

Helping a Child Cope with Loss by Using Grief Therapy

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Abstract

This paper describes a case study of the application of ideas and practices from grief therapy in eight sessions of work with a child by integrating the art and play elements. The social worker helped the client to go through four tasks suggested by Worden (1991) for handling grief, which consist of accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing, and emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life. Excerpts from the transcription of the different sessions are included to demonstrate the positive changes of client's mood and behaviours.

Keywords: Grief therapy; Child; Use of art; Use of play; Death and loss

Introduction

In Hong Kong grief therapy is commonly applied to help the elderly prepare for death and dying as most deaths are among older adults (Chan & Chow, 2006). In addition, the elderly may face loss and death with advancing age; grief therapy is recommended to grieve the old people nearing the end of life (Cheng, Lo, Chan, & Kwan, 2010; Miller, 2012). Although there are some resources or materials in teaching significant others to grieve for children when coping with death and loss (Chan & Chow, 2006), there is a lack of a therapeutic intervention approach in helping children tackle the death and loss issue as childhood traumatic grief has not yet been included in the DSM-IV (Cohen, Mannarino, & Staron, 2006; Prigerson & Jacobs, 2001) and talking about death to children is taboo in Chinese culture (Chan & Chow, 2006). Death and loss are inevitable issues that come in different stages of one's life. Affective and behavioural responses that disturb functioning may occur when one is suffering from

the grieving process (Brown & Goodman, 2005; Cohen and Mannarino, 2004; Cohen, Mannarino, Greenberg, Padlo, & Shipley, 2002; Layne et al., 2001). Children may also have different reactions and responses due to the death and loss, such as separation anxiety, impaired ability to make emotional attachments, sadness, anger, guilt, shame, depression, and despair, problem with control issues, diminished developmental energy, etc. (Jarratt, 1994).

Grief is a natural response to death and loss, which has four general categories including: emotional response, physical sensations, altered cognitions, and behaviours. Grief is fundamentally an emotional response to death and loss, such as loneliness, fear, sadness, anxiety, anger, mistrustfulness, guilt, etc. (Barbato & Irwin, 1992). Apart from emotional disturbances, physical symptoms, such as tight feelings in the throat and chest, oversensitivity to noise, breathlessness, muscular weakness and lack of energy are responses of grief (Barbato & Irwin, 1992). In addition, persistent maladaptive thoughts may trigger negative emotions that intensify the depressed and anxious feelings (Worden, 1991). Common behaviours associated with grief are crying, disturbances in sleep, altered appetite, absent-mindedness, social withdrawal, dreams of the deceased, avoidance behaviour, etc. (Worden, 1991).

Play therapy is a well-established and popular mode of treatment for children (Schaefer, 1993). Play empowers children to have power and control to practise problem solving and master new experiences, ideas, and concerns (Schaefer & Mehendze, 2012). The use of play has many therapeutic powers that encourage children to communicate verbal, nonverbally, in a symbolic way (Schaefer, 1993;; Webb, 2003). Besides, it helps build a working relationship with children, especially the children who are unfamiliar with verbal expression and show resistance to articulate their feelings and issues (Haworth, 1964). Additionally, play therapy can be especially helpful with younger children during the grieving process as a social worker can easily interact with the child by using toys and games (; Webb, 2003). Moreover, arts therapies support children in the sharing and healing of their experiences with a death loss (Philpott, 2013; Williams & Lent, 2008) and it also offers opportunities to help explore hidden feelings and express grief emotions through expressive arts activities like creative painting, old photos, and memorabilia (Cheng et al., 2010; Kim, 2010). Children also respond well to art therapy since they

can express themselves and conceptualize their thoughts through drawing (Brandell, 1998).

In order to fulfil the research gap, a study integrating grief therapy with the use of art and play is conducted to give some insights to work with children experiencing death and loss. The following is a case study of eight counselling interviews with a primary one student having emotional problems due to losses. CYS was a six-year-old girl referred to the school social worker. It is because her mother was concerned about CYS's emotions and self-deteriorating behaviours; thus, her mother approached the class teacher to seek help. In order to help CYS to cope with the loss, the social worker integrated grief therapy with the use of art and play.

