



Supporting 4-6-year-old children grieving life crises through creative methods

Erika Hafurova

2024 Laurea





Laurea University of Applied Sciences

**Supporting 4-6-year-old children grieving life crises through
creative methods**

Erika Hafurova
Degree Program in Social Services
Bachelor's Thesis
May, 2024

Erika Hafurova

Supporting 4-6-year-old children grieving life crises through creative methods

Year	2024	Number of pages	80
------	------	-----------------	----

Abstract

This thesis' object was to explore children's grief through creative methods which can be used in support. The purpose was to create a guide booklet based on theory and implementation of the functional part for the use of early childhood educators, other people working with children and parents at home. This guide booklet was done together with Mannerheim League for Child Welfare and is taken for their materials. The material is in MLL's intranet of Uusimaa's district region. Both English and Finnish versions can be found at the end of this thesis in Appendices. Development task of this functional thesis was to plan, implement and create based on feedback the finalized guide booklet.

Theory focused on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland, emotional development of 4-6-year-old children. In addition, three different life crises: loss of someone, divorce and moving to another place and grief process including three different emotions: sadness, anger and fear were examined. Creative methods used in this thesis theory and the functional part were play, art and music.

The creative workshops highlighted the importance of emotional education with children and especially learning and practicing to understand and express the negatively perceived emotions. The creative methods were tested and resulted to be suitable and effective for this age group of children. Professionals working in ECEC and other people with children could benefit from getting to know more about children's grief process and how to support children during it by using creative methods.

This functional study supports recognizing early childhood as a time where also life crises might belong and negatively perceived emotions take place in children's lives. Adults are the ones responsible for taking action to practice to support and start doing emotional education with children. It is crucial to utilize creative methods in support which are natural in young children's life. Recommendation for future research is about the effect of moving away for young children and how to support them in adaptation and if visiting the old area alleviates the felt grief. Another recommendation is to train personnel in daycare on grief work and use creative methods with children in emotional education.

Keywords: early childhood, grief process, creative methods, life crises, emotional education

Contents

1	Introduction	7
2	Background of the functional thesis	8
2.1	Working life partner	9
3	Theoretical framework	10
3.1	Early childhood education and care in Finland	10
3.2	Emotional development of 4-6-year-olds	12
3.3	Life crises	13
3.3.1	Loss of someone	14
3.3.2	Divorce	16
3.3.3	Moving to another place	18
3.4	Grief and feelings behind it	19
3.4.1	Sadness.....	20
3.4.2	Anger	21
3.4.3	Fear.....	23
3.5	Creative methods	24
3.5.1	Play.....	26
3.5.2	Art	27
3.5.3	Music	28
4	Implementation.....	29
4.1	First phase: Preparation and activity plans	29
4.1.1	Ethical consideration.....	31
4.2	Second phase: Piloting the creative workshops.....	32
4.2.1	Workshops' themes and activities.....	34
4.2.2	Reflection of the workshops	37
4.3	Third phase: Guide booklet	39
5	Feedback and evaluation.....	42
6	Conclusions and discussion.....	44
	References.....	46
	Tables	50
	Appendices	50

1 Introduction

The subject of this thesis is children's grief process through creative methods in different life situations which they may experience in early childhood. In my view it is crucial for adults to recognize children's grief and learn to support children in their grief. Sadly, children's grief is often viewed less important than adults and even children's grief is silenced, and this is a societal problem (Lipponen & Pursi 2022, 233). The topic grasps on grief process with three chosen emotions behind it: sadness, anger, and fear. Background is on three different most common life crises children may confront in life: loss of someone, divorce and moving to another city. Grief is often seen as a term used in context of death, but it has been examined to include even smaller happenings in children's life which create the feeling of suffering in early childhood (Quiñones, Lipponen, Pursi and Barnes 2021, 2). Some of the life crises I have chosen to examine are serious and others might have an impact on children's life and well-being depending on the situation, child's resilience and temperament and the support received from the adults. However, not all children will have grief process from these life situations, for some for example moving to another place is a relief and a positive matter.

In this thesis I am exploring some creative methods to use in supporting children during potential life crises in early childhood. I think creative methods are a powerful tool to use to express oneself without being able to process the life crises perhaps yet verbally and developmentally but also in tandem alongside them. Children need adults to create learning environments for them where they can play and express themselves through art (FNAE 2022, 31). Because painting, music and play are common and natural methods for children and easy to implement I decided them as creative methods to try-out in a practical part. According to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), creative methods and play are children's way of exploring the world (FNAE 2022, 22). Thus, it is valuable to expose children to emotional education using creative methods whether they have some life situations going on or not. Speaking about feelings and considering early childhood grief as a real issue are vital. Currently the understanding is that also young children do grieve, and the focus is on how they grieve and how adults can support them in their grief (Dyregrov 2008a, 11).

My aim of this thesis is to examine how children's grief process can be supported through creative methods. For this guide booklet material was developed during this thesis process. I wanted to find information about children's grief and bring that information to the attention of early childhood education and care and other people working with children. It is crucial for adults to understand their responsibility to support children in their grief based on children's best interest and starting points (FNAE 2022, 18). I am interested in prevention work with families and children thus to create thesis about children and including their parents to the

functional part was natural. I believe if grief is not confronted, it can explode later in life, and this is one of the reasons I wanted to examine children's grief and the means for support. Dyregrov (2008b, 71) claims that the preschool children are in a vulnerable stage of their development where trust, security, attachment, and identity are developing thus in the case of life crises the children are most dependent on the adult's support. It is true, that younger children are protected at that time by their lack of understanding of the long-term effects of the crises (Dyregrov 2008b, 72). Prevention work can be done during grief process too as giving tools and not leaving the griever alone in the grief.

2 Background of the functional thesis

This thesis is a functional thesis. Functional thesis is very practical way of producing some kind of service or product for use and this is considered with how it serves the target group (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 51). My thesis' purpose is to find suitable creative methods to express and process grief. Functional thesis' outcome of service or product should be personal and should stand out from other similar type of products (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003,53). The objective of a functional thesis is to make an operational outcome which is developed, tested and produced during the practical activity of the thesis process. The functional thesis includes reflection of the practical activity and the outcome in an own section. (Metropolia 2020.) In this thesis these can be found in section [4 Implementation](#) and section [5 Feedback and evaluation](#).

Functional thesis is about co-operating with working life partner in instructing, guiding, organizing or rationalizing practical activities. There are various methods at implementing the practical part such as a booklet, portfolio, book, folder, website or organizing an event. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 9.) Functional thesis can be also called as development-based thesis. The outcome of this functional thesis is a guide booklet which can be used by all professionals working with children but also families at home. Sometimes the topic of the functional thesis can come from the working life partner (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 17). I collaborated with working life partner and suggested my idea which was highly approved and together we planned and implemented the functional part of this thesis. The material for the guide booklet was tried out with the working life partner during eight creative workshops in an MLL centre in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

This thesis is made in Finland and the guide booklet is done in co-operation with The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. In Finnish it is called Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto and is abbreviated as MLL which I am going to refer in this thesis. MLL is an NGO which supports children's possibilities to have a childhood with meaning and promotes overall well-being of families with children together with other organisations (MLL n.d.). The English and

Finnish guide booklets can be found at the end of this thesis in the appendices. MLL Uusimaa district's region takes the materials in both languages for their use. The guide booklets are in MLL's intranet and MLL Uusimaa workers can give them further to people in need. I point out that it is important to notice that this material does not replace therapy or aim at being a therapeutic tool. Instead, the material is created for daycare context and can be used also by the parents or other people who are supporting the child. During functional part for me important aspect was to include parents in the process too thus they could continue the process openly at home. I personally view that for early childhood education this guide booklet is a good addition due to the lack of materials to use with children when coping with grief.

Two times I collected feedback during this thesis process. First feedback collection was done during the implementation of functional part in February 2023. I collected feedback from working life partner, registered families, and their children after each creative workshop. I had ready-made feedback forms for the parents and used emoji feedback for children. From the working life partner, I received oral feedback. Based on the feedback I got to know how I reached my goals for the functional part. The second feedback collection was done in April 2024. I received feedback from working life partner, five people who I know being involved in early childhood education and care and one counsellor. I sent them my thesis and or the guide booklet either in Finnish or English via email and they had one week time to give me feedback. I know that I have reached my goals if they give me feedback which is constructive, agrees that this type of material and thesis are needed in the early childhood education context and the working life partner is excited to take my guide booklet as their material.

Furthermore, there is not much previous research data on dealing with children's grief process through creative methods. Unfortunately, in Western societies childhood is viewed as a time where happiness and carefree living takes only place and unhappiness is not accepted thus the focus of research has not been even in early childhood grief (Lipponen & Pursi 2022, 215). Reasonably it is not easy to find background research for creative studies used in children's grief work as there is not yet much available. I use the importance of emotional education in early childhood, emotional development of children aged 4-6, creative methods and life crises as background theories of my thesis. I elaborate on these subjects in section [3 Theoretical framework](#). Next, I present the working life partner in more detail.

2.1 Working life partner

My working life partner is MLL (Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto, The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare) and particularly one meeting place in family centre activities. Meeting places are established activity in MLL's activities which are low threshold and open for families and their children to come spend time and meet other families and also get support from

professionals working in the meeting place (Kyyrö 2023). The funding comes from STEA which is short for Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (MLL n.d). Meeting places are free, preventive and have positive effects on families' well-being because families receive information about different services and can be supported right there in that moment (Jantunen 2023). My working life partner told me that based on survey indicators this meeting place is in the most deprived area of the city. According to my working life partner from January till May 2023, 3100 families and 7526 visitors came to the meeting place.

The meeting place is located in a suburb area, in a neighbourhood with many immigrants. I did there one of my practice placements, so I know the concept of the meeting place in practice. It is open every weekday from 9 till 16. Families can come for free inside and casually be in the open area, meet and discuss with other families and workers at hand. There is a kitchen which can be used freely and eating happens in the dining room. There are other professionals and operators in the same building who are available on different days and families can get help and support for their questions or issues. The professionals and operators are co-operating and are from different organisations, open early childhood education, child- and family services, child health centre, church, and volunteers. The meeting place offers recycling point and food distribution, so families can find clothes they need for their children and get food for free. Also, different kind of activities are offered every day and families can take part if they want to. Moreover, various events are organized for families where all partakers of meeting place can participate.

3 Theoretical framework

Next, I introduce five different theory aspects for my thesis. First, the Finnish ECEC will be shortly presented. Then I discuss about the emotional development of 4-6-year-old children. After that three different life crises are explored which children might experience in early childhood: loss of someone, divorce and moving to another place. Afterwards, children's grief is examined focusing on three different emotions: sadness, anger, and fear. Finally, three creative methods, play, art and music, are looked into which can be used to support children in their grief process and overall emotional education.

3.1 Early childhood education and care in Finland

Here I shortly present the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Finland. I focus especially on the aspects which supports my thesis' theory. It is not obligatory to participate in ECEC in Finland because children's guardians have the right to decide whether their child takes part in ECEC or is taken care of at home (Heinonen, Iivonen, Korhonen, Lahtinen, Muuronen, Semi & Siimes 2016, 34-35). If children are put to ECEC still the guardians have

most responsibility for their up-bringing whereas the educational task of home is supported and complemented by ECEC, and children's well-being is shared responsibility of both ECEC and home (FNAE 2022, 4). ECEC can be provided with various extents in daycare as subjective ECEC which is the right of each child for 20 hours per week, part-time ECEC for 5 hours per day and extended ECEC for more than 20 hours a week but less than full-time. Also as, full-time ECEC for maximum of 10 hours per day and shift care and 24hour ECEC if there is a need. (Heinonen et al. 2016, 38-39.) Other forms of ECEC services are open activities, family daycare and early education centre activities (FNAE 2022, 15). Finnish ECEC is seen as crucial part of children's development and learning and this is ensured by following the local curricula for ECEC, creating each child's individual ECEC plans and implementing ECEC based on national core curriculum (FNAE 2022, 4).

According to Heinonen et al. (2016, 60), European Commission stated that the ECE education and care given in early years of childhood is the foundation of sustainable life-long learning, personal development and integrating to society and these results cannot be received later on with other methods. In addition, the most effective and efficient financial investment for human's growth is done during ECEC (Heinonen et al. 2016, 60). According to Early Childhood Education Act some of the goals of ECEC are implementing versatile pedagogical activities including child's movement, arts, play, and cultural heritage promoting and enabling positive experiences. In addition, based on each child's age and development promoting comprehensive development, growth, well-being, and health. ECEC environment should be safe, healthy, and promoting learning and development. (Heinonen et al. 2016, 13).

Finnish National Core Curriculum strives for horizontal whole which is called transversal competence. These transversal competences of ECEC are consisting of an entity of skills, will, values, knowledge, and attitude. Transversal competences are needed because the world is changing around us and children's transversal competences are strengthened by doing high-quality pedagogical activities in ECEC. (FNAE 2022, 21.) One of the transversal competences is "Taking care of oneself and managing daily life" which includes expression and regulation of emotions and improvement of emotional skills. Personnel has the responsibility to teach children about emotions and together those are practiced for instance giving name to emotions. (FNAE 2022, 23.) "Thinking and learning" transversal competence happens in everyday situation in ECEC where play is a crucial aspect for children's imagination and creativity and free time to explore the surrounding world. In addition, personnel create versatile and meaningful experiences and support thinking with questions and encourages children to keep trying despite failures. (FNAE 2022, 22.) Next, I introduce the emotional development of 4-6-year-old children.

