



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition December 2013 Issue 82



## Some feelings – talking about grief

### Getting ready

There are gentle, worshipful ways to address topics that we might find uncomfortable speaking of with children. Children have a great capacity to know how to respond instinctively to others experiencing difficult feelings. In a worshipful way, this issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* offers ways to talk and explore with children about the feeling of grief.

Grief is a complex, confusing and messy feeling. Children can feel grief in lots of circumstances. These are not only around death but around loss and separation with regard to friends, family, animals and even favourite or special objects or toys. Grieving is a natural process and for many support, kindness and acknowledgment of the pain will get them through. You may have your own experiences of grief, and if recent, perhaps it is not an appropriate time for you to address this powerful feeling with children, although in the worshipful way it is presented, you might find solace too.

In preparing this session, take time to consider your own thoughts and feelings, and to reflect on your own experiences. If possible, share these with your co-facilitator. It is worth knowing that children of different ages express grief in different ways, and can respond differently from adults.

*Journeys in the Spirit* offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

### Gather

#### Many feelings, all acceptable.

*Resources needed: a rug, cushions if possible, copies of the pictures on Additional Resources 82.A, a candle on a small dish, smaller candles with named stickers on and matches.*

If possible have a door keeper greet children before they enter and just check that they are calm for worship. nother volunteer should be ready sitting calmly on a rug, speaking quietly and greeting each child by name as they sit, and writing their name on a label on one of the smaller candles.

Have pictures of faces and people showing different feelings laid out on the rug. See *Additional Resources 82.A*. Ask children to look at the pictures. Ask a question like – what do you think the people are feeling? Children may want to share their own feelings. When all are present and have looked, remove the pictures. Ask children to sit still and breathe in and out slowly a few times - when all are calm, light a candle, and say "this is to remind us that there is that of God in each of us. Light the named candles – everyone says the name on the candle. Light a candle "for absent friends. Sit quietly for a few minutes in worship.

### Underpinning references

Quaker faith and practice 22.89

*Few things make us feel more inadequate than being faced with another's grief... It helps us to be ready to stand by someone in [their] loss if we know a little of what to expect... Grieving is a necessary and arduous task. It should not be a state but a process*  
Diana Lampen, 1979

# Engage

## The colours of grief.

*Resources: round paper plates for everybody, wax crayons – stubby and ordinary, the pictures from Additional Resource 82.A and 82.B, copies for each child of the feeling cards from Additional Resource 82.C, blu-tak. The plates should be prepared by putting a big 'circle' of wax colouring of nine different colours (yellow, dark blue, light blue, green, red, orange, pink, purple and black) around the edge.*

With the story in this section there is an activity to do before and during the story.

Say that today we are going to talk about the feeling grief. Ask if anyone can say what grief is. Give time to any responses. Acknowledge comments and clarify or explain: grief is not one feeling but many. Grief is a messy, mushed up mix of feelings that is like a very big sad feeling.

Now lay out the feelings pictures from *Additional Resource 82.A*, previously used in Gather. Also lay out the pictures from *Additional Resource 82.B – Things children might grieve for*. Say that there is no right way to feel grief and that different people feel grief, or big sadness, differently. Say that grief is very complicated to describe but that you are going to try. Anybody can feel it and it can be about people, animals or things - indicate the pictures from *Additional Resource 82.B* as you say this. Give each child one of the paper plates, a set of feeling cards copied from *Additional Resource 82.C* and a blob of blutak.

Ask children, "what colour on their plate might the feeling happy be?" Say that there is no right or wrong answer to this - encourage children to do their own. When they have chosen they should stick the happy card next to the colour. Continue by asking children about colours for the other feelings. When all feeling cards are placed, point out the empty circle and say you will come back to it.

**A story about Shanta.** Read the story below – adapt as needed. Each time you name a feeling ask children to put a big mark or blob of the colour they chose for that feeling in the middle of their plate.

"When I was about your age, there was a girl in my class named, Shanta. She was away from school on a blistering, windy Monday. Our teacher, Mr. Slate, told us Shanta's mum had died. I couldn't believe it (shock).

I knew Shanta's mum. She was really nice and always gave Shanta and me chocolate biscuits when I visited. I started to cry (sad) in class. Some of the other children giggled and pointed at me. I was embarrassed to be crying but I was also really angry that some kids didn't seem to care about Shanta and were laughing at me! I wondered how Shanta was feeling.

That evening, I told my mum about Shanta and she asked how I was feeling. I really didn't know. My feelings felt a bit mixed up confused. Mum nodded and gave me a hug. Then mum did a funny thing, she gave me chocolate biscuits! She'd never let me have biscuits before supper!

That night, I couldn't get to sleep. I kept wondering how Shanta was. I thought about Shanta's mum, her big smile and her jokes. But then I thought, "what if my mum dies?" I got really scared and cried. Mum heard me cry and came and gave me a hug.

