

Graphic Narrative: The Power of Story Telling

Grief Story through Graphic Narrative- The Importance of Sharing Your Loss

Everyone who has experienced the death of someone important to them, has a grief story. Whether that person died of a long term illness or died suddenly, sharing the story is an essential part of the bereavement process. Often the death of an important person is shocking (even when anticipated) and overwhelms our ability to make sense of and adjust to current circumstances. Through the action of putting the story into words or pictures, it breaks down the experience into smaller, more manageable pieces so that our minds can better process the event. By capturing the overpowering events in words or pictures, grief stories help us gain a sense of control over the events, relieve emotional tension, and make meaning out of the experiences. Most importantly, grief stories are meant to be shared. They provide an opportunity for us to feel seen or heard and understood.

Creating a graphic narrative through drawing rather than verbally sharing a grief story can be a fun, creative alternative. It is an especially helpful outlet for children who may not yet have strong language skills.

Most grief stories follow a similar pattern:

1. The events preceding and just leading up to the diagnosis or event – This is often the last time the griever feels they were living blissfully unaware of the illness and/or death that was about to change their lives.
2. Long-term illness- the days, diagnosis, procedures and appointments or Sudden Loss- the moments just prior to the death– Many are able to remember every step of the person’s illness and the changes they witnessed in them. For sudden loss, seconds can be remembered as hours with every detail vividly standing out in memory.
3. Discovering or being told of the death– This is the moment when life changed forever. Every detail of not just this day, but this moment, may be etched into a griever’s memory and for some it may have resulted in post-traumatic stress.

To help further tell their story, children are encouraged to complete three more panels including the days directly following the death, the funeral/memory/celebration of life or other honoring activity the child or family has participated in, and what the child’s life looks like today.

Story I Would Like to Tell the Person Who Has Died

An additional activity is to illustrate a story of something that has happened since the person died, that the child would like to share with that person. As life for the bereaved continues to move forward, it can be painful to not be able to share with that person important events (such as graduations or marriages), fun or humorous moments, or even difficult and challenging episodes. Drawing a story as though the person who died can see it, can be a healing and cathartic experience. Activities like these can help to cultivate a sense of connection with the person who died and help children move forward in their grief.

Brought to you by the Safe Crossings Program

Graphic Narrative: The Story of My Special Person's Death

<p>Life prior to illness or death</p>	<p>Life during illness/ Days prior to death/ Day of death</p>	<p>Death/ Being told of the death</p>
<p>Days following death</p>	<p>Funeral/Memorial/Celebration of Life/ Activity honoring person</p>	<p>Life today</p>

Story I Would Like to Share with My Special Person Who Died

<p>1- Beginning</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6-The End</p>