3.2 Emotional development of 4-6-year-olds

Children's emotional development consists of ongoing understanding, dealing with and expression of emotions (Cherry 2024). This emotional development is also linked to children's ability to think and reason but in this chapter, I have purposely left out cognitive development and concentrate solely on emotional development as it is crucial to understand how 4-6-year-olds developmentally understand and view emotions in order to support them better. Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic theory of early childhood social-emotional development has the stage initiative versus guilt which denotes the 3-6-year-old children's new cognitive skills balancing between taking initiatives and facing the feeling guilt in situations where the child is practicing to do the right thing based on the developing conscience. It is the adult's responsibility to protect the child and teach the child to behave correctly. (Boyd & Bee 2019, 175.) Every child develops individually, and the mentioned developmental stages are referential (MLL 2013a, 4; MLL2013b, 4; MLL 2013c, 4).

4-6-year-olds are in the play age where play is developmentally valuable. During these years they get to know the world around them, their own possibilities, starts to build first social relationships and learns about what is prohibited and allowed. (Nurmi 2013, 50.) The emotional development of a 4-year-old includes understanding feelings of sadness, joy, fear, contentment, shame, anger, disappointment, and surprise. Also, children start to express their feelings in words and begin to understand what the outcome is of expressing different emotions. (MLL 2013a, 16.) Especially, 4-6-year-olds need adult support in identifying difficult emotions. Overall, the role of adults is to recognize the child's emotional states and name them for the child, which supports the child's emotional development. (MLL 2013a, 16; MLL 2013b, 14; MLL 2013c, 14.) Adults need to support children's emotional development by being children's so called development object and help ego to think together with them and on the behalf of children. Furthermore, adults support children to regulate their impulses and emotions which children are not yet able to control. (Nurmi 2013, 41.)

Children aged 2.5-5 are beginning to understand and take more notice of other people's feelings and become usually interested in their feelings and the reasons for them (Nurmi 2013, 43). According to Martin Hoffman's analysis of the development of empathy explains that during the stage 3 empathy towards another's feelings is built from the age 2 or 3 forward throughout elementary school. In this stage children do not anymore act egocentrically but can show empathy and respond towards other's feelings. (Boyd & Beed 2019, 180.) Parents can support emotional intelligence with questions of the child's feelings in a situation and then also asking the child how the other person might have felt, allowing the child to reflect on the feelings of others (Cherry 2024). At the age of 5 and 6, children need to have the experience of being understood, accepted, and supported by adults in their

emotional states hence the children learn that the difficult feelings will be alleviated with the adults (MLL 2013b, 14; MLL 2013c, 14).

It is crucial for children's emotional skills development to feel being accepted in order to show difficult emotions. The sense of acceptance also creates empathy skills, moral development and is a prerequisite for self-regulation and skills of self-control. (Nurmi 2013, 41.) 5-year-olds have an intense emotional life where anger and love are going hand in hand and in an instant emotions fluctuate from top to bottom. It is important to be aware that a 5-year-old is easily upset and sensitive and therefore an adult should not make good-natured jokes about a child of this age. (MLL 2013b, 13.) At the age of 6 children can tolerate a little bad mood and discomfort, but children need to be consoled and understood by adults during strong emotional outbursts (MLL 2013c, 14, 18). 4-6-year-olds develop more biological than psychological understanding of life (Dyregrov 2008b, 18). For calming down many children need the presence of adults and sitting on a lap to be able to understand that the difficult emotions are allowed to be shown, expressed, and handled and that the adults still love them. Some children need time alone to calm down but afterwards the situation need to be discussed together. Never child can be left alone in the bad mood and anger. (MLL 2013c, 18.)

4-and 5-year-old children can be afraid of various matters such as the thought of going to a hospital, losing a parent or fear of failure can cause fear. The child needs a peaceful down to earth approach from adults where the issues are explained alleviating the child's fears. (MLL 2013a, 13.; MLL 2013b, 9.) According to Peltonen and Kullberg-Piilola (2000, 138), children have a stage in their development where they are not scared of anything that nothing can move them, and everything is in control. For example, a 6-year-old child claimed that nothing is scary but when heard the adult saying that everybody is afraid of something then the child was able to confess that maybe snakes are scary (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 138). 6-year-olds can to some extent express themselves verbally and are therefore beginning to learn how to control their emotions. Children might not tell every experience when they feel down, and this can cause physiological symptoms such as stomach ache or sleeping problems. When the courage is built and adults get to know what has been going on, the children need to be taken seriously. (MLL 2013c, 14-15.)

3.3 Life crises

Next, I address three life events in order of severity. I chose these events as life crises because they are most common ones which child might face in early childhood. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) co-operates with the guardians of attending children and it is crucial to have a joint commitment, growing trust and equal interaction in order to build a safe, healthy, and developmentally suitable care for the specific child. When faced with challenging situations such as life crises, confidence between personnel and guardians is

the key for supporting child's well-being both at ECEC centre and home. (FNAE 2018, 35-36.) Grief can be felt differently in the three different life crises: loss of someone either through death or no more contact, divorce in the family and its consequences and moving to another place and leaving familiarity and safeness behind. In some of these cases grief and feelings behind it can be easier to work with and in others it takes very long time to welcome the grief as part of own life. It also always depends on the situation and the individual child's temperament, resilience, and relationship with the family. Some of these might have also positive effects on the children's life.

3.3.1 Loss of someone

Developmentally children are not built to face traumatic events hence their understanding is shaken and inevitably expanded (Erkkilä, Holmberg, Niemelä & Ylönen 2003, 66). The worst kind of loss is the death of a parent (Poijula 2002, 146). Kinanen (2009, 29) states that in Finland approximately 2600 minor children lose their parent each year and these losses are most significant in their life. Child is affected most by death because familiar and safe everyday life crashes and child might detach from reality. Detachment occurs because child's consciousness cannot handle the strong emotions thus the thoughts of the event can be rejected. (Dyregrov 1993, 33; Dyregrov 2008a, 83.) Reactions for confronting death is always based on the age and development of a child (Kinanen 2009, 30). Children react obviously to the loss of a parent as this person has been taking care of their needs and now the basic needs are not anymore met by this person (Dyregrov 2008b, 47,51).

Death of a parent is in every case a situation where the sense of safety is broken, and child must find somewhere else the balance and harmony for living. Also, fear for losing other members of a family is common and child might make sure very long time that others are alive by checking them during day and night and become worried if cannot see them for a while. (Kinanen 2009, 29-30; Poijula 2002, 147.) When losing a parent, the threat arises that the needs are no longer met because the person who consoled the grief is now the reason for the grief (Poijula 2002, 146). According to statistics, children losing a parent develops more problems compared to those who do not experience same kind of loss. This still does not indicate that the child's life will be full of problems because depending on the child's support system the child may feel well or almost as well as those who have not lost a parent. (Dyregrov 2008b, 54.)

Most common reactions for a child when hearing about death are shock, disbelief, fear, apathy or continuation of the activity at hand (Poijula 2002, 142). After the shock phase anxiety, anger, sleeping problems, sadness, need of attention, yearning, physiological reactions, guilt, and sicknesses are possible reactions of a grieving child (Poijula 2002, 143). It is most important that children are not lied to when it is about loss of someone, rather

truth is told age appropriately because children will be sadder and feel betrayed by the lies when the truth finally comes out. There is no need to go into deeper details of the death. For example, a grandmother is sick without the possibility for recovering, it is better to tell the truth to the child and answer the child's questions so that the child knows and understands what is going on. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 43-44.)

Magical thinking in young children can create self-accusation and feelings of guilt about the loss and situations around it (Dyregrov 2008a, 25). Poijula (2016, 100) describes how this kind of thinking can create a belief in young child's mind that the child has caused or is the reason for instance for the death because before it happened, they had a fight where the child expressed hating the parent. Young child is supported by the guardian with whom the attachment is created. These are holding the child on a lap, rhythm, and tone of voice, rocking and handling the child which create a safe feeling and child's self-image is built as a whole. (Poijula 2002, 142.) Young children see death as a temporary and believes that the parent is only sleeping longer than usual. Additionally, children can view death as a symbol such as the Grim Reaper (viikatemies in Finnish) and it can be seen as scary, but death is not yet personal because the belief is that death can be avoided. (Poijula 2016, 100.)

Other losses child might experience are a loss of a sibling, a grandparent/s, a pet, a friend, or a situation where there is no more contact due to for example difficult divorce. Dyregrov (2008a, 11) states that losing a grandparent is the most common loss experienced by children. The relationship and spent time together affect how a child views the loss of a grandparent. When child loses the grandparent the sense of safety is not threatened because own parents and family takes care of the child and consoles in yearning. (Kinanen 2009, 37.) Reactions can be stronger if the grandparent has often taken care of the child and the interaction has occurred daily (Dyregrov 2008a, 11).

The loss of a pet should be also confronted and processed because every loss is worthy of grief (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 113-114). Child often experiences first big loss when own pet dies (Poijula 2016, 98). For a child the loss can be even traumatic because the pet has been important part of life and has shared many secrets of the child. Child can feel denial, anger and depression without the animal but also try to bribe to get the pet back. (Kinanen 2009, 37-38.) Furthermore, child might be strongly affected by hearing that friend has passed away and this can cause fear that they can die too or someone in their family. Young children might express separation anxiety and do not want to go to daycare because they want to be present with the safe parents. (Dyregrov 2008a, 20-21.)

The likelihood to lose a sibling is slightly higher than losing a parent before adulthood (Kinanen 2009, 36). Death of a sibling can be traumatic and affect whole lifetime depending on the relationship. Not every child in the family reacts and grieves same way towards the

loss of the sibling which parents must consider. (Poijula 2016, 116.) Additionally, parents are affected by the loss which can lead to a situation where child does not receive physical presence and caretaking from the grieving parents. Worst case can happen where parents are not able to see past their grief thus children must take the role for supporting their parents. (Kinanen 2009, 34.) Also, a young child can start to think about own possibility of dying when experiences the loss of a sibling (Poijula 2002, 153). Children grieving deceased sibling might have physiological reactions which are caused by incapability to express emotions and adults' responsibility is to help in expression and acceptance of the emotions and situation. Additionally, telling the children of their importance, taking children to activities done together, consoling and giving information are beneficial ways to remind children of their value and position in their parents' lives. (Poijula 2016, 117.)

3.3.2 Divorce

Poijula (2016, 263) states that in Finland around 60% of divorces occur when children are young and every year 40 000 families move apart, and these families' children do not anymore live in a nuclear family. In Finland divorce takes place in every other marriage. Sometimes parents' divorce and get back together in a vicious cycle which is especially harmful for children and some children may experience divorce many times. (Poijula 2016, 263.) Children do not want divorce taking place in their family in most of the cases (Poijula 2016, 263). Divorce is always a life crisis in the family's life because renunciation (giving up and abandonment) takes place even though the divorce is in some situations necessary for the well-being of the family. During divorce children can feel that the other parent moving away is sort of abandoning them. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 193.)

Child experiences many losses during divorce and one of the greatest losses can be the loss of daily communication with the other parent or other members of the family (Poijula 2016, 98). Kinanen (2009, 30) adds the fact that child may feel grief towards the other parent who has passed away in the family earlier even though living together as a family has not happened because of the divorce. Furthermore, grief can be present in the child's life towards the absent parent, but this kind of grief is not always accepted in the society thus the child might stay alone with the felt grief in this kind of situation (Kinanen 2009, 30). It is interesting that according to some studies children who have experienced divorce have more problems than children whose parent has passed away. This is due to divorce possibly exposing children to interparental hostility and requiring children to choose between their parents. (Gindes 1998, 133.)

Unfortunately, divorce can cause children's feelings and needs to become secondary because adults have so much to do in planning, deciding, and agreeing on the matters of divorce. Also, parents own emotions and memories are on the surface thus it is natural that children are for

some period out of the limelight. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 193.) It is crucial that after divorce both parents can concentrate to be good-hearted parents for children's benefit instead of staying in a miserable survival mode (Poijula 2016, 263). The relationship between children and parents before divorce, during divorce and after divorce are most decisive aspects for the development of the children. Divorce can cause harmful aspect for child's development but if parents are able to keep child's best interest as a priority and not continue to fight with the other parent then divorce is not increasing the risk of disruptive development. (Poijula 2016, 263). Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola (2000, 194) points out a crucial aspect involving parents' responsibilities to respect each other as the children's parents even though they are not anymore together and strive for neutrality so that children will not be offended by denigration and slander towards the other parent.