In the morning, I went to school but Shanta was still away. She wasn't at school all week and I felt really lonely. I sat on the playground bench but when another girl asked me to play I shook my head. I felt funny in my stomach. I watched the kids skipping and laughing and felt they didn't like me abandoned. I wondered, "how could they be play and have fun when Shanta's mum is dead? I was feeling angry again and wanted to yell at them. Shanta came back to school the next week. I was happy to see her. When she saw me, she smiled a little but not much. She didn't talk much that week but we played together again. Skipping fast was our favourite." Now go to the first activity in Respond.

## References & other resources

For Meetings with a grieving child, do speak with an overseer about your programme. Also see *Journeys in the Spirit* children's issue 49: Advice & Query 30 – go to:

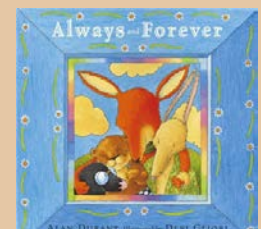
[www.quaker.org.uk/journeys-spirit-49](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeys-spirit-49)

## Quotes in Quaker faith and practice

*Death is but crossing the world* (W Penn) 22.95

*Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity; but, for that reason, it should be most our care to learn it* (W Penn) 22.01

'Always and forever' by Debi Gliori and Alan Durant  
ISBN  
9780552567657



*Additional Resources 82.A, 82.B and 82.C can be found at:*  
[www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## References & other resources

### Quotes in Quaker faith and practice

27.43: The whole of life is sacramental (A.B Brown):

26.04: Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee

### Resources for a collage:

Large paper for back ground, coloured paper to cut out waves, dark clouds, suns rays, other shapes that children think and come up in discussion scissors, markers, glue, gold and silver pens.

For another way to do this whole session see *Additional Resource 82.E*. This is based on approach called 'Way of the Child'.

*Additional Resources 82.D and 82.E* can be found at: [www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## Respond

**Grief feelings happen** - following directly from the story about Shanta.

Acknowledge the mixed up or scribbled colour in the middle of the plate, and remind them grief can be like that: messy feelings all mixed up.

Ask each child to put their plate in front of them them. Encourage children to take a quiet moment to look at each other's "grief plates".

Ask: "I wonder if each grief colour (in centre of the plates) is different."

"I wonder if you have felt one of these feelings."

"I wonder if you ever felt more than one of these feelings together."

"I wonder if there is any of these feelings you could do with out and still have all the feelings you need?"

Give time and spaces to the responses, encourage listening. Keep your responses to each child's comment simple: a nod or "ummm".

In closing, before moving to another activity or to Reflect, (if not already said by a child) acknowledge the different colours chosen for different feelings and the different colours of grief.

.....If children have not made the grief colour plate

Ask children to continue talking or thinking about the feelings identified in Gather. Ask the "wonder questions" above, apart from the first one, and give time for reflection. Then do one or the other activity below.

### The many (biscuit) faces of grief

*Resources: Plain biscuits, cake decorating icing tubes and pens, a variety of small edible cake decorations – jellies, silver balls, raisins, shoe string liquorice – and a paper table cloth.*

Ask children to decorate the biscuits with different feeling faces (after hand washing!). When done, invite children to display them under a sign you or a child has made: "The many faces of grief".



Ask children to look at the feeling faces. Ask them what they would do if a friend was feeling..... and point to a biscuit and encourage discussion, then a different biscuit and so on.

For older children: if you have time and an oven, make pizzas. Use pepperoni and vegetables to make faces. Talk about the feelings while the pizzas bake.

### Sea of Grief - making a collage. See sidebar for resource ideas.

Say that you are all going to help make a big picture about the feeling called grief. Explain or remind children that grief has so many feelings it can be like a swirling, thrashing, tumbling and pounding sea of waves. As you say this lay down some previously cut out wave and dark cloud shapes – children can also cut out more of these. Ask children for suggestions of what they might do for (how they might be kind to) a grieving, a sad friend. See *Additional Resource 82.D* for ideas. As you say this lay out previously cut out sun ray shapes – rays of sunshine and hope. Ask children to use these ideas to make a grief picture, a collage, together. Children then draw or write on each wave and dark cloud, write or draw (in gold and silver pens so it can be seen) one of the feelings of grief. On each sun ray children write or draw what kindness might help a sad person. Children might want to add more to the collage such as boats, birds, land etc. These might emerge as images or ideas from talking about helping.



# Reflect

## The candles and closing worship

When everybody comes back together at the end of the session say something like, 'when we started today we sat quietly together for a little time around a candle. Let's do this again. The quiet can help us think and listen to ourselves, others and God.' Ask everybody to gaze at the candle for a moment, then say, 'we lit this candle to remind us that God is with us and within us. Remember this is so, even as I blow it out.' (Pause and extinguish it).

Continue, "A candle was lit for each child here and for those unable to be with us today, but they remain in our hearts. As this meeting for worship draws to a close, I will extinguish their candle. Join me in saying their name." Then, if your children's meeting joins the adults, remind children "While we join the adults in their worship let us continue our silent worship with them." Ask if anybody would like to talk to the other adults about what the children's meeting has been doing.