Case Background

CYS is a six-year-old student who has several grief responses due to the death of her grandfather and separation from her grandmother. Before receiving primary school education, the primary caregivers of CYS were her grandfather and grandmother. Due to the death of the grandfather and the sickness of her grandmother, CYS's mother recently took over the nurturing and caring duty. The relationship between CYS and her parents is not as close as the grandparents because CYS explained that her parents seldom visit and rarely took care of her in early life. The social worker has assessed the emotional state and cognitive process during the case intake. It was discovered that CYS's emotional state was not stable. After the death of her grandfather, CYS revealed that she cried several times due to her grandfather's death and the separation from her grandmother. She also felt upset and sadness about the situation. She dreamt about her grandfather and described that her grandfather always disappeared suddenly in her dream. In addition, the emotion might have certain influences on her performance in school, for example, attentiveness in class. In addition, CYS is comparatively mature than other children her age. During the age of six, children move into the concrete operational stage and experiencing a reduction of egocentricity and an increased capacity for abstract reasoning (Piaget, 1970). CYS knew that her grandfather had passed away due to illness and over-drinking. Although she understood that death is irreversible and inevitable, she did not have a clear and comprehensive concept about death.

Intervention and Assessments

A total of eight interviews were conducted with the client with the treatment goal of helping her to cope with the loss – the death of her grandfather. The social worker used grief therapy as the main intervention approach and supplemented with the use of play and art. The social worker used four formal counselling sessions to help CYS to deal with the problem. At the beginning stage, the social worker tried to identify the content of those losses and understand the emotions related to the issues by using storytelling. The social worker adopted the use of art to help CYS recognize different feelings and cope with negative emotions. The social worker worked together with CYS to make a “Goodbye, Cookie Jar” and “Goodbye and Hellos Book” to cope with the loss. The social worker also helped CYS to examine the coping process and to transfer the learning from the sessions in coping with the separation from the social worker during the termination process. Overall, the social worker believes her intervention successfully helped the client deal with the loss issue.

Grief Therapy

Grief is a reaction to loss that can encompass a range of feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, and is experienced differently by each person (Walsh-Burke, 2006). Worden (1991) suggested four tasks for handling grief, which consist of accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing, and emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life. The social worker adopted these concepts for helping and facilitating the client, CYS, to overcome the loss.

Session 1 and session 2: To accept the reality of loss

In session one the social worker helped CYS to reminisce the death of her grandfather and understand the change of emotions due to the loss. The social worker tried to invite CYS to experience the loss through drawings and creating a loss map in order to help CYS identify the content of the loss. After drawing the loss map, the social worker invited CYS to tell her story. CYS told the social worker that the grandfather took care of her. The grandfather always took her to the park and accompanied her to go and leave the school. Her grandfather also cooked for her, which allowed her to maintain a healthy body. However, her grandfather did not listen to her and the

grandmother's suggestion to quit drinking alcohol. Thus, he became ill and was sent to the hospital. In response, the social worker continued to ask CYS to tell more about her story. CYS said that she visited her grandfather frequently after he was sent to the hospital. She pointed to her throat and said that her grandfather's situation got worse and needed medical treatment on his throat. However, the grandmother did not allow her to go to the room to visit her grandfather after he was sent to another hospital. The social worker asked CYS what she did when she was frustrated and worried during the waiting period. CYS mentioned that she tried to pray for her grandfather and wished he would recover. In addition, the social worker used a story - "Is Grandpa Wearing a Suit?" to help CYS understand her emotions about the grandfather's death.

Social Worker (SW): (After reading page 11) Bruno sits next to the lake...
Bruno cries for the first time."

CYS: (Looked sad, eyebrows were furrowed, and lips were tight)

SW: I found that you look sad, what happened to you?

CYS: I am sad and miss grandpa.

SW: After your grandfather passed away, you felt upset and down. It seems that you cannot forget your grandfather, right?

CYS: (nodded head)

SW: Does the story of Bruno arouse your memory of living with grandfather?

CYS: When I was off from kindergarten, he usually took me to the park like what Bruno's grandpa did. Life with grandpa was very happy but now it is different.

SW: What now has been changed?

CYS: I had a long time not going to the park as my parents rarely took me to the park.

