



Quil Ceda Tulalip

5/26/2021

Dear Kindergarten Families,

It is with deep regret that we inform you about a recent loss to our school community. On May 19, 2021, Celeste Alderete one of our music therapy interns passed away. She was working in our kindergarten classrooms and throughout our school for the last few months- creating meaningful connections and sharing her love of music with our students. This loss is sure to raise many emotions, concerns, and questions for our entire school, especially our students.



Marysville School District has a Crisis Intervention Team made up of professionals trained to help with the needs of students, parents, and school personnel at difficult times such as this. At Quil Ceda Tulalip, we have school counselors available for any student who may need or want help or any type of assistance surrounding this loss. We encourage you, as parents, to also feel free to use our resources.

The music therapist who was working with Celeste would like to inform our kindergarten students, and process loss with an age-appropriate song at the Friday Kindergarten meeting on June 4, 2021. If this is something you do not wish for your child to participate in, we understand and would love to accommodate you. Please call our school counselor Marysa Sylvester prior to this meeting at 360-965-3146.

In addition to processing this loss at school, we have enclosed some information that may be useful to you in helping your child at home.

We are saddened by the loss to our school community and will make every effort to help you and your child as needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah-Marie Boerner".

Sarah-Marie Boerner
Quil Ceda Tulalip Principal



What to expect at different ages

While everyone grieves differently, there are some behaviors and emotions commonly expressed by children depending on their developmental level. A child's developmental level is influenced by more than just their actual age. Trauma, including grief, and a variety of life challenges can inform where a child is along the spectrum of development. These stages are not rigid and a child might show a mix of responses from more than one developmental stage.

Children, no matter what age, find consistency, routine, and flexibility to be helpful.

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5 to 8 years

Children this age are exploring their independence and trying tasks on their own. They are very concrete thinkers, with a tendency towards magical/fantasy thoughts.

Concept of death/loss

School-age children often still see death as reversible. They can also feel responsible and worry that their wishes or thoughts caused the person to die or leave. They may say things like: "It's my fault. I was mad and wished she'd go away."

Common responses to grief

- Increased anxiety, including concerns about safety and abandonment
- Regressive behaviors — may need help with tasks they've already learned
- Disrupted sleep, changes in eating habits
- Short periods of strong reaction, mixed with acting as though nothing happened
- Repetitive questions — How? Why? Who else?
- Nightmares
- Behavior changes: high/low energy, kicking/hitting
- Physical complaints: stomachaches, headaches, body pain

Ways to help

- Offer lots of physical and emotional nurturance. As kids get older their need for nurturing may look different — or turn out to be just the same as when they were two. Try to be flexible and creative in meeting their needs.
- Explain the death or change honestly using concrete language. "Daddy's heart stopped working." Use the real word for what has happened (died, divorced, deployed, incarcerated). Avoid euphemisms such as gone, passed on, lost.
- Keep it simple and let their questions lead the way in sharing more information and details.
- Be prepared for repetitive questions. Offer consistent responses, but also phrase things a little differently or add additional information as needed.
- Provide opportunities for big energy and creative play.
- Give choices whenever possible. "Your room needs to be cleaned. Would you like to do it tonight or tomorrow morning?"



10 for 10

Ten Activities for when emotions run high

Children's grief can often look like "big energy". Big energy is a way children express different emotions and is an important part of play. Hitting, kicking, zoning out, not listening, and yelling are some examples of what big energy can look like. Our goal is to help children identify what they are feeling and then find ways to safely express them. This teaches them that it's okay to have strong emotions. Here are several ideas for helping children express and manage big energy that can be done either at home or school. You don't need to purchase anything special for these activities, many items can be found at home or in the classroom — get creative!

You can use this explanation sheet along with the 10 for 10 worksheet that children can use to pick an activity to express "big energy." Adults have "big energy" too, so don't forget to do some of these activities for yourself! Note: While choices are always encouraged to empower grieving kids, sometimes their elevated emotional state is better served by an adult choosing instead. If this is the case, you can refer to the Zones of Regulation sheet to match color-coded activities with children's emotional and physical state.

10 for 10

Ten Activities for when emotions run high

Use an "angry box"

Help children build an "angry box" filled with items that they can use to safely express their anger. Items may be: a pillow to yell into, newspaper to shred, empty plastic bottles to stomp on, bean bags to throw, bubble wrap to pop, a timer to set for doing jumping jacks.

Smell the flower, blow out the candle

Ask children to imagine they are smelling a flower on the inhale and blowing out a candle on the exhale. They can hold a finger up in front of their mouth and nose as a prompt.

I spy

Invite children to "Find 5" things of certain groupings ("Find me 5 red things" "Find me 5 soft things") and then drop the number down to 3 ("Find me 3 things that are orange").

Move

Do 5 jumping jacks or push-ups

Take the stage

Pull out puppets, stuffed animals, or dolls and ask children to tell you a story about what they are thinking and feeling.

Dance party!

Invite children to dance out anger, sadness, happiness, or whatever they are feeling in the moment.

Choose your own

Choice is really important for grieving children. Ask them what activity they think would be helpful for them.

Music

Play a calming song and invite children to slowly sit or lie down to listen.

Connect

Invite children to fill out the "People who like me" sheet. This can be brought into the Cozy Corner for self-soothing and reassurance.

Cozy Corner

Create an area in the classroom or at home that kids help design with comforting items.



Zones of Regulation



Red Zone: Intense Emotions

- Anger/rage
- Very scared
- Explosive behavior
- Inconsolable
- Extreme happiness
- Looks like:
 - Lack of reasoning
 - Destroying class/bedroom
 - Throwing



Yellow Zone: Elevated Emotions

- Frustrated
- Excited
- Silly
- Have the wiggles
- Nervous
- Looks like:
 - Hunched shoulders
 - Raised voice
 - Difficulty listening/responding to directions



Green Zone: Optimal Learning

- Calm
- Able to connect
- Alert
- Focused
- Ready to learn
- Looks like:
 - Relaxed shoulders
 - Eye contact
 - Wants to engage



Blue Zone: Feeling Down

- Sad
- Low energy
- Sleepy
- Disinterested
- Moving slowly
- Looks like:
 - Not wanting to play
 - Crying
 - Stomach aches/headaches

