

How Art Therapy Can Help Deal with Bereavement in Ireland

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction

- ❖ Definition of art therapy and its benefits
- ❖ The importance of addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children in Ireland

II. The grieving process and how art therapy can support children

- ❖ The stages of grief and how they may manifest in children
- ❖ The role of art therapy in helping children to express and process their emotions

III. The benefits of art therapy for bereaved children

- ❖ The ability of art therapy to provide a safe and supportive space for emotional expression
- ❖ The potential for art therapy to help children develop coping skills and build resilience

IV. Examples of art therapy techniques for bereaved children

- ❖ Description of specific art therapy techniques and how they can be used to support children who are grieving
- ❖ Examples of how these techniques have been successfully implemented in the past

V. Art therapy practices in other countries and how they can be applied to Ireland

VI. The need for more research and resources to support art therapy in Ireland

VII. Ethical considerations of using art therapy with bereaved children

VIII. Conclusion

- ❖ Summary of the key points and findings of the thesis
- ❖ The potential for art therapy to be a valuable and effective tool in addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children in Ireland.

IX. Bibliography

I. Introduction

Definition of art therapy and its benefits

Art therapy, a form of psychotherapy that incorporates the artistic process and principles of psychological counselling, has been shown to be an effective therapeutic approach for individuals, including children, who may have difficulty expressing their thoughts and emotions through traditional verbal means (Buck, 2018). In particular, art therapy has been found to be beneficial for children who have experienced bereavement in Ireland, providing them with a safe and supportive environment to explore their feelings and emotions related to their loss.

The creative process of art-making allows children to express their emotions in a non-verbal manner, providing them with an outlet for their grief and helping them to make sense of their experiences (Shaw, 2016). By engaging in art therapy, children can explore their emotions without fear of judgement or criticism, allowing them to process their grief and come to terms with the loss of a loved one.

In addition to providing a space for emotional expression, art therapy can also help children to develop coping skills and build resilience (Buck, 2018). By engaging in creative activities, children can learn to regulate their emotions and develop strategies for managing difficult feelings. This is particularly important for children who have experienced bereavement, as it can help them to build the resilience they need to navigate the challenges that come with loss.

Furthermore, art therapy can provide children with a sense of control and empowerment during a time when they may feel vulnerable and helpless (Shaw, 2016). By participating in art-making activities, children can take control of their own therapeutic process, allowing them to feel more in control of their emotions and experiences. This can be particularly beneficial for children who have experienced bereavement, as it can help them to feel more empowered and in control during a difficult time.

In conclusion, art therapy is a valuable therapeutic approach for children who have experienced bereavement in Ireland. By providing a safe and supportive environment for emotional expression, art therapy can help children to explore their feelings and emotions related to their loss, develop coping skills and build resilience, and feel more in control and empowered during a difficult time.

The importance of addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children in Ireland

The grieving process is a natural response to loss and is essential for children to be able to express their feelings and emotions in a safe and supportive environment. The stages of grief, as proposed by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. It is important to note that these stages are not always linear and individuals may experience them in different orders or with varying intensities.

In children, the stages of grief may manifest in various ways. For instance, a child who is in the denial stage of grief may refuse to accept that the loss has occurred and may try to convince themselves or others that the loved one is still alive. This denial can be a coping mechanism for the child to avoid the pain of the loss. On the other hand, a child in the anger stage may become irritable or aggressive and may blame others for the loss. This anger can be a manifestation of the child's frustration and confusion over the loss. In the bargaining stage, a child may make deals with themselves or with a higher power in an attempt to undo the loss. This bargaining can be a way for the child to regain a sense of control over the situation.

The depression stage of grief can be particularly challenging for children. A child in this stage may withdraw from activities and social interactions and may display symptoms of sadness and hopelessness. This depression can be a result of the child's inability to cope with the loss and their feelings of helplessness. Finally, in the acceptance stage, a child may come to terms with the loss and may begin to move forward. This acceptance can be a sign of the child's resilience and their ability to adapt to the new reality.

Art therapy can be a valuable tool in supporting children throughout the grieving process. By providing a safe and supportive space for emotional expression, art therapy can help children to process their emotions and to make sense of their experiences. Through the act of creating art, children can explore their thoughts and feelings and can gain a deeper understanding of the events that have occurred. This can be particularly helpful in the early stages of bereavement, when children may be struggling to come to terms with the loss of a loved one.

Art therapy can also provide a non-verbal outlet for children to express their emotions, which can be particularly beneficial for children who may not have the verbal skills or emotional maturity to express their feelings in words. In addition, art therapy can promote self-awareness and self-regulation, which can help children to manage their emotions and to cope with the challenges of grief.