After I read page 14, “Since his grandfather is passed away, ... , Bruno feels a pain in his chest. He thinks that maybe there is a hole in his heart.” I observed that her facial expression and her eye contact changed. She stared at the floor and looked sad. Then, I started to read the story again. There was a moment of silence. She started to tell me that she had the same feeling of the book character.

SW: “Bruno feels a pain in his chest and thinks that maybe there is a hole in his heart due to his grandfather’s death. How are you feeling after grandfather’s death?”

CYS: I felt depressed too. I cried for several times. Sometimes my grandpa appeared in my dream but he always suddenly disappeared.

SW: I saw you looked sad and your lips were tight. I can understand your sadness due to the loss of your grandfather. I know that you have a strong bond with your grandfather. Although your grandfather has been deceased for a period of time, you still cannot accept the fact that your grandfather has left you.

CYS: (nodded head)

In session two, the social worker also helped the client to discover some past successful and unsuccessful coping strategies during the interview.

SW: Did you tell your feelings related to the separation from grandmother to your parents?

CYS: No. But I sometimes cried at home.

SW: In the past, your grandfather and grandmother always accompanied you to go to Kindergarten. They played and lived with you. Now, they are not living with you. You must feel unease and unhappy. In addition, you were promoted to the primary school. The new environment can enhance your frustration and uneasiness. However, I want to tell you that this frustration and uneasiness are normal. When a child needs to face these problems, they will share similar feelings with you. Do you remember how Bruno felt after his grandfather’s death?

CYS: He feels sad and he cries as he cannot go fishing with grandfather.

SW: What more?

There was silence for a moment.

SW: (I tried to put my hand on my heart)

CYS: He also feels pain in his chest. He feels uncomfortable with his heart.

SW: What does Bruno do to make himself not feel unhappy and relieve the pain of his chest?

CYS: He goes to the graveyard and talks with his grandfather. He also waters flowers in the graveyard.

SW: Yes, you are right. Bruno has done several things to make himself not feel sad. What would you do when you feel sad?

CYS: I stare at my grandfather's photo and worship him. My grandfather's photo is in the cupboard, which is next to the toilet. Thus, I see him often when I finish going to the toilet.

SW: What more?

CYS: Sometimes, drawing pictures. I also listen to others.

SW: After you do these things, how are your feelings?

CYS: My feelings get better. But there is a little ...

SW: What do you mean by little?

CYS: Unhappy.

SW: What would you want to do when you feel unhappy?

CYS: Play and laugh.

The social worker assessed that CYS was facing emotional problems due to the death of the grandfather. In the meeting, the social worker identified that CYS had much worry and grief towards her grandfather's death. It was because her grandfather was one of her primary caregivers in her early childhood. CYS's grandfather gave her lots of caring and love, which created a strong bond with her (Crawford, Bond, & Balshaw, 1994). However, the death destroyed this strong bond, which made her feel sad and sorrow; for example, she felt frustrated and worried when her grandfather was ill. Also, she had a strong wish that her grandfather would get well soon. Since she needed to face many changes and losses, for example, change of caregiver, change of school environment, the loss of a strong bond with caregivers, the separation of close friends and teachers, etc., her emotional stability was affected. Besides, she did not have any chance to talk about these issues with significant others, which resulted in her problems and emotions being suppressed. If there is no involvement in talking about the issue with CYS, she might find herself rarely having these emotions and might treat death as a taboo (Chan & Chow, 2006). The message might also influence her further personal development in facing trauma or emotional issues (Cohen, Mannarino & Staron, 2006). In addition, during session two the social worker identified that CYS had several coping strategies to cope with her negative emotions due to the illness and death of her grandfather. CYS mentioned she prayed for the grandfather while he was ill. She also stared and worshipped her grandfather's photo. She used drawing to relieve her grief from the loss. CYS found these coping strategies could help her in reducing her sadness. Therefore, the social worker believed that intervention could involve some of CYS's coping methods to resolve her emotions on the losses in coming sessions.

Session 3 and session 4: To work through the pain of grief

The social worker educated CYS on the concepts of death and dying by storytelling. She used the story, "When Dinosaurs Die", to convey the message of death and dying to the client. The social worker used the first two pages of the book to help CYS understand the concept of alive.

SW: What is moving in the picture?

CYS: (Pointed at the old lady) The lady is using a stick to walk in the park. There is a cat chasing a mouse in the park. A boy is walking in the park with a dog. These people are moving in the park.

