

It Takes a Rainbow: Art Ideas for Difficult Times

Art and Activities to support Grieving Children and Teens

1. Treasure Chest - Decorate a shoe box or other small box with magazine images or other collage materials (tissue paper, feathers, stickers, gems) in honor of your loved one. This can be your "Treasure Chest." Use your container to hold special letters to your loved one. Whenever you are missing or thinking of them, jot down a note and place it inside. You can also fill it with memories of your loved one by placing pictures and mementos that remind you of them or perhaps a special gift they gave you.

2. Broken Bowl Activity -

Paint various pieces of the bowl to represent your feelings or memories. Once completed, break the bowl in a safe place. Collect the pieces and put the bowl back together again using glue. Talk with your child about how the broken bowl project can resemble life after a loss. We may feel as though life has "shattered". With the help of family, friends or other supportive individuals we can put life back together. Explain how the bowl becomes something new, a symbol for your family's "new normal."



3. Heart Activity - Use a blank piece of paper to draw a large heart. Make the heart big enough to fill the entire paper. Use various colors and shapes to represent the feelings in your heart. Have your child create a legend to identify the feeling associated with each color.

4. Scavenger Hunt Walk - Take a walk around your neighborhood and gather spring flowers or other natural items that remind you of your loved one (special rocks, leaves, sticks). Bring them home and place them around a photo of your loved one.

5. Coping Senses - Place your hand in the middle of white drawing paper. Trace around your hand with a pencil or marker. Write your name in the center. Start



with your thumb write all the smells/scents that comfort you, (the smell of popcorn, lavender hand lotion). Next, move to your pointer finger: write all the sights that give you joy (a sunset, photos of your family, selfies with your friends). Move onto your middle finger: write all the delightful tastes in your life (chocolate, a cold drink of water on a hot summer's day). Now to your ring finger: write things that comfort you through your sense of touch (warm sheets, petting your dog/cat). Finally, to your pinky finger: write sounds that soothe you (the rain falling on your roof, the strumming of a guitar). Decorate both inside and outside your hand design.

You now have comforts and joys literally at hand. Read them during times of distress. Add new coping senses as you experience them.

6. Shrinky Dinks - Shrinky Dinks are plastic sheets that when heated in an oven shrink to a firm and small size. They can be made into



a keychain, necklace or displayed as a memento. You can purchase Shrinky Dinks online. Have your child select images and colors that remind them of their loved one. Complete according to package directions.

7. Salt-Dough Mementos - Use salt dough to create a memento to represent your loved one. You will need 1 cup of flour, ½ cup of salt, ¼ to ½ cup of water and parchment paper. First mix flour and salt together. Then slowly add water to the flour and salt mixture. Knead the dough for about 5-10 minutes. Kneading the dough can be a cathartic activity to



For more information, please contact the Children's Bereavement Art Group at 916-454-6555.

help your child release some of their grief feelings. Roll the dough to ¼ inch thickness. You can use a cookie cutter or your hands to create shapes with the dough. Heat oven to 250 degrees and bake for about 2 hours.

8. Sidewalk art - Create sidewalk art with chalk in honor of your loved one. Use colors they loved or images and words that remind you of them.

9. Acrostic-Name Activity –

Write the name of your loved one vertically on a piece of paper. Use each letter to think of a word or phrase to describe a special quality, memory or feeling of your loved one. This activity can be completed individually or with the entire family. Encourage participants to share their work.



10. Mealtime Memories - Prepare your loved one's favorite meal together.

11. River Stone - Find a small to medium, smooth river stone. Paint the top surface of the stone black. Allow paint to dry. Use the eraser end of a pencil and dip into a bright color of acrylic paint. Create a center dot in the middle of the black surface. Continue to make smaller dots (use a Q-tip) around the center dot in a mandala design. Allow the dots to dry. Write your loved one's name within the circle of dots. Keep your stone in your room next to a photo of your loved one. If you want to place the stone outside, use Mod Podge to seal it.

12. Watercolor Paper Towels -

Paint paper towels with watercolors. Allow the paper towel to dry, and then use a sharpie to write a message to your loved one. Hang your completed art in the window so the sun can shine through.



13. Accordion Books - Use 9x12 drawing or watercolor paper. Cut in half lengthwise, creating two 4½x12 pages. Use double sided tape to connect pages together creating one long piece. For more book pages, attach another 4½x12 paper. To create pockets in your book, fold paper 1 inch from the bottom. You now have a long piece that is 3½x11 or longer. Fold paper accordion style. Place notes and other treasures in pocket.

Decorate blank pages with artwork, writings, stickers, gemstones, magazine images, etc. Create a

book cover using card stock. Ensure that the cover is about ½ inch larger than the size of your pages. Sandwich strips of ribbon/string between the front page and the cover, glue in place. Repeat for back page cover. Tie ribbons on side of book to secure it. Creativity has no rules. Follow your heart.

Additional Fun Art Activities

1. Hair Dryer and Crayon Melting -

Hot glue or super glue crayons to a canvas or board in a row or a desired pattern. Place canvas on top of a tarp or surface safe for hot wax. With a hair dryer starting on low, begin to melt the crayons. Experiment pointing the dryer in different directions. Note the crayons take a minute to warm up but will become liquid overtime. Be as creative as you want. You may want to melt the crayons over another image (drawn or collage).



Refer to the following: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K19tOUIEp3Y

2. String Art for Teens/Advanced - This project requires a canvas, string and acrylic/tempera paint. Begin a base layer by pouring liquid acrylic or tempera paint over a canvas. Next dip various strings in a different color and position them on the wet canvas base layer. Tape the strings at the base and pull canvas away. It is recommended to watch the following YouTube video prior to beginning the project. Be creative with colors and pull directions, note this requires a wet base layer for full effect.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blnl6kC0nSU

3. String Art for Younger Kids/Beginners -

You will need tempera or craft paint, string, paper and a heavy book you don't mind getting paint on. Fold your paper in half. Heavily saturate string with paints, you can use multiple colors on each string. Place strings in preferred pattern inside piece of paper on one side, fold other side over the top to trap the strings. Orient the strings so you can grab the ends from one side of the paper while it remains folded. Place the folded piece inside the heavy book and press down firmly. Remove the strings by pulling them out while the book (or your hand) keeps the paper folded. Refer to the following:



www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvTTi_QVfAQ