

## Naming loss and celebrating milestones

# Session 1: Loss

One of the most important concepts for a child or young person who is experiencing loss or grief to understand is that the entire range and complexity of their feelings is okay and expected. Encourage children and young people to talk about how they are feeling and let them know that this is a journey and process, and it will take time to heal. The only way to get through the process is by experiencing those feelings, even though they are uncomfortable. Giving a space for children and young people to share their emotions and learn to express them is part of a journey of building resilience.

### Activity 1: A tangled ball of loss

All you need is A4 paper and markers, crayons or colored pencils.

- 1) Ask the child/young person to create a list down the left-hand side of the paper of things they feel they have lost or have felt sad about during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, they might want to write about missing the end of their last year at primary school or not taking exams, not celebrating birthdays with loved ones, the death of a family member, not being able to meet friends, etc.
- 2) On the right-hand side ask them to write each emotion they felt (for example, anger, emptiness, loneliness) in a different colour.
- 3) Then ask them to create their own 'tangled ball of grief' by scribbling in a circle, using each colour that represented one of their emotions, until they have a big circle shape that looks like an elastic band ball, representing a big knot of all their emotions.
- 4) Explain that this is what it can feel like if all our emotions are jumbled together and we can't identify what it is we are feeling.
- 5) Encourage the group to look at each of the jumbled colours and reflect on the emotion each colour represents.

- 6) Return to the list of things they felt they lost during the Covid-19 pandemic. Take one of the things at a time and circle each with the colours that represent the emotions they feel about the loss.
- 7) Encourage the group to talk and share a little about what the loss was and what emotions they felt or feel.

## **Activity 2: What can I do with a feeling?**

The activity above helps the group to think about what they have lost and how they feel about it. This activity will help them to think through what to do with the emotion and feeling associated with it.

For this activity you will need an A4 piece of paper and pens. Split the page into eight squares. In each square write one of the emotions expressed in Activity 2 and the following unfinished sentences:

- 1) This emotion makes me...
- 2) One thing I can do to help me feel differently...

Then ask the children and young people to complete the sentences in their own words.

## **Activity 3: Who can support me?**

This activity is about realising who is around you who can offer support. It shows that, even though we may feel isolated, there are people we can talk to or be with.

You will need a piece of paper and markers, crayons or colored pencils.

- 1) Ask each person to write their name in their favourite colour in the middle of the paper.
- 2) Then, choosing different colours, ask them to write around their name the names of people or pets that they are connected to and who care about them. They can choose colours that represent the person or pet or can use different styles of writing.
- 3) Depending on the age and developmental level of the group, you may need to help with writing the names or ask prompting questions such as
  - What about family who don't live with you?
  - What about the people who care for you?
  - What about people at school?

- What about friends?
- What about neighbours?
- What about people at church?
- What about people on your sports team or in your youth group?

Questions to explore:

- 1) What colours did you choose for each of the people and why?
- 2) What does it feel like to be surrounded by all these people?

Encourage the group to keep their art work, perhaps folded up in their phone case or stuck on the back of their bedroom door.

### **Activity 4: A safe place sculpture**

You will need paper, newspaper and magazines and glue.

Ask the children/young people to create a 3D sculpture, using the newspaper and glue, of a place where they feel safe and comfortable. They can cut out images from the magazines that make them smile or give them warm or happy feelings and glue these to their sculpture.