SW: Who is eating or drinking in the park?

CYS: A bird is preparing to eat a worm on the wall. (Pointed at a bird on the pool) It was drinking water. The bird is flying towards the old lady to eat the biscuits.

SW: These people share the same characteristics, what is that?

CYS: She replied that these people were all alive.

SW: You have a very good observation. Yes. There are lots of people and things are alive. But some of them are not.

CYS: Why?

SW: Can you see these people? Some are ill, old, getting hurt ... There are different ways that people may die. For example, car accidents, illness, aging, etc. Like these pictures showed.

Then, the social worker continued to read the book.

SW: "Is the bird sleeping?"

CYS: No. The bird has died. My grandfather has died like the bird and he will not come back.

After talking about the concept of death, the social worker conveyed a message to CYS that death and loss are inevitable in different stages of life and death, and loss might trigger several negative emotions, which she was having now. The social worker helped CYS to learn and understand the feeling words and invited her to describe and express her emotions due to the losses.

SW: I remembered that you told me that you were sad about your grandfather's death and you were fearful when you saw your grandfather in the hospital ... (still haven't finished the sentence)

CYS: My grandfather would not play with me anymore.

SW: You are afraid that you would be lonely. You fear that no one would act as your grandfather to love you and accompany you.

CYS: (nodded head)

SW: Now, there are some ginger cookies, but they do not have any facial expressions. I would like to invite you to draw your feelings and facial expressions on the ginger cookies.

CYS: (Picked up a colour pen and started to draw) It has a crying face because it feels sad.

SW: What has happened to these ginger cookies?

CYS: Her grandfather died and now no one loves her so it felt sad and cried.

SW: Um. I saw it looks unhappy and it felt lonely, right?

CYS: Yes. (Picked another cookie and started to draw)

SW: I saw you drew two big eyes ...

CYS: It is an angry face. It feels angry as no one likes it. Her parents do not love her anymore.

SW: Why her parents do not like her?

CYS: Her parents blame her stupidity and used a slipper to hit her hips. They also said they will dump her if she does not listen to them.

SW: How does it react?

CYS: She misses her grandfather.

SW: How were her feelings when she was with grandfather?

CYS: (Picked another cookie and started to draw) You see, it is very happy as her grandfather brought her to the park and made lunch for her.

SW: Yes. I saw you draw a smile face.

During the session, the social worker tried to teach the concepts of death and dying by storytelling. Children's understanding of death varies according to developmental

stage (Black, 1998; Cohen et al., 2002; Emswiler & Emswiler, 2000; Grollman, 1995; Webb, 2002; Wolfelt, 1996). According to Piaget (1970), child development is divided into four stages, including sensorimotor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operational stage and formal operational stage. Although CYS was six, she was in the concrete stage. It was because CYS was comparatively more mature than other children; for example, her perception of her grandfather's death. In addition, CYS can think logically about the death of her grandfather. She knew that the death of her grandfather was inevitable and irreversible.

Furthermore, the social worker also tried to follow up her feelings of fear from the previous session and adopted the concept from the use of art to encourage CYS to draw her emotions of the loss and the time with her grandfather. In the meeting, the social worker helped the client understand the feeling of fear. Since she mentioned she was fearful in the last session, the social worker helped her to reflect her inner feeling of fear. CYS feared her grandfather's death because she loved her grandfather and she did not want to lose the bond and his love. She realised that she would lose an important caregiver and relationship if her grandfather died. She believed that no one would take her to the park and play with her anymore. Therefore, she experienced a strong fear when her grandfather was ill. At that moment, she prayed frequently because she had a strong wish that her grandfather would get well soon.

Apart from that, she felt fear because of the corporal punishment. She was afraid of being hit and feeling pain as her family members physically punished her when she was misbehaved. CYS experienced insecure attachment due to the physical abuse (Ainsworth, 1969). Since her parents recently took over the caring duty, the act of physical punishment might hinder her parents' ability to develop a bond with CYS due to the influence of insecure attachment. It also hampered them to build a healthy family with permeable and open boundaries. Individuals act as an isolated system and the close and impermeable boundaries restricted flow of information and interaction among different systems (Minuchin, 1974).

