 1-3 for children, and Level 4 for young people to cater for the different needs and interests of each group. Stephen Michael King has done an amazing job illustrating the Level 1-3 manual and journal for children, and Jacob Logos’ stunning artwork provides a thought-provoking backdrop to the program for the young people using Level 4.

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Worden’s tasks of grief have been adapted for use in the *Seasons for Growth* program to better reflect the broad range of losses experienced by children and young people participating in the program. In making use of Worden’s tasks in an educational context, the program provides four learning outcomes as *Seasons for Growth* tasks, which are aligned with the seasons and with specific session content.

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As an evidence based, highly regarded grief education program, *Seasons for Growth* has a unique and important role to play in promoting mental health.

Seasons for Growth is included in the list of programs by the national, school based mental health frameworks (MindMatters and KidsMatter) in Australia. The high quality of *Seasons for Growth* has been affirmed through a 4 star evaluation rating by the Australian Psychological Society on behalf of BeyondBlue, the national provider of MindMatters.

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All children experience grief differently, and most children are 'in and out' of their grief, with many taking comfort in the familiarity and routines of school life. It is important, though, to become aware of the signs that may signal children and young people might not be coping with their grief, and seek additional support for them (and for yourself, if you are in a support role) when necessary.

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Copies of the evaluation are available.

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Relationships with significant others, including parents, care-givers and teachers can provide vital support to children and young people as they adapt to the changes and losses associated with death, separation and divorce.

These questions can be as prompts for a group brainstorm, pair-share, or small group discussions.

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While supporting children as they manage loss and grief in the school setting is a critical part of school life, it is a part that may feel overwhelming. Teachers can be reassured that their professional expertise, coupled with a sensitive and informed approach to grief and loss will most often be enough to provide support to the children in their care. As mentioned earlier, some children and young people may need more structured support, and programs like *Seasons for Growth*, and access to information about counselling and other services can be provided to these children and their families.