When divorce takes place in the family, child has to be reminded and explained that the reason for the divorce is never the child and child cannot affect the decision although the child's opinions are respected. Young child does not need to have detailed explanation of the reasons for the divorce rather parents should be honest with their emotions and take care of the child. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 193-194.) Poijula (2016, 265) claims that it is most important to speak about the divorce to children only after parents' have made the decisions, can answer the questions consistently and offer the structured plan for future. Parents should tell children about decision of divorce together and explain it age-appropriately hence children can understand what is going to happen concretely. Young children do not think far ahead as adults do thus talking about divorce can take place closer to the divorce. (Poijula 2016, 265-266.)

Grief is the core feature for processing divorce and each member of the family experiences and expresses it in various ways and in their own time (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 195). Children can feel during divorce process anger, loneliness, grief, disappointment, shame, fear, and sense of betrayal (Poijula 2016, 268). Divorce causes children to experience loss of trust and become fearful what will happen in the future. Sadness is often the first reaction of young children when hearing about divorce and understanding the meaning. (Poijula 2016, 264.) Sometimes a child might not seem to realize the reality of divorce until the other parent brings home a new partner. This can cause anger inside the child and the child might view the new partner as the real reason for the parents' divorce. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 195.) Also, in this situation children might experience uncertainty until the own parent becomes emotionally available again. Important to note is that most of the children have fantasies about their own parents getting back together and this can take years because the children wish to have the family intact as before. (Poijula 2016, 268.)

3.3.3 Moving to another place

There is not much research done about moving to another place affecting young children, but more focus is on relocation due to divorce and its consequences. I believe children of any age can experience emotion grief and feelings behind it due to relocation. Here I concentrate on young children's experience of relocation and the effect divorce has in moving away. Anyway, child can experience relocation to a new area as a loss of familiar environment (Poijula 2016, 98). According to studies, less than 13-year-old children perceive feeling of security truly important based on permanence of home instead of the physical protection inside the home. Additionally, environment and home where child lives create the feeling of attachment towards security and family's love. (Giuliani 2003, 158.) Poijula (2016, 24) explains that "children are really sensitive towards the changes in their environment, especially to parents' emotions and reactions" thus change in their environment due to relocation can cause a lot of stress in children.

Children also change daycares because of moving to a new area. Young children should be encouraged to bring familiar and safe toy or picture of parents to a new daycare in order to alleviate the feeling of fear and sadness (Jalongo 1994, 83). Research has found that young children whose friend has moved away, and they do not have anymore contact might show more agitation longer time. It is noteworthy that both children who move away and who stay have shown feelings of grief, worry and sometimes anger which are normal in any type of separation. (Jalongo 1994, 81.) Children can adapt better to new environment and home or transform the new reality using their imagination (Giuliani 2003, 151). According to Jalongo (1994, 82), adults generally view moving away as a logistical and logical matter while children see it as an emotional and social matter.

In Finland in most cases (87%) children stay with their mother as a decision in divorce and 96% of the parents have an agreement where the children live after divorce. Around 11-13% post-divorce families decide on children living in joint residence which can cause stress and disturb social life in a long term for children. (Poijula 2016, 265.) Children may feel guilt and have blame fantasies towards themselves as if they would be responsible that the other parent did not move in with them. Young children do not have the understanding yet so they might feel abandoned by the other parent who stayed in the old home. (Gindes 1998, 139.) When relocation takes place, the needs of every member involved cannot always be satisfied. Children and noncustodial parent will be deprived the valuable times together and children's well-being might be negatively affected by the distressed custodial parent whose parenting is lacking. (Gindes 1998, 146.) Nowadays in Finland both parents take care of the children in shared custody, and it is important to consider the effect for the children which weekly changes in the environment might cause (MLL 2024).

Relocating with a decent and capable custodial parent decreases risk for a young child but still losing important attachment is the central risk as left-behind noncustodial parent is also competent and was spending time with the young child (Kelly & Lamb 2003, 13). Some cases relocation does not have much negative impact on the child's relationship towards the other parent if already before or after divorce the noncustodial parent showed little or no interest in the child (Kelly & Lamb 2003, 14-15). According to Gindes (1998, 141), children of any age have difficulties to view divorce as positive especially when relocation is contested but evidence shows that adaptation takes approximately two years for both children and parents. When moving away improves the well-being of parents in different aspects in their life then this affects positively children's well-being especially if the relationship between them and noncustodial parent is continuing regularly. On the other hand, moving away can benefit the child if the relationship was non-existent or disturbed with the noncustodial parent. (Kelly & Lamb 2003, 23.) Even if divorce can be a good turning point in life due to for example one parent being abusive, it can and might still cause the child to grieve (MLL 2024).

3.4 Grief and feelings behind it

Children can feel grief emotionally and bodily, but it is crucial to understand that every life situation is unique, and each child is an individual. Already young children show crying as a sign of sadness. Other signs can be certain withdrawal, tension of the body, anxiety reactions, item throwing and refusal to speak. (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 22.) Poijula (2016, 117) claims that children who have lost their sibling can experience grief physiological for example as stomach ache, headache, sleeplessness, and symptoms of depression. Physiological reactions can occur more if child is not able to express the grief and feelings behind it. Other feelings behind grief are loneliness, anger, fear, sadness, frustration, irritability and many more. (Poijula 2016, 117.) Often can be heard that children will survive grief naturally and this is one way true, but it is crucial for young children to have safe adults walking alongside them throughout the grief process (Kinanen 2009, 56). It is important to examine grieving and everyday grief of children in the glance of cultural dynamics in order to support children better. Everyday grief denotes situations in child's life where suffering takes place in some way for instance loneliness can come from not having friends in a daycare (Quiñones et al. 2021, 2).

Next, I address three emotions related to the grieving process: sadness, anger and fear, which a child may experience in the context of different life crises. All the aforementioned are basic emotions (Nurmi 2013, 20). Different cultures have different meanings for the word grief (Lipponen and Pursi 2022, 217). Grief and sadness are terms which are slightly different in English and Finnish. As to grieve is "surra" and sadness is "surullisuus" in Finnish. Grief is "sureminen" which tells how a person mourns after something has happened. Word "suru" itself in Finnish consists of both grief and sadness thus I am using them interlinked in the next

chapter. In the Finnish language guide booklet word "suru" is used so it includes both the action grief and sadness emotion. Whereas the English language guide booklet has sadness and grief words used separately.

3.4.1 Sadness

Young children get familiar with milder feelings of sadness through disappointments and it is easier for them to understand first a feeling "bad mood", "paha mieli" a Finnish term which means that the person is not feeling emotionally well, instead of the concept sadness. When a child is learning through healthy and open emotion honesty to notice the "bad mood" and tell about it to someone then this skill prepares the child to be able to grieve. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 117.) Poijula (2016, 103) explains how adults can think that children are not affected by grief when outwardly children seem to have lack of sadness because young children try to avoid the pain which emotion sadness causes. One reason for a child's silence can be that the strongest feeling child experiences is confusion, and other emotions are below it. As a result, child struggles to find ways to express and understand the whole emotional turmoil. (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 109.) In some cases children can conceal their sadness in order to prevent their parents becoming sad and when they cry, they tell the reason to be something else than the grief (Dyregrov 2008b, 29).

According to Peltonen and Kullberg-Piilola (2000, 126), parents have a vital role of teaching children from an early age on that when they feel sad and disappointed, those feelings are immediately allowed to be shown and it is totally okay to be comforted by other people. Children have completely different view on expression of the feelings when they have seen the example from their parents that all feelings are acceptable and important to feel and speak about. Moreover, children should be told that they have their own way of grieving because otherwise they can try to imitate the reactions of adults. Additionally, children should also hear that they do not need to be sad all the time. (Dyregrov 1993, 77.) Children are good at reading situations and sensitive so being supported by an adult to be themselves and feel how they feel is important. When processing grief with children, adults should remember the principle "The bigger the problems, even smaller the steps" which means that while supporting, the actions should be simple, delicate and understandable (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 110).

Grief doesn't always have to do with dying thus many circumstances in a child's life can pop up the feeling strongly such as losing something important for instance a friendship (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 125). Children's grief can be looked at through the glance of an umbrella concept for children's experiences of everyday grief such as withdrawal from peers (Quiñones et al. 2021, 2). Children inevitably face emotion grief, and this can happen for example when a dead animal is found outdoors, and guardians should take the situation

seriously even though for them it is meaningless to cry over something one never knew. Parents can help the child to process the new feeling by going to the level of the child's emotion as validating and expressing it out loud as: "You must be feeling very sad over the dead squirrel". (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 124-125.) Emotion honesty and emotional skills start with parents acknowledging the need for their children to process grief (Dyregrov 1993, 31, see also Dyregrov 2008a & Dyregrov 2008b).

When children are grieving more difficult situations like death of a grandparent then again, the way parents support children in their grief matters. The example of how to deal with emotions is learned from closest people's actions. If children are left alone with the grief process since parents are not able to face own grief and other emotions, then children must face the grief alone which is very hard for them. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 125.) Parents can think it is easier to not to speak about what has happened and how they are feeling in order to keep the child safe. Unfortunately, childhood can be seen as a life stage where pain and sadness do not belong (Poijula 2016, 103). According to Dyregrov (1993, 45; Dyregrov 2008a, 75), adult should always speak what has happened to a child considering the child's age because obmutescence causes more trouble in them. Young children should be encouraged to express with words and talking about their grief and sadness because even though they are young, they are developmentally capable (Poijula 2016, 118).

3.4.2 Anger

Children can express "bad mood" through anger and tantrums. Adults can think the behaviour is nonsense, but a child is finding a way to express the feeling and after the outrage calm down. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 97.) Expressing anger can be thought to be dangerous but Poijula (2016, 68) describes that frustration, irritation and rage feelings and anger emotion itself belong to anger expression. So that being said, children can start to understand anger emotion from those smaller expressions. It is important to allow anger to appear through small proportions and steps so that anger emotion is not to be scared of, but it can be confronted safely (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen, 2009, 63). Important to know also is that anger emotion can mask other emotions such as sadness, fear, pain, shame, and lack of safety when something traumatic has happened in a child's life (Poijula 2016, 70; Nurmi 2013, 26). Suppressing emotions has been the emotional education in the past and sometimes adults repeat this kind of behaviour by invalidating, downplaying and not allowing child's emotions to be expressed (Isokorpi 2004, 131; Nurmi 2013, 17). Nurmi (2013, 17) recommends that adults offer a safe place and a time for a child to express anger and make sure that the reason behind the emotion is heard and nobody can humiliate the child.

Reality is that during early childhood timespan anger outbursts and aggressive behaviour are typical part of a child's life (Nurmi 2013, 23). Young children are still open and more

straightforward at showing anger emotion and especially around the age of 3 children are angriest and this can be noticed. Anger is so huge physiological emotion that mind might not be able to handle it, so a child can feel anxiety instead of anger. (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 57-59.) That is why adults and educators have a valuable task to teach children to name emotions and feelings. Inevitably children learn to understand what is going on and can start to express themselves other ways than suppressing feelings or doing aggressive actions. (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 58.) Peltonen and Kullberg-Piilola (2000, 96) agree with the importance of adult's role in supporting child with emotions. For example when child is making a tantrum, adult should validate by saying out loud "Darling you are very angry right now" and this kind of emotional education helps child soon to link the words to the feelings. Additionally, if children are explained by parents that their behaviour caused also parents to feel anger then children recognize that they are not alone with this big emotion and do not feel scared to face this emotion again. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 96.)

Children can occasionally find it too difficult to experience emotions bodily and this can lead to life traps where the felt emotions are not recognized. Children's emotions are on the surface and change rapidly, which leaves the responsibility for the adult to ease the emotional load for them by expressing own emotions openly and safely but also comforting and calming down the strongly feeling children. (Isokorpi 2004, 129-130.) Likewise, Nurmi (2013, 17, 26) expresses the importance of a safe and capable adult's role in situations where child feels strong emotions. When child's so called "negative emotions" are suppressed due to adult's anxiety towards the situation then child learns that these emotions are abnormal and makes the child feel guilty about feeling them. Slowly child will reject the difficult emotions which still stay inside the child and some point later in life, the suppressed emotions will come out. (Isokorpi 2004, 131-132.) In the Finnish culture the punishment culture for wrong actions has been the norm. Instead, children should be in a constructive way given a chance to change the behaviour and if it does not happen then clear boundaries are made, the anger is recognized and support is given. (Nurmi 2013, 136.)

Anger is a powerful emotion felt both inside and outside of the body at the same time. Poijula (2016, 69) states that anger is a psychophysical feeling which is linked closely to hormone balance specifically to adrenaline and its related hormones. Anger causes usually temporary restlessness, hyperactivity, and the need to move body, such as hitting, clenching hands into fists, tightened jaw, shouting, or taking up a fighting position. Furthermore, typically energy levels and general alertness increases because anger generates energy. (Poijula 2016, 69, 72.) Child can break down when not being able to handle unbearable emotions by out bursting rage in which child screams, shouts, hits head to wall and hits with fist (Nurmi 2013, 38). During anger outburst child can become scared of the intensity of anger because anger can make the child feel more powerful at that moment (Nurmi 2013, 168). If anger is linked to traumatic experience, then outburst can be disproportionate compared to

the real situation causing the outburst. Outburst can look like lightning and explosion which creates physical pain such as headache. (Poijula 2016, 168.) On the other hand, to show anger can become extremely passive or internal so that child directs anger towards themselves, keeps it inside or gets depressed (Poijula 2016, 68; Nurmi 2013, 168).

