

Supporting a bereaved pupil – Creative ideas for capturing memories

An activity can support a child to communicate. Engagement in an activity often negates the need for a child to have eye contact and may help free them up to share their thoughts, feelings and memories. It also affords you an opportunity to work alongside the child to support them

Memory box

Choose a suitable box or tin with a lid – this could be a box file, printer paper box, old gift box or biscuit tin. You could even make it out of cardboard or wood.

Encourage the pupil to personalise it and decorate it themselves.

Allow them to fill it with their own special memories, these may be items or memories written on pieces of material or paper

Things you might include:

- Photographs (if available); the pupil could draw a picture; write the memory as a story, poem, song, comic strip etc; cut a picture from a magazine or print one out to show a favourite place, food, colour, sports team, film, band, type of music, hobby or interest.
- Explore ideas of objects which they could put in the box to help them remember their special person.
- Actual items, replicas or pictures – such as a piece of fabric from an item of clothing (or a similar fabric to represent it), a recipe for a food they enjoyed, the title of a book/film/TV programme they shared together, letters to tell their special person what they are doing or how they are feeling.
- Abstract objects which could be chosen by the pupil to represent a particular memory or assigned to a significant meaning for the pupil – these could be gems, coloured stickers, pebbles, pieces of ribbon, buttons, feathers etc.

Memory Book

Use a scrapbook, ring binder, photograph album or make one from pieces of sugar paper.

The pupil can personalise it and decorate the front cover.

If photographs are available these could be stuck in – pupils could write additional details, thoughts or comments or an adult could scribe if necessary.

Its useful to include a large envelop for inclusion of special items which cannot be stick down

What to include?

- Pictures drawn of special memories/days shared with special person.
- Poems or stories about the person, a specific memory or about how much they are missed.
- Letters written to the person.
- Pieces of artwork or collages made in school which the bereaved pupil may want to keep in their scrapbook.
- A memory cloud made up of words associated with the special person

E-Memory Store

- Consider collating memories electronically – using photographs and other electronic memories – messages, emails, pictures etc. These could be animated
- Additional content such as messages, letters, pictures or memories could be added. These could be stored or used to create an image or film montage.
- It is important that these memories are backed up and that all relevant policies are adhered to.

Craft activities for memory capturing

Memory bracelet – make a ‘friendship bracelet’ by plaiting together coloured threads. Each thread could represent a different memory or special quality of the person who has died.

Pom-pom – create a small pom-pom using different colour/texture wool again representing different memories. This pom-pom can also act as a small fidget toy as well as a reminder of the person who died.

Weaving – weaving different threads representing different memories to create a small wall-hanging piece of art. Offering a selection of items to incorporate into the design can add to the detail and give individual meaning to the final piece. Weaving natural materials through some twine or grasses can make this an outdoor activity.

Dream-catcher – create one of these colourful pieces in memory of a person who has died. Originally created by tribes of Native Americans using natural materials, these were hung above the beds of family members, particularly children. The belief is that all sorts of dreams get caught in the web of the dream catcher but only the good ones can pass through and slide down the feathers to the sleeper below. Bad dreams become tangled in the protective net and are held until morning, when they burn up in the sunlight. The basis for a dream catcher can be as simple as a thin twig or flexible wire which can be shaped into a circle or cut out the rim of a paper plate. Wool or twine is traditionally knotted in an intricate pattern but can be simply wound around the frame to create the ‘web’. Using natural resources, this could make a great outdoor activity.

The activity may be used to focus on a dream for the future or a goal they wish to achieve.

Worry dolls – According to legend, children in Guatemala tell their worries and fears to the Worry Dolls and place them under their pillow when they go to sleep at night. The doll ‘looks after’ the worry or problem during the night, so the child can sleep peacefully.

Dolls can be made by simply wrapping coloured wool around lolly sticks, pipe cleaners or sticks. As an alternative, small pom-pom pets or tassel dolls can be created with wool or fine thread or even cut out of paper and coloured in.

As they create their own worry dolls, children and young people can acknowledge their own feelings and share any worries they may have. Adults can help pupils to identify ‘big’ worries or issues and support them when they need additional help.

A memory comfort object – Sewing something special to the inside of a piece of clothing or into a pocket can be a discrete reminder for a bereaved pupil. This could be a button, small swatch of fabric or piece of ribbon from a piece of clothing owned by the person who died, or it could be one of these items chosen by the bereaved pupil to represent a special memory.