Kübler-Ross, (2005) suggests that there are five stages of grief including: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In no defined sequence, most of these stages occur when a person is faced with the reality of their impending death and applies to survivors of a loved one's death as well (Kübler-Ross,, 2005). According to CYS's current situation, she was in the stage of depression. In this stage, it is natural

to feel sadness and regret, fear, uncertainty, etc. (Kübler-Ross, 2005). In the session, the social worker discovered that CYS had the feelings of sadness and fear. During the interview, CYS had at least begun to accept the reality in which her grandfather had passed away.

Session 5 and session 6: To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.

After helping CYS to work through her emotions of the losses, the social worker tried to work with her to adjust to her new environment. The social worker also tried to review some positive coping methods that CYS learnt in previous sessions. The social worker invited CYS to talk about and practise her coping strategies to tackle the negative responses of the loss. When the social worker talked about the method of memorializing the dead person, CYS gave many suggestions.

SW: Although the one you loved has passed away..., you can do lots of things to memorialize him or her.

CYS: Looks at grandpa's photo.

SW: Yes. It is a good idea.

CYS: Talk with grandfather's photo.

SW: Great! It is a method we learnt from Bruno of the story book "Is Grandpa Wearing a Suit". In the book, there are also some other methods. Which methods would you like to choose for memorializing your grandfather?

CYS: (Put her hand on her heart) Drawing is also good to heal the heart.

SW: Yes. It is a very good method. Let's do together.

The social worker put all prepared materials (story book, blank paper, colour pencils, sign pens, and colour paper) on the desk. CYS selected the blank paper to draw her unforgettable experience with her grandfather. After she finished the picture, she took the initiative to talk about the story of her drawing. She shared her story with the social worker by performing different voices. She acted her grandfather's voice in the storytelling.

CYS: (Pointing to different objects in her drawing). It is the park. I like here very much. It is my grandpa. It is me.

SW: What are you doing?

CYS: I am playing in the park happily with my grandfather. I like this slippery slide. My grandpa is waiting for me in here. He smiled and looked at me.

SW: Your grandfather loves you very much. Did your grandfather talk during the playing time?

CYS: Yes. He taught me colour words, asked me the things that happened in kindergarten ...

SW: I saw your smile when you talked about your grandpa. It is different when I had interviews with you before.

CYS: I memorialize him in my heart like what Bruno did.

SW: Good. I am very surprised that you remember what you learnt in previous sessions. Now, grandpa cannot go to the park with you ... (not yet finished the sentence)

CYS: (interrupting) I want to go with my mummy. She said if I got 100 in my dictation, I can do one thing that I like. And I got it in my English dictation. But I don't know whether I can go or not.

SW: I appreciate that you try your best to put lots of effort in studying. I would like to encourage you to tell this wish to your mother. I believe she will listen to your desire.

CYS: I hope I can go to the park on Sunday. I tell mum today.

SW: I found that you started to build a relationship with your mother as you have a wish to go to the park with your mother.

CYS: I found that she likes me as she sometimes plays toys with me after I

finished homework. She tells bed story to make me sleep. I like her more than before.

SW: It is happy to hear that you like your mother. I believe your parents also like you as they can reunite and live with you. I wish you could have a happy life with your parents like what you had with your grandparents before.

According to the interview with CYS, she was entering the stage of acceptance. It was observed that she used positive coping methods to deal with the loss. She also made an effort to build rapport with her parents in order to integrate into a new environment. It is assessed that she tried her best to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.

Session 7 and session 8: To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life

The social worker tried to follow up CYS's action plan – keeping grandfather in her heart. The social worker helped the client to resolve the loss by facilitating CYS's creation of a "Goodbye and Hellos Book" to remember her grandfather. Last but not least, the social worker encouraged CYS to move on with her life through practising her action plan – have more interaction with parents.

The social worker put all prepared materials (story book, blank paper, colour pencils, sign pens, and colour paper) on the desk for CYS to choose to make the booklet. During the drawing process, she chose different colour paper to write sentences and draw pictures of her grandfather in the "Goodbye and Hellos Book". After CYS finished the picture, the social worker invited her to talk about her story after she finished her drawing. There are four pages of the story book.