3.4.3 Fear

Some of everyone's fears are caused by traumatic life crises or life itself and during interactions with others (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 43). Child can become even scared of own parent if experiences many times for example quarrelling and drinking at evenings and the known and safe parent becomes weird and scary. Child might seem outside the same as before but inside the conflict has arisen that the child ponders about trustworthiness and safety of the parent or both of them. (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 43.) According to Dyregrov (1993, 19), grieving children's fear and anxiety appear in various ways and especially young children become fearful and clingy towards own family members. Additionally, fear of losing another parent too when they become sick is usual and child can become scared of own death also. Avoiding strong emotions is standard and this can be seen if child avoids places where something bad happened or people who reminds of the difficult situation. Child can have magical perceptions on life and believe that if something bad which has happened is spoken about, it will happen again. (Dyregrov 1993, 20; Dyregrov 2008b, 27.)

Fear can also be healthy as it can protect and warn of dangers for instance fear of falling, fear of darkness and getting scared of loud noises coming towards are beneficial to experience so that human being is cautious (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 42). Fear being a good thing is called excitement for example in an amusement park (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 131) and the reaction in the body is more positive than negative. The possible fears children have, are endless, but here are some of them mentioned: cars, animals, divorce, death, sicknesses, wars, own parents, darkness, relatives, drunkards, monsters et cetera (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 136). Peltonen and Kullberg-Piilola (2000, 132) speaks about the fact that adults must be aware of own fears because often children absorb the same ones such as fear of snakes, spiders or thunderstorm which are known to be the most common fears children receive from their parents. Fear can be felt in the body as hands' shaking, sweating, throat tightness, face going pale and heart beating (Poijula 2016, 63).

If fear is multilayered then the emotion can be felt as anxiety, lack of safety and even sometimes the fear of fear itself. Fear of fear denotes that a person is more scared of feeling the emotion fear than the object of fear, accordingly the fear is towards the experience of fear. (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 45.) Anxiety is unresolved fear which is caused by something experienced as danger (Poijula 2016, 64). If child has experienced loss of someone

it might affect the sleeps of the child because in the evening there is more time for thinking and feeling about the person and the situation. Going to sleep can become a fear and child might see nightmares, struggle to fall asleep and wake up often during night. (Dyregrov 2008b, 28-29.) Fear provokes anxiety by causing new fears because of the initial fear. For example, a child fears darkness and a group of children plays a tag in the dark and then this child becomes even more scared that others won't invite the child anymore to play because the fear of darkness prevented to participate in the game. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 131.) Young children become worried when experiencing anxiety for instance five-year-old has the need to sleep together with a toy gun even though neighbourhood is safe so if someone robs the house during the night, the toy gun is the protector in that situation (Poijula 2016, 65).

Sinkkonen and Tähtinen (2009, 47), states that emotional education was earlier based on conditional love and children were parented using the fear of losing love. Therefore, the child who was acting the way as supposed to was worthy of love but if mistakes were made then the love and acceptance was taken away as a punishment (Sinkkonen & Tähtinen 2009, 47). It is crucial to separate forcing and encouragement from each other when supporting children in their fears. Forcing to try something or encouraging so much that it becomes like obligatory for the child to do then those behaviours just increase more fear to the already felt fear for the child. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 139.) It is easiest for a child to confront emotion fear during day light with safe adults and in a familiar place in the child's pace, giving name to matters. Important to note is that each child experiences fear individually, and the same family's children might fear different things. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 131.)

According to Peltonen and Kullberg-Piilola (2000, 132) young children's fears are not tangible therefore turning the light on in a room and showing there is no monster in the room helps for example a three-year-old child to overcome the fear of darkness. When a child is scared and anxious, adults can support the child by doing breathing exercises, safety place exercises, show empathy by saying that the child is understood, and the feelings are real. Always first a child needs the support for the feelings and then is time for comforting, advising, and analysing the situation. (Poijula 2016, 66-67.) Adults can support children by being honest and share own story how something scary was confronted and overcome in their childhood or life. Likewise, to remind that it is good to speak about fears as well as other topics and comfort children that they are never alone with fear because processing fear is done with the safe adult. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 132, 136.)

3.5 Creative methods

Poijula (2016, 103) states that adults may see childhood as a timeline where pain and grief do not belong, so they want to protect children. I believe creative methods are a powerful tool

to use to express oneself without being able to process the difficult life crises yet verbally and developmentally. Children need to be heard and seen in different ways to get in touch with their own feelings and memories in order to increase children's self-knowledge. Art is a tool for communication and interaction because it connects with emotional areas, even if language is not yet involved. (Känkänen 2013, 68.) Working methods in ECEC must promote creativity and participation for children with the purpose of natural learning (FNAE 2018, 40). Adults who are either professionals and or guardians can get access to the guide booklet, which was produced based on this thesis, where are several tested creative methods. The adults can use it as a tool when supporting children to express themselves without going to the role of a therapist. Känkänen and Raunio (2010, 7) explain art-based activities to be therapeutical but not therapy itself. The same way this guide booklet has a reminder not to use it as a therapy. Känkänen (2013, 89) states that adults utilizing creative methods with children should have therapeutical attitudes of acceptance, playfulness, empathy and capability to be curious.

Finnish early childhood education uses playful and artistic methods. ECEC determines various children's rights (MLL 2023) which must be followed. Children's right to receive early childhood education and care from own starting points and the rights for opinions, thoughts, emotions and self-expression during ECEC. Personnel have a responsibility to understand children's different ways of communication and importantly play as a concept for fun, and joyful learning is the right of children. (FNAE 2018, 21.) Non-verbal expression and creative methods provide a concrete outlet for stimulus and thoughts but also relieve children's overall tension. Even if children have built defence mechanisms to avoid unprocessed painful experiences, it is possible to do creative methods. (Dyregrov 1993, 93.) Creative methods in ECEC are at the same time used for achieving learning and an instrument for learning (FNAE 2018, 40). According to Känkänen (2006, 139), creative activities can help to process indirectly difficult matters because they give possibility for symbolic distance. The symbolic distance denotes a protective, liberating, and mediating tool for going through contents of the mind. It is a safe way to unlock something which was not comprehended earlier. Children benefit from this as over time the issues not dealt with will be connected naturally in creative expression. (Känkänen 2006, 139.)

Play, art and music are chosen for the guide booklet because they are beneficial tools for expression and natural in childhood. Artistic experience and expression are viewed as a necessary part of children's normal way of acting in early childhood education plan (Pusa 2014). Play is the whole platform to work with because children play all the time in their childhood. In this thesis the upcoming play chapter has more information compared to art and music chapters, because the importance of play in children's life is taken account and all the creative workshops were started by some game which evoked the children's excitement for learning. Thus, art and music activities are done based on play in the guide booklet. Creative

methods are explained and activities for play, art and music have instructions for use in the guide booklet. It is important that chosen creative methods of use are increasing children's participation (Känkänen 2006, 138). ECEC values children's participation and it is done by ensuring every child having the opportunity to take part, also listening, and reacting to children's initiatives increase the ability to take part (FNAE 2018, 27).

3.5.1 Play

In a Finnish National Core Curriculum play is contained in the themes "I grow, move and develop", "Me and our community" and "Diverse forms of expression" in ECEC's learning areas (FNAE 2018, 42). Operational culture of ECEC encourages play and interaction by creating settings and learning environments for play because play is perceived to have positive impact on children's well-being and learning. Play is both about initiatives from children which personnel respond to and created time and space for children and personnel to play together. (FNAE 2018, 31.) In ECEC personnel can observe child's play and get to know in the meantime better the child's interests, thoughts, emotions and experiences (FNAE 2022, 38). Experimental play is a way for a child to build again sense of safety towards outer world but also adults can notice which matters are puzzling the mind of the child (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 66).

Play is natural and joyful way for children to experience inner selves and outer world. Children can process difficult experiences during play because play is a safe way to try, experiment and fail. Group playing in ECEC supports each child's emotion regulation and teaches to take consideration on others. (FNAE 2018, 41.) Grieving children's play is active and includes strong emotions, and the play can have changes such as different roles and outcomes and the final phase is about understanding and having wishes for the future (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 73). Games representing real life situations such as funeral and accidents are never to be forbidden because a child is learning about the adults' world, finding answers to questions and processing emotions felt. Additionally, adults should support children creating circumstances for the play where for instance death is possible to go through. (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 67; Dyregrov 1993, 71.)

Children are learning inevitably through play even though they do not realize that play is a key for their learning, to perceive world around them and to spend time by playing (FNAE 2018, 41). Play is a safe environment where children can confront experienced trauma thus play is most helpful for children to process grief and continue their life (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 64). Likewise, play is for young children means to create symbolic distance and metaphoric safety in order to indirectly process difficult matters (Känkänen 2013, 99). Child starts to feel new kinds of feelings due to traumatic events and to get to know the new angry, grieving, rejecting self is safer inside the play (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 65). Processing an out-of-ordinary

life event by repeating subjects in a play is healthy and a natural way for a child (Kinanen 2009, 57).

Play is a form of verbal and bodily expression which teach children about various communication and expression methods. During playing topics can arise from children's experiences, imagination and observations which are processed together in ECEC. (FNAE 2018, 47.) When verbal expression feels or is difficult then play offers easier way to confront and process difficult experiences. Children do not necessarily realize that play is about these matters which require inner processes and feelings. (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 69.) Children play projective plays which help to get to know themselves and others by projecting intentions, emotions and wishes towards toys and this starts processing emotions and experiences (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 64-65). Sometimes a child's model of interactions is seen in the play like hitting the toy and the next minute hugging or behaving contradictory towards peers. This kind of behaviour can tell of the child's way of understanding how human relations can include contrary emotions for instance the same caregiver can love, be present and sometimes leave alone and hit. (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 68.)

Truly, play is one of the best ways to practice different emotions. These emotions are identified during play, aroused in other children and experienced by themselves. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 133.) Anger can be expressed safely during play because being angry does not cause consequences and anger can be headed for something not even acceptable which helps a child to process it (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 70). During play it is safe for children to practice being fearful and brave and how to survive scary situations. For example, a child often plays a game where the pet of the family dies and in this way the child practices to face the emotion fear towards losing something important. (Peltonen & Kullberg-Piilola 2000, 133.) Adults can support children taking part in the play and reminding children that they are not the reason for the incident and complimenting children positively (Erkkilä et al. 2003, 66).

3.5.2 Art

Art is part of the themes "Me and our community", "I grow, move and develop" and "Diverse forms of expression" in the Finnish National Core Curriculum's learning areas of ECEC (FNAE 2018, 42). Art activities include experiencing and expressing oneself and they support children's social skills, positive-self-image, learning and increasement in understanding and structuring world. Additionally, emotions, creative thinking and learning to observe are explored and experienced during motivative artistic activities (FNAE 2018, 45.) Art can be done either alone or in a group and either way the child enjoys it. Learning and expressing oneself happens in art making and children develop themselves as an individual but also as a member of a group. (Pusa 2014, 60.)

ECEC supports each individual child, and this is considered in joint artistic activities as enough time and space is reserved. Children are taught to interpret and explain their reflections about their own art works. Shapes, colours, context, emotions woken up by the art, the artist itself and materials are taught to put attention to. (FNAE 2018, 46.) It is important to set aside time for unhurried artistic activities in order to allow children to solve their questions appeared and explore different matters through art (Ruokonen, Rusanen & Välimäki 2009, 49). According to Känkänen (2013, 95-96), empowering and therapeutical impacts of art have gotten to be known by the experiences gathered from art therapy which have strengthened understanding and information of art's value. The educators' role is to inspire children to create art, and this is done by awakening multisensory mental images and touching the children's emotional world (Ruokonen et al. 2009, 49).

Every child can independently work on their grief process by drawing. The materials for drawing are easy to gather and each household and daycare should have them for children's use. (Kinanen 2009, 57.) Visual work needs mental images for a child to create imagination based on observations of reality because the child's imagination cannot produce something out of nothing. Children are processing their perceptions and mental images while creating art and making them visible. (Ruokonen et al. 2009, 49.) Grieving children might create some drawings related to death just as graveyards or some other life crisis experienced and this is a way to expand their understanding of the situation (Dyregrov 1993, 72).

3.5.3 Music

In the Finnish National Core Curriculum music belongs to the themes "Me and our community", "Diverse forms of expression" and "I grow, move and develop" from ECEC's learning areas (FNAE 2018, 42). In ECEC children practice immersing themselves in music and observing the sound environment. Music is done by singing songs, having fun with nursery rhymes, trying out different musical instruments, dancing to music together and just listening to music. (FNAE 2018, 46.) Personnel of ECEC encourage children to express their emotions and thoughts woken up by music, for instance doing it visually, verbally or dancing and using their imagination (FNAE 2018, 46).