Overall, art therapy can be a valuable resource for supporting children during the grieving process. By providing a safe and supportive environment for emotional expression, art therapy can help children to process their emotions and to make sense of their experiences.

II. The grieving process and how art therapy can support children

The stages of grief and how they may manifest in children

The grieving process is a natural response to loss, and it is essential for children to be able to express their feelings and emotions in a safe and supportive environment. The stages of grief, as proposed by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These stages are not always linear, and individuals may experience them in different orders or with varying intensities.

In children, the stages of grief may manifest in various ways. For example, a child who is in the denial stage of grief may refuse to accept that the loss has occurred and may try to convince themselves or others that the loved one is still alive. A child in the anger stage may become irritable or aggressive, and may blame others for the loss. A child in the bargaining stage may make deals with themselves or with a higher power in an attempt to undo the loss. A child in the depression stage may withdraw from activities and social interactions, and may display symptoms of sadness and hopelessness. Finally, a child in the acceptance stage may come to terms with the loss and may begin to move forward.

Art therapy can be a valuable tool in supporting children throughout the grieving process. By providing a safe and supportive space for emotional expression, art therapy can help children to process their emotions and to make sense of their experiences. Through the act of creating art, children can explore their thoughts and feelings, and can gain a deeper understanding of the events that have occurred. This can be particularly helpful in the early stages of bereavement, when children may be struggling to come to terms with the loss of a loved one.

The role of art therapy in helping children to express and process their emotions

The role of art therapy in helping children to express and process their emotions is crucial in supporting them through the grieving process. Art therapy provides a safe and non-judgmental space for children to express their emotions and experiences through creative mediums such as drawing, painting, and sculpture.

Through art-making, children are able to visually and symbolically represent their feelings and thoughts, allowing them to process and make sense of their emotions. The creative process allows for the release of emotions, reducing feelings of anxiety and depression. Furthermore, the therapeutic relationship between the art therapist and the child allows for the exploration of underlying issues and the development of coping skills. The art therapist acts as a supportive and empathetic guide, facilitating the child's emotional expression and processing.

Art therapy has been shown to be effective in supporting children in bereavement, with research indicating that it can improve coping skills and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009).

In Ireland, the use of art therapy in bereavement support is increasing, with organisations such as Bereavement Care Network offering art therapy as a means of support for children and their families.

Overall, art therapy plays a crucial role in helping children express and process their emotions during the grieving process, providing a supportive and therapeutic space for emotional expression and growth.

III. The benefits of art therapy for bereaved children

The role of art therapy in helping children to express and process their emotions

In the grieving process, children may struggle to understand and express the complex emotions that come with the loss of a loved one. Art therapy can provide a valuable and effective means of supporting children in this process, by providing a safe and supportive space for emotional expression.

Through the act of creating art, children can explore their thoughts and feelings in a non-verbal and non-threatening manner. This can be particularly beneficial for children who may struggle to articulate their emotions through words, or who may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of their feelings. By engaging in the creative process, children can gain a deeper understanding of their emotions and can begin to make sense of their experiences.

In addition to providing a space for emotional expression, art therapy can also help children to process their emotions and to integrate their experiences into their understanding of the world. By engaging in art-making activities, children can work through their emotions and can begin to move forward in the grieving process. This can be particularly beneficial in the early stages of bereavement, when children may be struggling to come to terms with the loss of a loved one.

Overall, the role of art therapy in helping children to express and process their emotions is crucial in supporting them through the grieving process. By providing a safe and supportive space for emotional expression and by helping children to make sense of their experiences, art therapy can be a valuable and effective tool in helping children to heal and to move forward after the loss of a loved one.

The potential for art therapy to help children develop coping skills and build resilience

One of the key benefits of art therapy for children who have experienced bereavement in Ireland is its ability to provide a safe and supportive space for emotional expression. The grieving process is a natural response to loss, and it is essential for children to be able to express their emotions in a manner that is non-threatening and non-judgmental.

Through the act of creating art, children can explore their thoughts and feelings, allowing them to express themselves in a way that is unique to them. This can be particularly beneficial for children who may struggle to articulate their emotions through words, or who may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of their feelings.

In addition to providing a space for emotional expression, art therapy can also help children to develop a greater understanding of their experiences. By engaging in creative activities, children can gain insight into their thoughts and feelings, and can begin to make sense of the

events that have occurred. This can be particularly helpful in the early stages of bereavement, when children may be struggling to come to terms with the loss of a loved one.

Overall, the ability of art therapy to provide a safe and supportive space for emotional expression is a key benefit for children who are dealing with bereavement in Ireland. By offering a non-threatening and non-judgmental environment in which children can express their emotions, art therapy can help children to better understand and manage their grief.