Page 1 - The Park

She picked a blank paper to draw the park scenery. She mentioned that she liked to go to the park with her grandfather and she seldom went to the park after living with her parents. The social worker noted that she missed her previous living arrangement and memory. CYS said that she would remember this scenery in her heart. CYS said that she hoped her parents might do what her grandfather did with her in the past. The social worker used a miracle question to ask her: "If there was a fairy, she gave you a

wish. What do you want the wish to be?”

Page 2 – Wish

She replied that she wanted to go to Ocean Park with her grandfather, grandmother, mummy, daddy, aunt and uncle because she wanted to have a happy day with them. The worker realised that she wanted to have a harmonious and completed family so she had a dream to go Ocean Park with those family members. Then the worker reflected her wish, saying “I understood that you wished to have a harmonious and happy family that all the family members could accompany and love you”. She nodded her head and said that she understood her grandfather would not come back and she would remember him in her heart. She insisted that she wanted to go with her parents. Therefore, the worker encouraged her to tell her wish to her parents.

Page 3 - My Effort

She started to recite her dictation words on a blank paper and mark “100” on the paper. She mentioned that she wanted to show her grandfather that she had an excellent result in her study. She tried to write down the happy wish for her grandfather and recited the words of the dictation in the booklet. CYS mentioned that she wanted to know if her grandfather could feel her happiness and appreciated her efforts in studying. The worker added that CYS’s grandfather could feel happy about her study attitude.

Page 4 – Seeds

CYS drew some seeds for her grandfather because he liked planting. She said she wished that the plant would grow up and have colourful and beautiful flowers in heaven. She wished her grandfather could happily appreciate them in heaven. She suggested putting the cookies that she made in a previous interview in the booklet. The social worker appreciated her efforts and creativity in making this precious gift to her grandfather and said that he would love it very much.

According to the interview with CYS, she was entering the stage of acceptance. It was observed that she was trying to deal with the loss by making the “Goodbye and Hellos Book” to her grandfather. In this stage, CYS needed to overcome grief and

retain her fond memories (Kübler-Ross, 1969). The social worker discovered that CYS was able to emerge from the pain of the loss and retain the fond memories of her grandfather. For example, she said that she understood her grandfather would not come back and she would remember him in her heart. This statement reflects that she accepted the loss and she tried to cope with the loss in a positive way. The social worker believed that both drawing and talking were forms of a healing process of the loss, which encouraged CYS to overcome the grief and emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life.

Use of Play

Play therapy can be divided into two basic types: nondirective and directive (Harter, 1977). Directive play therapy is a method that includes more structure and guidance by the therapist to help children work through emotional and behavioural difficulties (Knell, 1998). Storytelling and structured games, such as “Is Grandpa Wearing a Suit?”, “When Dinosaurs Die”, etc. from the directive play therapy perspective were used in sessions 1-3 to help CYS to resolve her emotional problem and understand the death issue. In addition, the storytelling had played a role in educating CYS on the concept of death and helped her deal with the loss. For example, CYS said that her grandfather was dead like the bird and he would not come back. Support during the telling of the story and the expression of feelings could also have helped to reinforce CYS’s coping efforts through identification of previously effective strategies and teaching new strategies as she learnt the character Bruno to reminisce about her grandfather in her heart from the book “Is Grandpa Wearing a Suit?”