Music as a therapeutical tool has an impact on humans' concentration, verbal capability, and initiative. Children with dysfunction have been found to react positively to music together with dancing as this captivates their concentration both in nonverbal and verbal levels. (Bojner-Horwitz & Bojner 2007, 57.) Creating music and listening to music are general methods to express emotions and children see producing music differently than adults. If a child has lost a parent, the music chosen to listen to or play to are in the child's world the best ones, but an adult might view the choices as negatively loud or not suitable. (Kinanen 2009, 58-59.) Emotions can be woken up by different features of music (Bojner-Horwitz &

Bojner 2007, 61). Children might start to laugh and play due to music's comfortable and relaxing effect (Bojner-Horwitz & Bojner 2007, 78).

According to Bojner-Horwitz and Bojner (2007, 81), 4-6-year-old children receive too much stimulus nowadays which affects children's well-being. Especially children living in bigger cities might have their days busier, wider, and fragmented compared to many adults. This leads to apathy, restlessness, troubles in concentration, sickness and hyperactivity which all are serious warning signals. One of the issues is the loud volume in the environment and children might not be able to handle the moments of silence. Hence, to create moments of silence where children close their eyes are crucial and this opens the concentration to sounds which have been hidden due to the loud noises. (Bojner-Horwitz & Bojner 2007, 81.)

4 Implementation

My aim of this thesis was to produce a material for supporting grieving children through creative methods. This was done by examining the theory of children's grief process during life crises and creative methods. The data for the study was collected using functional methods. This denotes that I facilitated workshops in practice based on the creative methods: play, art and music. The examination of the functional part includes three phases: first, eight activity plans were designed based on theoretical discussion and collaboration with the working life partner based on each workshop experience; second, the activity plans were piloted with children and parents, and; third, the guide booklet was created based on the theoretical discussion and piloted activities. The goal of the workshops was to test whether the creative methods of the guide booklet work with children. The aim of the guide booklet is that adults, whether professionals or not, can get to know more about children's grief and how to support grieving children. I present next the three phases of the functional part of my thesis' implementation.

4.1 First phase: Preparation and activity plans

The activities for supporting 4-6 years old children in their grieving process were planned during October, November, and December 2022. I chose this age group because 4-6 years old children can understand and use language already better, can follow guidance and are able to understand better what emotions are and can benefit from the creative methods I chose for the guide booklet. I co-operated with a working life partner during these months and got confirmation of the plans and ideas I had for the activity plans. Based on our discussions with the working life partner we assessed that the activities were looking suitable and versatile before the workshops started and concluded that they are possible to be implemented with the three emotions: anger, sadness, and fear. I chose creative methods, play, painting and

music, for examining above mentioned emotions with children. The methods belong under the learning area “Diverse forms of expression” in the ECEC curriculum and resonate with several transversal competence areas like “Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression”, “Thinking and learning” and “Taking care of oneself and managing daily life” (FNAE 2022, 21, 39). Based on the try-out workshops the plan was to evaluate whether and how the activities should be adjusted more to the age group of children for the guide booklet.

Furthermore, we planned together in January 2023 what time and how the creative workshops will be held, what kind of facility is used and how to implement the workshops. Workshops were chosen to be every Monday and Wednesday, altogether eight times, in February 2023 at 4-5 pm in a suburban area in a meeting place for registered families. The dates and times were decided together with a working life partner based on the suitability; schedules of the meeting place and the idea that this time of the day could be working for the families after the meeting place closes and daycare ends. The rhythm of the workshops was agreed to be similar every time. Idea was that keeping the same rhythm is important because it brings safety and consistency to the workshops.

The workshops started with a small snack, introduction circle and rules (15 minutes), carrying out the planned activities and at the same time discussing and learning about the three emotions (30 minutes). The last part was for feedback from parents and children and relaxing in the room while instrumental peaceful music was played (15 minutes). We decided to book a proper size room with a big table for the workshops. The room had space for free play, including musical instruments and toys. These would have been visible all the time, but I hid them purposely under the blankets so that children would not lose their focus during the workshops. I explain how the implementation of the workshops happened in the [Second phase](#).

Advertisement was done by putting leaflets on the walls of the meeting place in January 2023. Also, the advertisements were posted to meeting place’s Facebook and Instagram. Age group of children was mentioned in the advertisement. Advertisements were both in Finnish and English language hence both speaking families were invited, and I was willing to do the workshops bilingual. In January 2023 I came a few times during the opening hours of the meeting place to advertise the workshops to the visiting families. I had done my practice placement there less than a year ago so many regular visitors remembered me which was great for the advertisement. I personally invited families and my picture was purposely put to the advertisement thus when it was on the wall in the meeting place and social media, families could recognize me and get interested and brave enough to register themselves.

Families registered themselves with the help of a worker in the meeting place, my working life partner. The working life partner was responsible for the families’ registrations. Families

as wished age group of children and possibility to commit to the workshops were reasons for selecting the families. The guardians of the children were invited to every workshop which created coherent understanding and safe space. Same adults and children taking part resulted in sharing knowledge and practice. My working life partner said that sometimes meeting place's families do not commit and take part in workshops held multiple times and where there is an unfamiliar host. In my situation, workshop registrations became full already by the end of January even though only two families from seven knew me personally from the time of my practice placement. Some of the families I had met during my personal advertising.

Accordingly, seven families with nine children registered themselves to the workshops. The children's ages were 5-year-old's (four of them), 4-year-olds (three of them) and 3-year-olds (two of them). Unfortunately, no family registered themselves who would have a 6-year-old as the wished age group. One of the 3-year-olds was almost 4 and came together with an older sibling. The other 3-year-old was registered by the parent telling how the child is developmentally capable to take part. Four of the families spoke good Finnish, two of the families' parents spoke only English where the other family's child spoke Finnish and the other family's child did not share any common language, so the parent translated everything to the child. One of the families spoke better English and a little Finnish but the child had delayed speech and communicated seldom. Thus, the workshops were mostly in Finnish, but I translated to English a lot to the parents who did not understand Finnish. This chapter's information can be found in Table 1 in the [Second phase](#).

4.1.1 Ethical consideration

Working life partner was involved in the workshops; being present during every workshop, observing the workshops and taking part in some of the activities which was ethically right as I was doing the workshops in co-operation with MLL and in their premises. In addition, children's parents were present in all the workshops. For some children it might bring more comfort to have their own parent next to them when coming to the workshop and during workshops the communication between parents and their children was supported. Participation agreements were signed by parents during first and second workshops because only one family was able to come to the first workshop. The participation agreement consisted of confidentiality and permissions for taking pictures, without children's faces, of the activities done during workshops and using them in the guide booklet. As a soon-to-be Bachelor of Social Services, I am bound by the obligation of confidentiality, and this includes the non-disclosure obligation and prohibition of use (Talentic 2019, 38).

Ethical consideration was done already in the advertising stage with targeting familiarity, cultural and linguistic aspects to widen to English speaking families and families' registration made easy. Furthermore, sending reminders was to ensure that registered families came in.

Privacy was considered in functional study's facility so that it stays safe and private for participants. There were occasions that people not registered tried to access the workshops. Privacy requires quiet physical space without non-participants overhearing (Talentia 2019, 41).

The reminder messages were sent by me to the registered families' phone numbers during the same day a few hours before the workshop started. Family life is busy, and they might forget so this also helped me to know who is coming because they started to inform if they cannot make it. We created rules for the workshops together with the children, their parents and working life partner's input and the rules were repeated in the beginning of workshops. Safe atmosphere for learning is done with the help of together created rules and functional methods. Safe atmosphere builds respectful interaction, joint responsibility and supports emotions' expression and regulation and allows emotions to be shown. (FNAE 2022, 31.)

Additionally, keeping out the life crises during creative workshops was important. I was not supposed to get involved in the grief process of anyone because I am not a therapist and that is why it was not a requirement for registration that the family has a grief process. Life crises were little mentioned in the conversation with the parents in the workshops, but the focus was not on the life crises so unless children would themselves mention about some difficult experience then focus was on emotion education with the help of creative methods. We thought about what to do if a child shows symptoms of ongoing crises and emotional issues during workshops and concluded with a working life partner that then the family is guided to professional help straight away and the participation in workshops would need to be reconsidered. In the end this kind of situation did not happen. Additionally, the guide booklet itself has a list of support material.

Emotion education was on the surface during workshops. Besides, the atmosphere was supporting children and parents to think and speak about the more difficult perceived emotions with the help of creative methods. If children had experienced life crises and creative methods were used to let them express themselves, then keeping workshops once a week would have been too short a time to create an atmosphere of trust. Besides, for having eight workshops, I was able to receive more information about what was good and not and I could improve the workshops during the month, and then based on the whole experience finalize the guide booklet.

4.2 Second phase: Piloting the creative workshops

Next, I describe how piloting went step by step. Eight creative workshops were divided into four implementation plans which meant that two consecutive workshops had the same kind of plan implementing it. As if the first one was a practice and the second one was a repetition of the previous one which gave more understanding for the children what is going on because

through repetition, they learn the best. Also, I was more confident of the plan as it was already implemented one time and could concentrate more on the children and parents instead of trying to remember the plan for the workshop.

During the first workshops it was found out that most of the families were able to come on Mondays but not every family could make it on Wednesdays. This can be seen in Table 1 below. We were thinking how this affects the workshops' rhythm, grouping and everything but discovered a solution that the two consecutive workshops were done based on the same activity plan. The families who were able to come to the first activity plan, were then already more experienced during the second activity plan and the observation from the children's learning was obvious.

Table 1: Entity of creative workshops held

Creative workshops	1 st 1.2.23	2 nd 6.2.23	3 rd 8.2.23	4 th 13.2.23	5 th 15.2.23	6 th 20.2.23	7 th 22.2.23	8 th 27.2.23
Number of children	1	10	3	8	4	6 (1 extra child)	3 but overall 5	5 but overall 6
Ages of children	a 4-year-old	5-year-olds (5), 4-year-olds (3) & 3-year-olds (2)	4-year-olds (2) & a 3-year-old	5-year-olds, (4), 4-year-olds (2) & 3-year-olds (2)	4-year-olds (3) & a 3-year-old	a 5-year-old, 4-year-olds (3) & 3-year-olds (2)	5-year-olds (2), a 4-year-old & 2 toddlers	5-year-olds (2), 4-year-olds (2), a 3-year-old & a toddler
Emotions practiced	anger + presenting the others	anger + presenting the others	fear	fear	sadness	sadness	anger, sadness, fear	anger, sadness, fear
Creative methods used	painting, play	painting, play	play, music	play, music	painting, play, music	painting, play, music	painting, play, music	painting, play, music
Language used	English	Finnish and English	Finnish and English	Finnish and English	Finnish and English	Finnish and English	Finnish	Finnish and English

During creative workshops the emotion grief was explored. Workshops consisted of three different creative methods and their implementation including three different emotions children often experience during early childhood. Children were able to practice in a safe place the emotion grief through verbal and non-verbal activities. For the first two workshops I decided to have the same type of activity plan which seemed to work indeed practically. After that I naturally chose to run the workshops the same way because the first pilot of the activity plan for the two workshops always had fewer children. This helped me to make changes for the next workshop if needed.

Consequently, the first two workshops had a short presentation of all the emotions and then focus was on anger emotion. The next workshops had one emotion at work and some of the creative methods or all of them. The last two workshops had all the emotions and creative methods. The implementation can be seen above in Table 1. After every workshop, I wrote a

diary and at the end of every workshop I collected emoji feedback from the children and written feedback from parents. Also, after each workshop, I received feedback from the working life partner. Next, I introduce the themes and activities of the workshops in a consecutive order.

4.2.1 Workshops' themes and activities

1st and 2nd workshops

The theme of first and second workshops was emotion anger, although emotions of sadness and fear were introduced to make participants aware of the themes of the creative workshops. One child came to the first workshop and ten children to the second workshop. I had to change the activity plan for the first workshop to be flexible and try out spontaneous ideas during it due to the child's developmental delay. It was good that this child came first alone, so I could observe the situation in order to be prepared for the upcoming workshops. During the second workshop the working life partner, who was responsible for registrations, realized that there was one extra family who was not registered. We decided even though this family had written the participation agreement for the workshops that they will not receive reminder messages but if this family comes to the next workshops, we do not forbid the participation.

Activity plan was not followed precisely in the first workshop but in the second one went accordingly. Both workshops started with a snack and getting to know each other in a circle with a name game. In the first workshop before going to activities, I showed a guide booklet's three-emotions emoji as examples of how these emotions are usually expressed. I was able to share about emotions and their importance with the parent and guided the child by listening to the state of being and behaviour at that moment. Painting the anger went well and the child enjoyed it. Play and extra music activities were made, and there was a good amount of time for feedback and relaxing in peaceful music at the end of the first workshop.