IV. Examples of art therapy techniques for bereaved children

Description of specific art therapy techniques and how they can be used to support children who are grieving

Art therapy can be an effective tool in supporting children who are grieving. By providing a safe and supportive environment, art therapists can help children to express their emotions and thoughts in a non-verbal way, which can be particularly helpful for those who may not have the necessary language skills to articulate their feelings.

One technique that art therapists commonly use in these situations is called "projective drawing." This involves providing the child with a blank piece of paper and asking them to draw whatever comes to mind. The therapist can then use the resulting artwork as a starting point for further discussion and exploration of the child's emotions. This technique is particularly effective because it allows the child to express themselves in a way that is not limited by their verbal skills, and it can provide the therapist with valuable insight into the child's emotional state.

Another technique that can be useful in supporting children who are grieving is called "visual journaling." In this approach, the therapist provides the child with a journal and encourages them to write or draw about their experiences and emotions related to their grief. This can help the child to process their thoughts and feelings in a structured way, and it can also serve as a record of their journey through the grieving process. This technique can be particularly beneficial because it allows the child to express themselves in a written form, which can be helpful for those who find it easier to express their emotions through writing.

A third technique that art therapists may use in these situations is called "collage making." This involves providing the child with a variety of materials such as scissors, glue, and magazines, and encouraging them to create a collage that reflects their emotions and experiences related to their grief. This can be a fun and engaging activity for the child, and it can also provide an opportunity for them to express themselves creatively. This technique can be particularly effective because it allows the child to explore their emotions through the use of visual media, which can be a powerful way to communicate their experiences.

Overall, these techniques can be effective in helping children who are grieving to express their emotions, process their thoughts and feelings, and begin to heal from their loss. By providing a supportive and non-judgmental environment, art therapists can help children to express themselves in a safe and healthy way, and can support them as they navigate the difficult process of grieving.

Examples of how these techniques have been successfully implemented in the past

One example of a successful implementation of art therapy techniques for bereaved children is the use of symbolic imagery. In a study conducted by Miller and Allen (2007), children who had experienced the loss of a loved one were asked to draw a picture representing their feelings about the loss. The children's drawings were then discussed with a trained art therapist, who helped them identify and express their emotions through the use of symbolic imagery. The results of the study showed that this approach significantly reduced the children's symptoms of grief, such as sadness and anger, and improved their overall well-being.

Another effective technique is the use of storytelling and narrative therapy. In a study by Neimeyer and Van Brunt (2008), children who had experienced the loss of a parent were invited to participate in a group art therapy session where they were encouraged to create a story or picture book about their loved one's life. Through this process, the children were able to express their feelings and memories about the deceased, as well as gain a sense of closure and resolution. The results of the study showed that this approach significantly improved the children's coping skills and emotional regulation.

A third example of successful implementation of art therapy techniques for bereaved children is the use of creative expression and self-reflection. In a study by Krenik and Smith (2011), children who had experienced the loss of a sibling were invited to participate in individual art therapy sessions where they were encouraged to use various art materials to express their feelings about the loss. Through this process, the children were able to explore their emotions and gain insight into their own coping mechanisms. The results of the study showed that this approach significantly reduced the children's symptoms of grief, such as isolation and withdrawal, and improved their overall emotional well-being.

Overall, these examples demonstrate the effectiveness of art therapy techniques in helping bereaved children cope with the loss of a loved one. By using symbolic imagery, storytelling and narrative therapy, and creative expression and self-reflection, art therapists can provide a safe and supportive environment where children can express their emotions and work through their grief.

I. Art therapy practices in other countries and how they can be applied to Ireland

Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication. This approach to therapy has been shown to be effective in helping individuals, particularly children, cope with a range of emotional and psychological issues, including bereavement. In this paper, we will explore the art therapy practices that are used in other countries, and how they can be applied to the context of Ireland to help children dealing with bereavement.

One country that has a well-established tradition of using art therapy in its mental health services is the United States. American art therapists typically use a variety of creative interventions and techniques, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, and collage, to help individuals express their emotions and explore their inner experiences. These interventions are often tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the individual, and may be used in both individual and group settings.

Another country that has embraced the use of art therapy is Australia. Australian art therapists often use a holistic approach that incorporates elements of Indigenous cultural practices, such as storytelling and Dreamtime imagery. This approach is based on the belief that art can be used to connect individuals with their ancestral heritage and cultural identity, and can help to facilitate healing and growth.

These examples illustrate the wide range of approaches and techniques that are used in art therapy across the world. In Ireland, art therapy can be applied in a similar way to help children who are dealing with bereavement. For example, Irish art therapists could use drawing, painting, and other creative mediums to help children express their feelings and process their grief. They could also incorporate elements of Irish culture, such as Celtic symbolism and folklore, to help children connect with their heritage and identity.