## Review

Together with those who have worked with you on this material ask yourselves the following questions:

What was the children's response to this theme?

Were they able to make links to their own lives?

Were the children comfortable talking about personal experiences?

Is there anything that you might need to talk about with parents?

What went well and not so well?

Is there anything that you might do differently another time?

**This issue was written by Eugene Nanning and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. Chris Nickolay wrote the topical activity.**

There are going to be three new series in 2014 - 2015. The first of these is about *Quakers, work and businesses*.

The first in this series is **Issue 83** *Quakers and work*. Available from 6 January 2014.

**Issue 84** is about *Quaker nurserymen & botanists*. Available from 3 February 2014.

**Issue 85** is about *George Cadbury and the production of chocolate*. Available from 3 March 2014.

## Materials available online are:

Current issue additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

Links to other resources and information

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – this time about one group that helps people when there is a big disaster.

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

All these are available at: [www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren)

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# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 82.A

Gather

Pictures of feelings



**Happy**



**Angry**



**Embarrassed**



**Lonely**

**Confused**



**Sad**



**Abandoned**



**Scared**



**Shocked**







# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 82.B

Engage

Things children might grieve for





# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 82C

Engage

Mixed up feelings in grief



<b>Happy</b>	<b>Sad</b>
<b>Angry</b>	<b>Scared</b>
<b>Embarrassed</b>	<b>Lonely</b>
<b>Confused</b>	<b>Abandoned</b>
<b>Shocked</b>	





# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 82.D

Respond

Sea of grief and making a collage



Sad, grieving children need their feelings acknowledged. Let them know you know!

Offer lots of kindness, and fun: it's okay to have fun when grieving. Children dip in and out of sadness, grief: one moment they may be crying, the next they want to go play, watch tv or do something.

Encourage children to think of what their grieving friend likes. Here are some suggestions, but first encourage children to come up with their own ideas.

Some ideas:

- a particular food: could it be made and given to them, or invite them to play and offer the favourite food? Or have a tea party teddy bear picnic (if relevant to age) or keep it simple and make and decorate biscuits or cup cakes (together or to give)
- music: record favourite music, make a download of favourite tunes
- a framed picture: decorate a frame (inexpensive ones from Ikea) draw a picture or use a photo of the children's group that includes the child
- favourite place to visit: organize a visit -- child and grieving friend go together, and child could make an invite and give/send, or give/make something from that place (likes beaches, give a shell, etc)
- favourite movie: get the DVD, set up the living room like a cinema, make some pop corn and watch the movie

Or simply meet up and play together

- in your favourite park/play ground
- enjoy a favourite sport together
- have a picnic outside or make a den inside and have it there
- have a bubble visit: make bubbles and bubble wands (from wire or willow)
- create a balloon zoo or wild safari together: make balloon animals (libraries often have simple instruction books)

Make some cards and over time send/give them (e.g. once a week or month)



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resources 82.E

Respond Another approach to a session on grief



## Quiet Worshipful response – a 'Way of the Child Approach'

- Set out a few rugs around your room to create different creative/reflection/response areas, to give children an opportunity for a personal and private response to the theme of the session or their inner thoughts or feelings.
- On different rugs or low tables, place play dough and nature items (stones, sticks, flowers, etc.). On another rug (or low table), place paints, water, paper towels, brushes and paper. On another rug place drawing and colouring pencils and paper or card.
- Be aware that not all children are comfortable with arts and crafts. So, on another rug in a comfortable corner place books with relevant stories, appropriate stories of Jesus, the period he lived and a few bibles. On another rug, in a basket, some note books – marked 'Journal' and a few pencils, for those who want to Journal, write or draw.
- You might also have other craft areas in the room on rugs or low tables: poem & story making: lined paper and pencils; poster, card or book marker making: coloured card, markers, crayons &/or coloured pencils; a candle to sit and pray, blank calendars, stickers, coloured pencils to decorate a calendar and mark special days; decorative candle for contemplation.
- Whatever 'stations' or areas you set out, depending on the number of people in your group of course, keep the choice to around six different choices.
- Take the children on a calm, quiet spoken tour of the materials. Explain that these are different things they can use. Do not suggest what they might do with the items, except at Journaling, where you can explain children can put their own name on a note book, and that will be theirs to leave here and use at future Meetings. It is for them to write or draw as they feel moved to.
- After the tour, return to the large rug. Tell the children, they can go to one or more of the "stations", if there is space. You may need to remind the children to centre down again, to get themselves quiet and calm as they did earlier. Then invite them to go to a rug that interests them and to quietly and calmly continue their worship. They can change stations.

A couple minutes before calling the children back for Reflect, walk around the room telling them individually, "a couple more minutes". When it is time, be sitting at the rug to welcome them, and ring a quiet bell.