In the second workshop there was a discussion about the emotions with children and their opinions were heard about what the emoji might be before I explained the emoji's emotions. This was done with examples of mine and children's own ideas as they understood more of the emotions. Next preparation for the anger painting was done by putting art smocks on children and the table ready. This moment I realized the rules were not done so children sat down at a table, and it was an excellent moment for concentration to create the rules together. The painting went wonderfully, and children were able to choose their anger's colour/s. After painting, hand washing took a bit of time. Next, we did a circle where feelings in the body-exercise was made, and I explained the meaning of it to the parents. In the end I put peaceful instrumental music and children chose their own spot on the mattresses. At the same time parents wrote feedback to the ready-made questions I gave, and I went

individually to ask feedback from children with an emoji feedback paper. Every family received three-emotions emoji paper to bring home.

3rd and 4th workshops

The theme of the next two workshops focused on emotion fear. The 3rd workshop had three children attending and the 4th workshop had eight children. During the 3rd workshop it became clear that the emotion fear is more complicated for children to understand, thus we decided with a working life partner to demonstrate the fear next time as a drama. The 4th workshop was started by introducing the fear emotion with drama and this presentation worked well for increasing the children's understanding of fear emotion.

Activity for the workshops consisted of play and music. In the beginning we went together created rules through and created for the parents' own rules. I asked the children their fear's speed, movement, and temperature. These questions they were able to think about and show the answers bodily after each other. If children wanted there was time for playing. We did a circle and I asked what kind of sound their emotion fear is, and everyone showed in turn their sound with given instruments. Feelings in the body-exercise was done and one variation of it is that children are asked where in their body they feel the emotion fear. Parents were together with their children in a circle and marked in the exercise paper from the guide booklet which I gave them the children's mentioned body parts and this paper the families took home.

5th and 6th workshops

Theme of 5th and 6th workshops was emotion sadness. On Wednesdays there was more time to cooperate with parents because less families were able to come, and Wednesdays were in a way more intimate. Four children came to the 5th workshop. On the 6th workshop an ideal number of children, six, took part and usually the Mondays were full of children, thus this workshop size was especially suitable.

Activity plan included all three creative methods: play, painting, and music. Also, in the beginning a new thing was an encouragement circle where every child got the opportunity to be supported by the whole group. The name of each child was repeated loudly, and everyone clapped when each child ran around the circle back to their spot individually. Feelings in the body-exercise was done and children did it with their parents and I observed and reminded them that parents can support the children by telling their own experience and the body part can be spoken nicely to when the emotion is felt strongly. The taste and smell of the emotion sadness was asked from the children in the form of imagination play. In 5th workshop children did painting as a weather condition and in 6th workshop as a colour of the emotion sadness. Next was the music part where emotion sadness was done with instruments in a circle. To these workshops I added relaxing time to have stretching out in the peaceful music without

speaking. I showed the movements which children and parents followed. I started to use shh-sign which was done as a rule that if too much noise is done, and I am continuing to explain further then this shh-sign reminded the children and parents to become quiet and focus on what happens next. Children and parents also put their finger to their mouth to show others the shh-sign.

7th and 8th workshops

Theme of the last two workshops was a sum up of the whole creative workshops. The three-emotions emoji paper was shown to the children and parents with one emotion expression at a time and questions were asked from everyone. The anger emotion was done as a painting, sadness emotion in a play with new addition of toy animals and fear was done as music with instruments and addition was singing a song. To the second last workshop came only two families with three children. Both families had brought their toddlers, and the toddlers were as part of the workshop's activities as they could. The last workshop had an ideal number of children participating, six children including the toddler.

Activity plan for the 7th workshop went amazingly. We talked about emotions and children wanted to tell what has happened in their life where the exact emotions have been present. Anger painting was exciting as it was something I had waited to try out. The point of crumpling paper together with anger emotion, including annoyance, disappointment, and hate, was explained to the children and parents. One child expressed a situation where was really angry and the child made a painting about that. Children understood the idea not to try to make the paper straight after opening the crumpling but just paint on the bumpy surface. Parents felt it was a beneficial method to process anger emotion when it occurs. The question of which animal the three emotions are worked very well, and children got great ideas to express themselves. Fear was reminded with a short drama presentation again. After that we made music about each one of us emotion fear, first individually and then all together. One child initiated during the music part to sing the Finnish song "Leijonaa mä metsästän" which is a children's song where a lion is hunted and the word fear is mentioned because it is thrilling where the lion will be found in the jungle during the song

Activity plan for the 8th workshop had the same activities as the previous workshop but this time also an art exhibition was held from the emotion paintings and children were able to admire their own and others' works. Everyone was able to talk about their own artwork if they wanted to. I also tried if the children wanted to crumple their already dried anger artworks and some of them did and it was a new experience of this activity. Children were excited to create their own sounds and one child remembered the lion song, so we played and sang it together. During play I expressed that my animal is sad because I do not have friends. All the children expressed also being sad when not having friends when I asked what has made them sad. It was seen how somebody's answer can make the children imitate it and not to

think about their own answer. Few of the children were playing to be mean towards my animal and not wanting to be my friends but after sometime during playing the children asked my animal if we can become friends. Feelings in the body exercise was done in the moment by breathing in and out and asking the child what part of the body has sensations and what feeling it might be and why.

4.2.2 Reflection of the workshops

Changing situations are a reality in early childhood education and care and I also experienced this during the workshops. Before one workshop started a registered family asked if their friend with a child could come but this I politely declined as they were not registered but then when the workshop started, one other family had additionally brought a friend of their child to the workshop. For example, in this workshop, it was not practical to leave out this new child brought in by the family. In addition, the room was booked for my workshops thus it was the same each time except before the first workshop it was accidentally double booked and another group of people already used it. Another room had to be prepared and the workshops' activities. Printer had not printed out all the necessary documents, thus it was done in a hurry before the workshop started. When working in the social field being flexible and ready to adjust when needed are important as during these creative workshops also happened.

Children's development during workshops was obvious. They showed understanding for emotion anger based on earlier workshops during the third workshop, where the theme was already different, by communicating a lot about this emotion to me and their parents. Fear as an emotion and the communication for the play activity was a bit challenging for this age group of children to understand for the first time but children understood better after repetition. After half of the workshops held the children's learning and understanding about these emotions was clearly shown and the repetition of the workshops' rhythm supported the whole concept as the topics were not easiest for especially younger children, but they understood better after each workshop. It was transparent that children were already able to talk about their feelings and understood these three emotions. Compared to the first of the workshops, the development was huge during the last workshop, and it did not take more than some hours to do the encouraging emotion education with children. As some of the children were in almost all of eight workshops and others half of them.

All the workshops supported practically the ideas and plans I have created for the guide booklet in a way that they work with children. Even a child with severe developmental delay could participate in the activities. Development for the guide booklet is not to have a limit for possible colour using in the instructions but that children are able to express the emotion they feel as the colours they want. Offering a wide range of colour options can influence

children's choices and seeing the choice of other children. It is good to privately ask children about their preferred colours and adults give those to them. The guide booklet is suitable for independent use by 5-6-year-olds. The questions can help 5-6-year-olds explore topics and express their thoughts. Verbal communication may not work as well with 3-4-year-olds instead creative activities are more effective. Music part of the guide booklet is very simple to implement and works well with all age children. Sadness as an emotion is easiest from these emotions for children to comprehend. This Finnish lion song was done in both last workshops, and I added it to the guide booklet because it was a fun way of learning about fear and excitement feelings. Singing is an excellent way to learn about feelings together with creating music with instruments.

Co-operation with a working life partner was consistent and after each workshop we shared insights. We agreed that reminder messages must be sent before each workshop so that the families will be reminded of the workshop. We pondered about children's possibilities to paint at home because parents do not buy or want to allow something that can create more mess. There were probably expectations for the workshops because some children were clearly disappointed that painting was not done in every workshop. We decided with a working life partner that the emotion fear must be demonstrated as this can help the children to understand better what emotion fear is. After one workshop, my working life partner said that my example in the animal play was a fitting spontaneous one as children often remember the feeling of being sad when thinking about not having friends. Working life partner pointed out that the space had become safe and the same rhythm and repetition of the workshops and I made for successful workshops. My ability to be genuinely present and to listen to the children and give them space to express themselves were remarkable for the working life partner.

I learned a lot from children during the workshops. When asking for feedback using five emojis, young children might not understand that it's about providing feedback on the day's workshop because they expressed their experiences and feelings using those emojis. I had not thought about this possibility that children choose the feeling that was practiced during the workshop as feedback even though it is logical that the emoji is chosen where the learning has happened. I came across that in larger groups, asking about feelings becomes challenging, as younger children tend to imitate other children's answers. Children seemed to understand and process anger as the easiest emotion during workshops. Then working with sadness was more manageable than dealing with fear. I discovered that working with the group's youngest children was more effective when I went to their level and used a less communicative approach. Still, emotion sadness was possible to go through with younger children verbally.

Parents' enthusiasm can influence children's participation and concentration. When parents are engaged, children feel encouraged to express themselves. Children got a deeper

understanding of these negatively perceived emotions and were able to express what has caused them to feel that way which surprised some parents. One parent could not react any other way than laughing to their child talking about the difficult emotions. We discussed with a working life partner that not all parents have the skills to discuss emotions with their children. That is why emotional education is crucial, and adults must support children through difficult emotions. It was marvellous to see when parents took part, were present for their children and supported them during the workshop. It was amazing to observe the parents and children's interaction when they did the feelings in the body-exercise because they had their own private time with their child.

4.3 Third phase: Guide booklet

In this part I am presenting the four activity plans for the eight workshops which I implemented in order to construct the guide booklet best way practically. The activity plans are below in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5. I lift up some of the activities to explain deeper the meaning of them and how it can be done. Child learns through these creative methods how they perceive the emotions and that they are in control of them and not controlled by emotions. I made the guide booklet in co-operation with my working life partner MLL, and the guide booklet is in their materials in intranet of MLL Uusimaa district's region. In the end of this thesis the English and Finnish versions can be found. Guide booklet was created in both languages because this way it reaches more users, and the creative workshops had both languages used.

Table 2: Structure of activity for 1st and 2nd workshops

Beginning	Activities	Ending
Small snack	Showing anger emoji, questions to children	Feedback forms to parents
Introduction circle with games	Painting anger emotion	Relaxing in a peaceful music in own spot on a mattress
Creating rules together	Feelings in the body-exercise and discussion	I go one-by-one to children to receive emoji feedback
Presenting the workshops, the emotions and the methods	Participation agreements given to parents	Giving the emoji emotions paper to bring home, cleaning and goodbyes till next time

Here above in the Table 2 is the activity plan for the first and second workshops. Feelings in the body exercise with asking where this emotion locate in your body is important. Parents and people using this guide booklet can support the child by hugging, touching the body part if appropriate, speaking to the body part comforting words and tell that it is completely normal to feel for example pain in the stomach or in the head and the child learns that they are not alone with the emotions and they are not weird or sick. Also, to the child can be told where the parents and adults themselves feel this emotion.

Here below in the Table 3 can be seen the activity plan for the third and fourth workshops. Play exercises were done with the three different emotions: sadness, anger and fear with questions. The Table 3 shows that emotion fear was practiced during those two workshops with asking children about the speed, movement and temperature of the emotion and these answers were pretend played together with children. This kind of communicative play can help a child to identify and get to know the emotion. Additionally, children's opinions can change so the questions can be asked more than once when child is feeling or not feeling these emotions. The point of playing is to allow children to think about their emotions through creative questions and play their answers if they want to.

Table 3: Structure of activity for 3rd and 4th workshops

Beginning	Activities	Ending
Small snack	Understanding emotion fear through play: speed, movement and temperature	Relaxing exercise while peaceful music is played in an own spot, possibly eyes closed
Introduction circle with games	Creating own fear emotion as music with instruments in a circle after each other	Feedback forms to parents
Going through rules together and creating rules for parents	Feelings in the body-exercise: where fear emotion is felt and parents marking their children' answers to the given exercise paper	One-by-one going to children to receive emoji feedback
Short drama about emotion fear (4 th workshop)		Goodbyes till next time

Here underneath in the Table 4 can be seen the activity plan for the fifth and sixth workshops. Painting the emotion sadness as a colour or weather condition were done during

the workshops. The point of painting the exact emotion is to confront the emotion when painting it. Child does not necessarily need to be feeling the exact emotion because the painting can be done as getting to know the emotion. Child can see that the emotion is not the same as when it is only felt in the body and mind because having the imagined emotion painted in the paper in front of a child, it shows practically to the child that the child is in control of the emotion and not vice versa. Also, child can practice getting familiar with the emotion and confront the emotion by making the sounds of the emotions with instruments or some other items to make music.

Table 4: Structure of activity for 5th and 6th workshops

Beginning	Activities	Ending
Small snack	Discussion about sadness emotion: what is the taste and smell of sadness emotion for each child, parents take notes	Relaxing exercise with stretching (including parents) in peaceful music
Circle games and encouragement circle	Feelings in the body-exercise: where sadness emotion is felt for each child	One-by-one going to children to receive emoji feedback after stretching
Going through the common rules	Painting emotion sadness as a weather condition (5 th workshop) or as a colour (6 th workshop)	Feedback forms to parents
	Creating own sadness emotion as music with instruments in a circle and playing	Cleaning and goodbyes till next time

Here below in Table 5 is the activity plan for seventh and eight workshops. Anger emotion as a painting is a great exercise to be done when not angry or being angry. In this exercise no communication is needed, only instructions are important to follow. I have often heard, seen and done by myself to crumple a paper and throwing it to trash when angry, but in this exercise the paper is not thrown away. Rather when ready to open the object in which anger was burst out, then painting is done on the bumpy surface without trying to clear the wrinkles of the paper.