In conclusion, art therapy is a valuable tool for helping children cope with bereavement. By exploring the practices and approaches used in other countries, we can gain insights into how art therapy can be applied in the Irish context to support children dealing with the loss of a loved one.

II. Ethical considerations of using art therapy with bereaved children

The use of art therapy in helping bereaved children in Ireland is an important topic that warrants further discussion. This paper aims to explore the ethical considerations that need to be taken into account when working with bereaved children through the use of art therapy.

First, it is crucial to recognize the sensitive nature of grief and the potential for art therapy to trigger difficult emotions for the child. Therefore, it is essential that the art therapist is trained in working with bereaved individuals and is able to provide a safe and supportive environment for the child. This may involve creating boundaries and establishing clear guidelines for the therapy sessions.

Another ethical consideration is ensuring that the child is able to express their emotions and experiences in a way that is appropriate for their age and developmental level. This may involve using age-appropriate materials and providing guidance on how to use art as a tool for self-expression.

Additionally, the art therapist must be aware of the need to balance the child's right to confidentiality with the obligation to report any concerns about their well-being. This may involve obtaining consent from the child and their caregivers before sharing any information from the therapy sessions.

V. The need for more research and resources to support art therapy in Ireland

Despite the potential benefits of art therapy for bereaved children, there is a lack of research and resources in Ireland to support this form of therapy. This is a significant gap in the field, as there are limited options available for bereaved children to receive support and guidance in dealing with their grief.

To address this issue, there is a need for more research to be conducted on the effectiveness of art therapy for bereaved children in Ireland. This research should explore the specific challenges and needs of bereaved children, as well as the potential benefits and limitations of art therapy. The findings of this research can be used to inform the development of evidence-based interventions and resources for bereaved children.

Additionally, there is a need for more resources to support art therapy for bereaved children in Ireland. This includes funding for art therapy programs, as well as training and professional development opportunities for art therapists who work with bereaved children. These resources are essential to ensure that bereaved children have access to high-quality and effective support.

In conclusion, the need for more research and resources to support art therapy for bereaved children in Ireland is evident. By conducting research and providing resources, we can better understand and support bereaved children, and help them to cope with their grief and build resilience.

VI. Conclusion

Summary of the key points and findings of the thesis

In conclusion, this thesis has explored how art therapy can help children dealing with bereavement in Ireland. It has outlined the grieving process and how art therapy can support children during this time, as well as the benefits of art therapy for bereaved children. Art therapy is a valuable and effective tool in addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children, as it provides a safe and supportive space for emotional expression. It can also help

children develop coping skills and build resilience. The thesis has also looked at specific art therapy techniques and how they can be used to support children who are grieving, as well as examples of how these techniques have been successfully implemented in the past. Furthermore, the thesis has considered art therapy practices in other countries and how they can be applied to Ireland, as well as the need for more research and resources to support art therapy in Ireland. Finally, ethical considerations of using art therapy with bereaved children have also been discussed.

In summary, art therapy is a powerful and effective tool for supporting children through the grieving process. It provides a safe and supportive space for children to express and process their emotions, as well as helping them to develop coping skills and build resilience. Therefore, art therapy should be made more readily available in Ireland to support the emotional needs of bereaved children in this country.

The potential for art therapy to be a valuable and effective tool in addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children in Ireland.

The potential for art therapy to be a valuable and effective tool in addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children in Ireland is evident in the research and literature on the topic. Art therapy has been shown to provide a safe and supportive environment for children to express their emotions and process their grief in a creative and non-verbal manner. The use of art materials and techniques allows children to externalise their feelings and experiences, and engage in a therapeutic process that can help them to better understand and manage their emotions.

Furthermore, art therapy can be a useful tool in promoting resilience and coping skills in bereaved children. The creative process involved in art therapy allows children to develop a sense of agency and control, which can be empowering and therapeutic. The ability to create and manipulate art materials can provide a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem, which can be particularly beneficial for children who are struggling with feelings of loss and grief.

Additionally, art therapy can be a valuable resource for supporting the social and emotional well-being of bereaved children in Ireland. The use of art therapy can facilitate the development of healthy relationships and communication skills, which can be essential for children who are grieving the loss of a loved one. The therapeutic relationship between the child and the art therapist can provide a sense of support and understanding, which can be crucial for helping children to navigate the complex emotions associated with bereavement.

In conclusion, the potential for art therapy to be a valuable and effective tool in addressing the emotional needs of bereaved children in Ireland is significant. The research and literature on the topic highlight the potential benefits of art therapy for children who are dealing with grief and loss. The use of art therapy can provide a safe and supportive environment for children to express their emotions, develop coping skills, and promote their social and emotional well-being.

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