



ART BRIDGES: Lesson Plans for Enrichment, Growth and Healing

Helping Kids Express Their Grief

**A Copyrighted Resource with Insights and Activities Cited with Permission from
Jennie Wright-Parker
<http://www.recover-from-grief.com>**

Note: Jennie Wright-Parker is the webmaster and editor of www.Recover-From-Grief.com . She has drawn from her wealth of experience (20 years as a licensed and registered critical care RN nurse working with families in crisis and bereavement) in gathering resources to assist in the grieving process. Jennie was led to enter advanced studies in thanatology (the study of bereavement) and became a Certified Grief Counselor in 2007. She shares, *“This website evolved as a result of my interest in and advance study of grief theory and interventions.....I too have seen my own share of personal tragedy and I looked for easier ways to cope with my own grief. Thus was born our site concept of ‘healing through creative grieving.’”*

When we contacted Jennie to ask for permission to re-post form her website, she graciously agreed Hildegard could post excerpts with links back to her site; therefore, this is the format this section will employ. These ideas/exercises can be adapted for all ages and circumstances.

[Excerpts and Links from Recover-From-Grief.Com](http://www.recover-from-grief.com)

“Mental health care professionals agree that one of the most helpful ways to work through mourning is to express grief, and not hold it in. And the most effective and creative expressions of grief may differ from person to person. We present in our website a variety of creative mourning techniques—talking, writing, creating art, music or poetry, or memorializing—which are all good ways to express your bereavement. Explore our site to find the expressive techniques that feel “just right” for you.” <http://www.recover-from-grief.com>

By accessing the website, you can find out more information about the following:

- Stages of grief and sorrow
- Signs and symptoms of bereavement (what’s normal?)
- The Grief Club
- Coping Strategies
- “Grief Guidebook”
- An audio program for grief coping and relaxation called “Grief Relief”
- A link to a Stress Management “E” Course
- Understanding pet loss grief
- Comfort “items” to help those grieving through the “hard times”
- Projects for healing artwork
- Links to comforting music and poetry
- Ideas for creating living memorials and special memorial services
- How create “Their Space”, a memorial page to a lost loved one
- Suggestions for friends and family to help them learn how to help and how to express sympathy
- Unique sympathy gifts
- A free seven-part grief “E” course
- Guidance is how to help children through the grieving process

[Healing Artwork Ideas found on the Site \(http://www.recover-from-grief.com/creativity-grief.html \)](http://www.recover-from-grief.com/creativity-grief.html):

A quote from Jennie: *“I am not a professional artist. I found that the most soul-satisfying emotional release for me came during the MAKING of the art, the creative process, and not from the final results! “But I'm not an artist!” you might say, “Well all the better. You won't have any pre-conceived notions of how to*

create, or rules of design to follow. You'll more easily "create from your soul" than a trained graphic artist will.

*"It doesn't matter if your creations are simple stick figure drawings, or colorful and intricate abstracts, or even realistic landscapes. The value of healing artwork for you is in the **doing**, not the final product. In other words, it doesn't matter what your drawing looks like, if you benefited by creating it. This is such a liberating way to look at the creative arts. And you'll be surprised at how good it feels, once you get started. Just remember... the goal is not to make great art, but to express yourself greatly."*

- **"Draw Out"** will help you get started with your art therapy projects and includes a supply list and suggestions for creating a peaceful "healing place." Several projects to get you started are suggested including an Art Journal. <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/art-therapy-activity.html>
- **"Painting"** introduces beginners to using this art form to express emotions. This link gives suggestions to the beginner to "paint what is inside you and let it out—paint your feelings." <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/memorial-painting.html>
- **"Sculpture"** explores using clay, Paper Mache, wood and other media to create 3-D works of art. The site includes suggestions for using clay (modeling, sculpting or throwing on a potter's wheel) which is "the ultimate stress relief." Create a **"Grief Mask"** which is a tool that can help a grieving person express his/her true feelings or deep emotions. Jennie shares, *"People in bereavement often put up a brave front or pretend that they are fine when they're not."* This activity uses art to create a mask with the purpose of unmasking your soul, bringing your deepest weaknesses, fears, pains, strengths and joys to the surface. <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/grief-masks.html>
- **"Memory Box"** is a *"safe container where you can contain your grief and open it up whenever you want. Creating a memory box to honor your lost loved one can be a very healing experience."* <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/memory-boxes.html>
- **"Grief Journals and Tribute Scrapbooking"** use writing and art to work through grief. They help you strive for understanding, to reach inside yourself to find hidden emotions—to draw them out and get them down on paper, allowing the mind to rest. Tribute Scrapbooking is an activity a family

can do together to offer comfort. http://www.recover-from-grief.com/tribute-scrapbooking.html#TRIBUTE_SCRAPBOOKING

“Creating artwork following a tragic loss can be very therapeutic, helping you to express and release your own painful, stressful emotions. Accessing these emotions is not always easy by talking, by using words. You may try to talk it all out, get it off your chest, yell and scream out in your anger and grief. But in the end, the feelings still sit there. Why? Because your left-brain's verbal language is limited in its vocabulary, leaving your true emotions literally unexpressed. To access and release your real feelings, you have to use the right-brain's language of imagery... through artwork. Open your mind to this and you will find much comfort in your artwork.”

Helping Kids Express their Grief <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/art-therapy-children.html> --This link is a great resource for using art to help children express and deal with their grief. *“One of the first things that mental health professionals do when working with disturbed or traumatized children is to put art supplies in their hands and let them express themselves.”* By having art supplies on hand (crayons, pastels, colored pencils, colored markers, tempera paints and watercolors, art paper and sketch pads, scissors, glue, old magazines finger paint, clay and Play-Doh) you'll be able to help children use their art in the healing process.

Jennie suggests starting each art session with a theme or a topic that the child can answer with his/her artwork. Visit <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/art-therapy-children.html> for a list of possible topics and suggestions for engaging the child. The site also explores the helpfulness of Mandalas in providing comfort and stress relief. Children will also benefit from activities such as creating memorial scrapbooks and grief journals.

Finally, by linking to <http://www.recover-from-grief.com/grief-in-children.html> , you will find resources to help kids find their way through their grief. This site offers pointers to help a child through a healthy bereavement, how to talk with children about loss as well as age-specific guidelines for grieving children.

From Jennie: *“My hope is that you will come to our website often, and tell other grieving friends and family members about it. And our biggest wish is that you get*

to the point where you don't need us anymore. Then "pay it forward" by!
recommending "recover-from-grief.com" to someone else who needs it more."

Our sincere thanks to **Jennie Wright-Parker** for allowing Hildegard to reference
www.Recover-From-Grief.com . We hope you will visit the site and explore the
many resources available to help in the grieving process.

Additional Resources:



Amazon awards **Tear Soup** (Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen, Authors, and Taylor Bills, Illustrator) five stars out of five saying: "If you are going to buy only one book on grief, this is the one to get! It will validate your grief experience, and you can share it with your children. You can leave it on the coffee table so others will pick it up, read it, and then better appreciate your grieving time. Grand's Cooking Tips section at the back of the book is rich with wisdom and concrete recommendations. Better than a casserole! Hardbound; 56 full-color pages. Affirms the bereaved. Educates the un-bereaved. A building-block for children.....

winner of the 2001 Theologos Book Award, presented by the Association of Theological Booksellers.”

If you use this resource, we'd love to hear from you! Please send questions or comments through our website www.hildegardcenter.org .

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