Use of Art

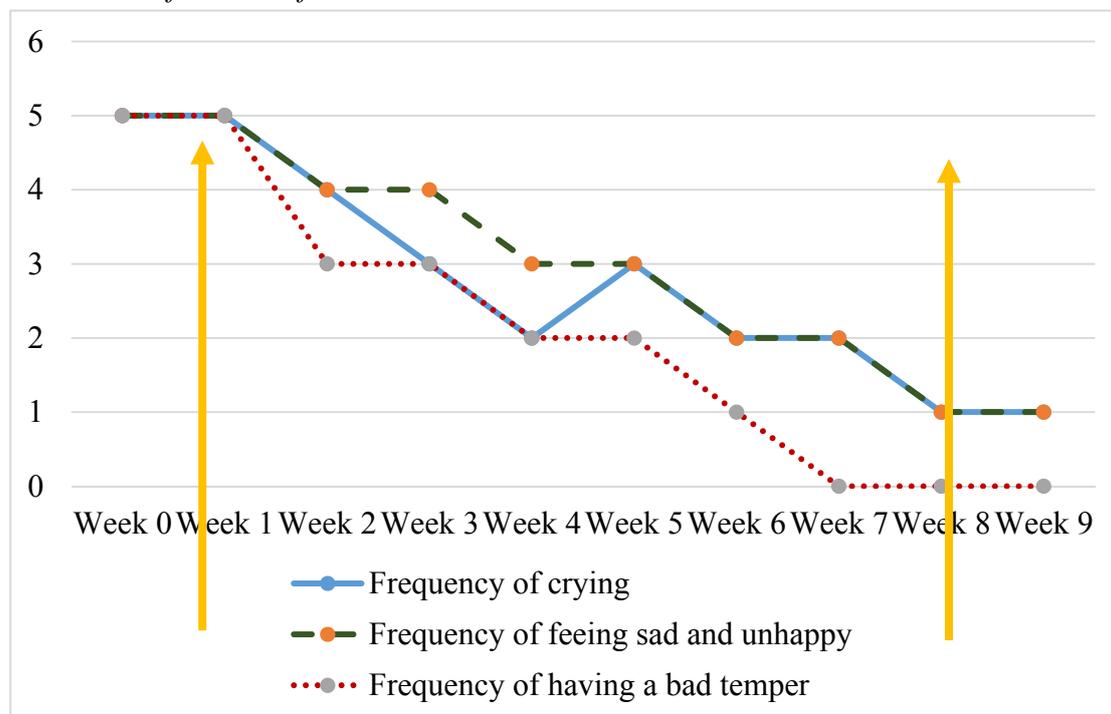
Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma or life challenges (Dalley, 2004). The concepts of art therapy have been used for resolving her emotional problem through making a “Goodbye and Hellos Book” and “Goodbye, Cookie Jar” in sessions 4 and 7. Through drawing the facial expression of the ginger cookies, the social worker helped CYS to express her grief emotions in session 4 (Cheng et al., 2010; Kim, 2010). For example, CYS picked up a colour pen and drew a crying face because she felt sad and lonely after her grandfather’s death. Through creating art with the art products and processes,

the social worker helped the client to increase her awareness of self and others to cope with sadness, stress and traumatic experience (Brandell, 1998; Kramer, 1971). For instance, CYS drew a play situation of the park to recall the time with her grandfather in her heart but she stepped forward to the future by drawing a wish to have more interactions with her parents, like going to Ocean Park with her relatives in session 7.

Evaluation of the Treatment Outcomes

During an interview, the social worker needs to review and evaluate with the client about the changes and improvement in every session. The social worker can seek comments and feedback from clients, teachers and parents for assessing the progress of the intervention. Scaling questions are also recommended for evaluation. Social worker’s observation is also an important method for analysing the changes after intervention. These methods were used to analyse the changes of CYS during the eight-session interviews.

Table 1
Emotions before and after the interventions



Before intervention, CYS cried frequently: crying at least one time per day five days out of seven. She also felt sad and unhappy and found no interest in playing with toys and had no interactions with parents. She also had a bad temper, such as hitting herself. However, after intervention, the social worker found that emotions in terms of frequency of crying, feeling sad and unhappy, and having a bad temper positively changed as the frequency of negative emotions decreased by going through the four stages proposed by Worden. The frequency of crying was reduced to crying at least one time per day to one day out of seven. CYS has more interaction, such as playing and talking with her biological caregivers (parents) and has more positive emotions: smiling, becoming happier, and feeling grateful. In addition, she exhibited less blaming and hurting herself as she could transform what she learnt to express negative emotions, such as drawing and praying as positive methods. Overall, according to Table 1, emotions after intervention are more stable compared to before intervention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research was a pilot study integrating grief therapy with the use of art and play in helping children to cope with death and loss. It is believed that this research can give insights in working with children with bereavement needs since death and loss are inevitable for everyone in any stage in life. The use of play and art are essential and are effective tools for social workers to help the children to express their emotions, needs, and desires during the grieving process. The social worker found that storytelling is one of the beneficial ways to educate children on the concept of death and memorabilia is also a way to reminisce. Last but not least, the research also emphasised the knowledge and experience transformation. The client in the case study could learn to grieve when she faced the death of her grandfather after intervention. CYS transformed the experiences and knowledge in the termination process with the social worker.

Biographic Note

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