This anger painting exercise is about understanding that something relaxing and beautiful can be made of something which was supposed be thrown to trash due to the strong emotion of anger. Children can keep the painting as a masterpiece reminder that they survived while feeling the anger. This anger emotion as a painting can be done also again to the same paper. When the child is feeling angry for instance about the same matter as before when doing for

the first time the exercise, the paper can be again crumpled and opened when the anger has been relieved.

Table 5: Structure of activity for 7th and 8th workshops

Beginning	Activities	Ending
Small snack	Going through all of the three emotions with the help of emoji emotion paper and discussion with children and parents	Relaxing time while peaceful music is played, children have pillows
Circle games and encouragement circle	Anger emotion as a painting with first crumpling the paper. Exhibition of anger painting and crumpling the art works again if wished (8 th workshop).	Feedback forms to parents
Going through the common rules	Sadness as a play: what animal is each child's sadness and then using toy animals. Exhibition of sadness paintings and discussion (8 th workshop).	One-by-one going to children to receive emoji feedback when they lie down in their own spot.
I give feedback about rules and workshops (8 th workshop)	Short drama demonstrating fear. Making music about fear emotion with instruments in a circle after each other and singing a song: ''Leijonaa mä metsästän''.	Goodbyes and many thanks for participating to the workshops (8 th workshop)
	Feelings in the body-exercise: taking deep breaths and children show where does right now feel in the body and why. Parents support children (8 th workshop).	

5 Feedback and evaluation

I had two feedback collections: feedback from the creative workshops and the try-out guide booklet in February 2023 and feedback from the thesis and the finalized guide booklet in April 2024. Overall, the feedback was affirmative and highlighted the topic's relevance in the current world and especially the need for daycares to receive education and materials how to confront and support children in their grief. My thesis was said to be truly interesting and up-to-date and evoke the want for learning more about children's grief, its support and implementing emotional education. Guide booklet received praise and interest for people to

start using it in their work in smaller or bigger amounts because the way I had made it was relatable. Working life partner concluded that the guide booklet helps to guide a grief group and the pictures, practical examples and clear questions are suitable for the facilitation.

Feedback from the workshops and the try-out guide booklet was given by the working life partner, the families, and their children after each workshop. It was positive, encouraging and supported the guide booklet's function in grief work and emotional education for children. MLL takes the material for their use and will spread it further when grief process of children and other topics which the guide booklet includes arises with professionals or families. We discussed of the opportunity to continue these kinds of workshops in MLL's meeting place in the future where for instance I or someone else can facilitate them with the help of the created guide booklet. Families were thankful after each workshop and told that they always learned something new which can be used at home. Also, the high wish for continuing the workshops raised. Children gave feedback from the workshops pointing out emojis and I received happier and more satisfied emojis as feedback.

Closer to the end of thesis process the feedback from the thesis and the guide booklet was received from altogether seven people: working life partner, ECEC teacher for six years, freshly graduated ECEC social pedagogue and ECEC teacher, two childminders one with six years and other with two years of experience and an American counsellor specialized in grief, children, art and play therapy to name a few. This thesis received generally excellent and admiring feedback towards the combination with children and ECEC, thesis's length, simplicity to follow the text and importance of the whole concept. The theoretical part was expressed to be comprehensive, clear and varied where both theory and practice were combined in a good way and everything relevant was summed up in the text. I received fortunately some constructive criticism towards the language used as it is not my mother tongue, length of some paragraphs and sentences which can be shortened or divided and suggestions to try to change older references to newer ones and support more my own thinking with references in some parts. According to these I made some changes in the thesis.

This thesis process was not the easiest as I tend to overdo but during this process, I learned to confront my stress and ease down the feeling inside to do more. I was able to practice focusing on the main matters and skip and remove matters which were not relevant for the thesis. I enjoyed in the end the reviewing and fixations of my thesis because this was something new for me and I practiced looking at my thesis from an outsiders' point of view and realized more about what do I want to deliver and how. During the workshop month I wrote a diary after each workshop about how I acted and how I should develop myself and the workshops. After the last workshop I had developed better in skills such as listening, asking questions, giving time for children and taking all participants into account, patience, leadership skills, being present, going to the level of the children, trying out new things, not

letting surprises affect my doing and the workshops' implementation and confidence to be authentic myself.

6 Conclusions and discussion

This thesis process taught me a lot about the importance of children's intrinsic childhood and several ways adults can support children to be children during hard times and express difficult or negatively perceived emotions safely. I learned during the planning phase to think about why exactly the matters I choose to take to the guide booklet are taken and this way was able to create effective creative methods to use with children. The cooperation with working life partner was consistent, insightful, and helpful. I really did enjoy the whole planning process of the guide booklet and all the try-out workshops supported my ideas which I had already decided to put in the guide booklet. Some additions I received during the workshops from children which I added to the guide booklet. I believe it is beneficial to have the guide booklet both in Finnish and English so that more people can have access and benefit from it.

One parent gave two times feedback of wishing to have workshops where feelings perceived as positive are processed. This made me think of the fact that there might still be parents who would wish to focus on positive emotions with their children because this parent knew that the workshops are going to be about difficult perceived emotions. One day after the end of the workshops, I visited the meeting place and met one family who had taken part in my workshops. The parent told me how they had continued to use the creative methods learned during workshops at home and how the child had become more able to express their feelings verbally and the parent had more confidence in speaking about these emotions. Also, the anger emotion as a painting had been often done at home and it was working for the child to express the anger to the paper safely. This same family told me how one year prior to the workshops the grandparent of the family had passed away and the parent had not known how to handle it with the children but due to my workshops they had spoken about it at home and the parent felt thankful for the benefits of the creative workshops.

I learned to plan and implement a guide booklet and eight creative workshops suitable for young children and evaluate my own actions. I had created the structures for the workshops excellently that even though sometimes I lost my phone and couldn't track the time I was able to do the workshops as I had imagined. I was able to take into consideration each child during the workshops but also to communicate with their parents without putting aside the children. During the workshops a lot happened with emotions and creative methods, nonetheless I was able to implement them in a way that children had the best way of learning. I learnt practically some differences between 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children. I got insights on how I work under pressure, stress and discomfort as especially in the beginning the situations

required me to be flexible and go out of my comfort zone. I stayed outside peaceful, kind and organized in my actions. I listened to children and was creating the workshops fitting for their development and was able to switch the activity at the right time keeping the children's interest.

While writing my thesis I did some substitution in a daycare where one new 5-year-old child had started there at the beginning of that month. One moment I was guided to go alone with the child to calm down because the child had kicked the teacher during resting time. There I heard that the child had just moved away from old home and was transferred to this daycare. The child told me how much is still missing the old area and the old friends because in this new daycare the child had not yet become good friends with other children and expressed the felt loneliness and sadness. My wish for future research is about the effect of moving away for young children and how daycares and other adults can support the child in adaptation and finding new friends but also possibly to visit the old neighbourhood area. I believe that children who miss old home, old daycare and the environment around would benefit from visiting the areas as a part of the grieving process. Another development idea for the future is training of personnel in daycares on grief work and methods to use with children.

References

Printed

Bojner-Horwitz, E. & Bojner, G. 2007. Mielihyvää musiikista. Helsinki: WSOY.

Boyd, D. & Bee, H. 2019. Lifespan development. 8th edition. Global edition. United Kingdom: Pearson education.

Dyregrov, A. 1993. Lapsen suru. 2nd edition. Jyväskylä: Gummerrus Kirjapaino Oy.

Dyregrov, A. 2008a. Grief in young children : a handbook for adults. United Kingdom, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Dyregrov, A. 2008b. Grief in children : a handbook for adults. 2nd edition. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Erkkilä, J., Holmberg, T., Niemelä S. & Ylönen, H. 2003. Surevan lapsen kanssa. Tuettu suru - projekti. Suomen Mielenterveysseura. 2nd edition. SMS-Julkaisut. Jyväskylä: Gummerrus Kirjapaino Oy.

FNAE. 2018. National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018. Finnish National Agency for Education. 2nd edition. Vantaa: Punamusta Oy.

Heinonen, H., Iivonen, E., Korhonen, M., Lahtinen, N., Muuronen, K., Semi, R. & Siimes, U. 2016. Lasten oikeudet ja aikuisten vastuut varhaiskasvatuksessa. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Isokorpi, T. 2004. Tunneoppia parempaan vuorovaikutukseen. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Kinanen, M. 2009. Surusäkki. Vertaisryhmätyöskentelyä lasten sururyhmille. Poikien ja tyttöjen keskus. Helsinki: Lasten Keskus / LK-kirjat.

Känkänen, P. 2013. Taidelähtöiset menetelmät lastensuojelussa - kohti tilaa ja kokemuksia. Tutkimus 109. THL. Tampere: Juvenes Print - Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy

Känkänen, P. 2006. Taidelähtöiset työmenetelmät lastensuojelussa. Teoksessa Hannele Forsberg & Aino Ritala-Koskinen & Maritta Törrönen (toim.) Lapset ja sosiaalityö. Kohtaamisia, menetelmiä ja tiedon uudelleenarviointia. Sosiaalityön neljäs vuosikirja, 129-148. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Känkänen, P. & Rainio, A. P. 2010. Suojassa, mutta näkyvissä - taidelähtöinen toiminta osallisuuden rakentajana lastensuojelussa. Nuorisotutkimus-lehti 4/2010, 4-20.

Nurmi, P. (ed). 2013. Lapsen ja nuoren viha. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Peltonen, A. & Kullberg-Piilola, T. 2000. Tunnemuksu & murkku. Tunnetaitoja perheille ja kasvattajille. Helsinki: Kirjapaja Oy.

Pojjula, S. 2016. Lapsi ja kriisi. Selviytymisen tukeminen. 3rd edition. Helsinki: Kirjapaja.

Pojjula, S. 2002. Surutyö. Helsinki: Kirjapaja Oy.

Pusa, T. 2014. Encounter art. Handbook for a group guide. Laurea publications. Kuopio: Kopijyvä Oy.

Sinkkonen, M. & Tähtinen, P. 2009. Lupa tuntea. Helsinki: Kirjapaja.

Vilka, H. & Airaksinen, T. 2003. Toiminnallinen Opinnäytetyö. Jyväskylä: Gummerrus Kirjapaino Oy

Electronic

Cherry, K. 2024. Social and Emotional Development in Early Childhood : How Kids Learn to Share and Care. Verywell Mind. Accessed 11 April 2024.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/social-and-emotional-development-in-early-childhood-2795106>

FNAE. 2022. National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022. Finnish National Agency for Education. Accessed 26 March 2024.

https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman%20perustee%202022_EN_final_23%20.pdf

Gindes, M. 1998. The Psychological Effects of Relocation for Children of Divorce. Journal of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 15, 119-148. Accessed 13 February 2024.

https://www.aaml.org/wp-content/uploads/the_psychological_effects.pdf

Giuliani, M. V. 2003. Theory of attachment and place attachment. In M. Bonnes, T. Lee, and M. Bonaiuto (Eds.), Psychological theories for environmental issues (137-170). Aldershot: Ashgate. Accessed 13 February 2024.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Maria-Vittoria-Giuliani/publication/216658528_Towards_an_Analysis_of_Mental_Representations_of_Attachment_to_the_Home/links/09e414fd4a8c436612000000/Towards-an-Analysis-of-Mental-Representations-of-Attachment-to-the-Home.pdf

Jalongo, M. R. 1994. Helping children to cope with relocation. Childhood Education, 71(2), 80-85. Accessed 13 February 2024.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/210388704?accountid=12003&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>

Jantunen, J. 2023. MLL:n kohtaamispaikka tukee perheitä monella tapaa. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Accessed 30 January 2024.

