



# HOW THE ARTS CAN HELP WITH BEREAVEMENT

**Dealing with grief is never a linear experience, no matter how many hardships you have endured.**

While we've all been forced to be more distant with friends and family over the past year, some have sadly been left to deal with bereavement on their own, in solitude with perhaps nothing more than their own thoughts to act as company.

For young people and children in particular, who perhaps haven't encountered periods of grief before, it's been an particularly destabilising period.

At the start of the year, we were awarded the [Co-op Foundation grant](#) to help young people support each other through bereavement, using the arts as a vehicle to achieve togetherness.

Using the funding to deliver a national online project, we will be aiming to help young people, bereaved during the Covid-19 pandemic, to use the arts to enable them to safely explore their experiences, and help process the impact of bereavement.

## The Arts and Grief Management

The arts are commonly seen in different settings to help people, both young and old, navigate trauma.

*The Treatment of Childhood Traumatic Grief* study states that the 'creative arts [can] provide an opportunity for children to create visual and tangible alternatives to disturbing images', and that '*creative interventions also provide opportunities ... to identify cognitive distortions related to a child's sense of responsibility for the trauma, ideas regarding future safety, and feelings of guilt and shame.*'

Depending on the immediacy of the trauma, or if a condition has been known and a person has been deteriorating over time, children and young people can be left with unpleasant memories and images of their experiences, which can be hard to shake or let go of.

Similarly, feelings of guilt or of responsibility can create an echo chamber in the mind, which can be hard to escape - especially during periods of social isolation owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Crenshaw and Webb's study, Play and Expressive Therapies to Help Bereaved Children, it's suggested that *'people are often able to express feelings or experiences through creative venues such as poems, drawings, and songs in a way they are not able to express verbally.'*

Learning how to express emotions, thoughts and feelings that have been otherwise oppressed or thought inaccessible to say is an invaluable skill, and one that will be instrumental in navigating grief throughout life.

The research paper, Resolving Child and Adolescent Traumatic Grief: Creative Techniques and Interventions, says that: *'On a more practical level, engaging in creative activities may enhance a child's skill set in language and communication, and specific artistic skills may contribute to feelings of positive self-esteem and self-worth.'*

## How We Can Help

Findings from Co-op Funeralcare's 'biggest ever survey' into death, dying, and bereavement found that young people are most likely to bottle up their feelings and be excluded from social arrangements when experiencing bereavement.

The funding we've received will allow us to run a scheme to help young people experiencing the challenges of bereavement through peer support, creating a safe environment to explore feelings of loss, guilt and trauma with others across the country who have had similar experiences.

Adam Tulloch, our Chief Executive, says: *'We are grateful for the Co-op Foundation's funding to help us support bereaved young people through this project, which will equip young people with tools and resources to help them process their bereavement. Using the arts to support mental health has been at the heart of our pandemic programme and we are pleased to be able to continue to do so.'*

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## How You Can Help

We use the arts to transform children and young people's lives - but it's only made possible through **your support and donations**. No matter the environment in the world around us, we always want to ensure our care is unwavering for those who need it the most.

**You can support Total Insight by making a one-off donation [here](#), or if you're able to, a continued pledge to help our vital work continue during the time when it's needed the most.**

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