<https://www.mll.fi/blogi/mlln-kohtaamispaikka-tukee-perheita-monella-tapaa/>

Kelly, J. & Lamb, M. 2003. Developmental Issues in Relocation Cases Involving Young Children: When, Whether, and How? Journal of family psychology: JFP: journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association, 17(2), 193-205. Accessed 13

February 2024.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/10689607_Developmental_issues_in_relocation_cases_involving_young_children_When_whether_and_how

Kyyrö, R. 2023. MLL:n kohtaamispaikkatoiminta osana perhekeskuksen palvelukokonaisuutta. InnoKylä. Accessed 30 January 2024. <https://innokyla.fi/fi/kokonaisuus/mln-kohtaamispaikkatoiminta-osana-perhekeskuksen-palvelukokonaisuutta>

Metropolia. 2020. Toiminnallisen opinnäytetyön erityispiirteitä. Accessed 26 January 2024. <https://wiki.metropolia.fi/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=57182852>

Lipponen, L., & Pursi, A. 2022. Children's grief: repertoires of practices in institutional early childhood education and care. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 29(3), 215-235. Accessed 12 April 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2022.2133144>

MLL. 2024. Elämää vanhempien eron jälkeen. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Accessed 13 April 2024. <https://www.mll.fi/vanhemmille/tukea-perheen-huoliin-ja-kriiseihin/vanhempien-ero/elamaa-vanhempien-eron-jalkeen/>

MLL. 2023. Lapsen oikeuksien sopimus. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Accessed 13 April 2024. <https://www.mll.fi/ammattilaisille/lasten-oikeudet/perus-ja-ihmisoikeudet-ja-lapset/lapsen-oikeuksien-sopimus/>

MLL. no date. About MLL. The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. Accessed 26 January 2024. <https://www.mll.fi/en/about-mll/>

MLL. 2013a. Lapsi eri ikävuosina : 4-vuotias. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Accessed 11 April 2024. <https://cdn.mll.fi/prod/2017/08/04174316/Lapsi-eri-ik%C3%A4kausina-4-v.pdf>

MLL. 2013b. Lapsi eri ikävuosina : 5-vuotias. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Accessed 11 April 2024. <https://cdn.mll.fi/prod/2017/08/04174318/Lapsi-eri-ik%C3%A4kausina-5-v.pdf>

MLL. 2013c. Lapsi eri ikävuosina : 6-vuotias. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Accessed 11 April 2024. <https://cdn.mll.fi/prod/2017/08/04174403/Lapsi-eri-ik%C3%A4kausina-6-v.pdf>

Quiñones, G., Lipponen L., Pursi, A. and Barnes, M. 2021. Children's Everyday Manifestations of Grief and Grieving in Early Childhood Education and Care. *Early Child Development and Care*, 192(11), 1786-1799. Accessed 12 April 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2021.1934464>

Ruokonen, I., Rusanen, S. & Välimäki, A.-L. (eds). 2009. Taidekasvatus varhaiskasvatuksessa : Iloa, ihmettelyä ja tekemistä. THL. Accessed 18 February 2024.

<https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/80314>

Talentia. 2019. Work, values and ethics. Ethical guidelines for social welfare professionals.

Accessed 30 March 2024. [Lukusali - Talentia](#)

Tables

Table 1: Entity of creative workshops held	33
Table 2: Structure of activity for 1st and 2nd workshops.....	39
Table 3: Structure of activity for 3rd and 4th workshops.....	40
Table 4: Structure of activity for 5th and 6th workshops.....	41
Table 5: Structure of activity for 7th and 8th workshops.....	42

Appendices

Appendix 1: Creative methods for processing grief for 4-6-year-old - guide booklet in English

51

Appendix 2: Luovia menetelmiä surun käsittelyyn 4-6-vuotiaille - guide booklet in Finnish .. 65

Appendix 1: Creative methods for processing grief for 4-6-year-old - guide booklet in English

Appendix 2: Luovia menetelmiä surun käsittelyyn 4-6-vuotiaille - guide booklet in Finnish

CREATIVE METHODS FOR PROCESSING GRIEF FOR 4-6-YEAR- OLD CHILDREN

Erika Hafurova 2024



MLL

THE MANNERHEIM LEAGUE
FOR CHILD WELFARE

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

03

DIFFICULT LIFE SITUATIONS

04

GRIEF & FEELINGS BEHIND IT

05

STRUCTURE OF ACTIVITY

06

EMOJIS OF THREE EMOTIONS

07

PLAY

08

PAINTING

10

MUSIC

11

HELP FOR THE FUTURE

12

APPENDICES (child's feedback & feelings in the body - exercise)

13



INTRODUCTION



Child's grief and difficulties in dealing with it. This guide booklet has been developed and tested as part of a functional thesis. Early childhood education personnell, others working with children and guardians of children can benefit from the materials in this guide booklet. For example, how to talk about grief, why it is good to talk about it with children and what methods to use. The structure of the activity can be used to run own emotion/creative workshops. This guide booklet cannot be used as therapy.

The guide booklet was developed as part of a thesis at Laurea University of Applied Sciences in cooperation with MLL. The thesis theory in English can be found from Theseus <https://www.theseus.fi/> under the name of Erika Hafurova - Supporting 4-6-year-old children grieving life crises through creative methods.

The fictional images in this guide booklet are from Canva's free images and the photographs were taken during the workshops and are published with the permission of the participants.

DIFFICULT LIFE SITUATIONS

DEATH IN THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

- Child can experience loss of own parent, sibling, grandparent, friend, pet and a situation where there is no more contact for instance due to a divorce.
- Death's possible effects on child: detachment from reality, magical thinking with self-accusations and guilt, death is not personal to child, it's "temporary".
- Common reactions on hearing about death are shock, disbelief, apathy, fear or proceeding the activity at hand.
- Reactions of a grieving child can be anxiety, anger, guilt, bodily reactions, sleeping problems, sadness, need of attention, yearning and sicknesses.
- Child needs adult's physical presence and caretaking during grief process.

DIVORCE IN THE FAMILY

- During divorce one of the greatest losses child experiences is the loss of the daily communication with the other parent or other members of the family.
- Children can feel during divorce process grief, anger, disappointment, fear, shame, loneliness and sense of betrayal.
- Children can experience loss of trust, fear for future and realization for reality of divorce.
- Best interest of the child should be priority during divorce process too thus parents have to be able to respect each other and strive for neutrality.

MOVING TO ANOTHER PLACE

- Child experiences relocation to new place as a loss of known environment.
- Better adaptation to the new environment and home or transforming the new reality happens in children's imagination.
- Based on research children feel grief, worry and sometimes anger in separation situations where one of the child has moved away (daycare group).
- Small children should be encouraged to bring familiar and safe toy or picture of parents to a new daycare to ease fear and sadness.

GRIEF & FEELINGS BEHIND IT

SADNESS

- Signs of sadness in small children are crying, certain withdrawal, tension of the body, anxiety reactions, item throwing and refusal to speak.
- Outwardly might seem that small children have lack of sadness because sometimes they try to avoid the pain which emotion sadness causes.
- Small children should be encouraged to express their grief and sadness because even though they are small, they are developmentally capable.
- Children are good at reading situations and sensitive thus being supported by an adult to be themselves and feel how they feel is important.

ANGER

- Frustration, irritation, rage feelings and anger emotion itself belong to anger expression.
- Anger can mask other emotions such as sadness, fear, pain, shame, and lack of safety when something traumatic has happened in child's life.
- If child is not able to handle unbearable emotions, bursting rage can occur in which child screams, shouts, hits head to wall and hits with fist.
- Adults must offer safe place and time for child to express anger and ensure that the reason for the emotion is heard and child cannot be humiliated.

FEAR

- Fear can be felt in the body as hands' shaking, sweating, throat tightness, face going pale and heart beating.
- Children can be afraid of various matters, and multilayered fear can be felt as anxiety, lack of safety and even sometimes being scared of fear itself.
- Avoiding strong emotions is normal thus child can avoid places where something bad happened or people who reminds of the difficult situation.
- It is easiest for a child to confront emotion fear during day light with safe adults and in a familiar place in the child's pace, giving name to matters.

STRUCTURE OF ACTIVITY

STARTING SESSION

- Beginning:**
1. Snack
 2. Starting circle (introductory games, names, ages)
 3. Creating rules together
 4. Introduction to the topic with three emotion emojis

- Activities:**
1. Showing anger emoji and questions
 2. Painting the emotion anger as colour or weather condition
 3. Feelings in the body exercise

- Ending:**
1. Relaxation exercise on mattresses/pillows
 2. Individually getting children's feedback
 3. Discussion and bye in the closing circle

MIDDLE SESSIONS

- Beginning:**
1. Snack
 2. Starting circle (names, ages, favourite colour, courage circle)
 3. Review of common rules

- Activities:**
1. Showing sadness or fear emoji and discussion
 2. Personal understanding of emotions through play from parts 1-6, page -
 3. Emotion as music, part 7
 4. Feelings in the body exercise

- Ending:**
1. Relaxation exercise with stretching/massage
 2. Individually getting children's feedback
 3. Discussion and bye in the closing circle

LAST SESSION

- Beginning:**
1. Snack
 2. Starting circle (favourite animal, encouragement circle)
 3. Review of common rules
- Activities:**
1. A review of all three emotions using emojis and questions for children
 2. Painting emotion anger as on page -, task 1
 3. Emotion sadness through play part 1, on page -
 4. Emotion fear as music and singing
 5. Feelings in the body exercise with different version as on the page
 6. Possibly an exhibition of artworks
- Ending:**
1. Relaxation with eyes closed
 2. Feedback from children
 3. Give thanks and listening wishes

DURATION

Beginning:

15 min

Activities:

30 min

Ending:

15 min



SADNESS



ANGER



FEAR



PLAY

Beginning of the activity any type of circle games can be done with children. Getting to know each other (names, ages, favourite things etc.), encouragement/courage circle, follow the leader.

Personal understanding of emotions (sadness, anger, fear)

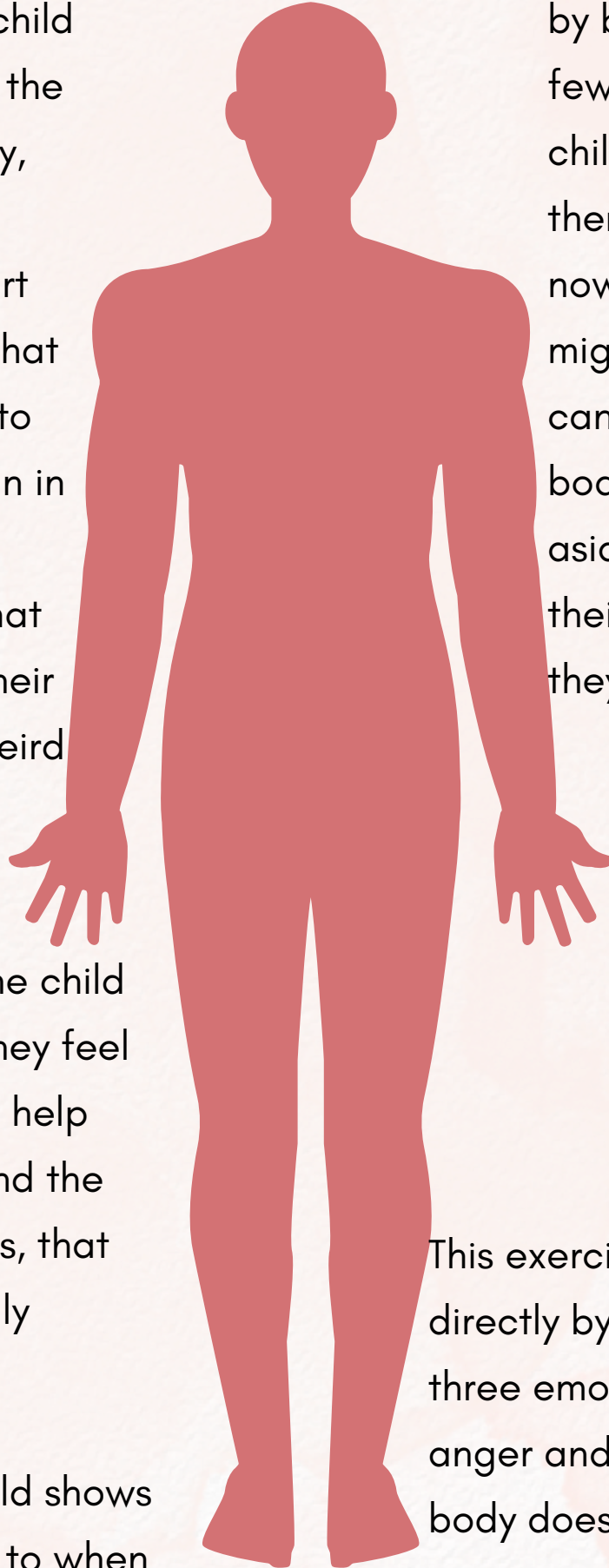
1. What animal is this emotion?
2. How does this emotion move like? (what kind of movement)
3. What is the speed of this emotion?
4. What temperature is this emotion?
5. How does this emotion smell like?
6. How does this emotion taste like?
7. How does this emotion sound like?
8. What weather condition (season) is this emotion?
9. What colour is this emotion?
10. Where does this emotion locate in your body?

Instructions

- Child/children can play parts 1-4 alone or in a group.
- In a group play can be done so that everyone takes a turn representing their emotion as an animal, speed, movement and temperature. Child can learn what the other child's same feeling looks like. The play can be continued if the children want to..
- Part 10 is important because it helps to support the child better.

Feelings in the body - exercise

**Where does this emotion
locate in your body?**



This exercise can be done by breathing in and out a few times, then asking the child where in their body there are sensations right now and what feeling it might be and why. Child can show from their own body or use this picture aside to show the spot on their own body where they feel the sensation.

In the appendices is this page without the guidelines which can be printed out and filled in with the details the child tells.

This exercise can also be done directly by going through the three emotions one by one: fear, anger and sadness. Where in the body does the child feel this emotion in general?

Adults using this guide booklet can support child by hugging, touching the body part if necessary, speaking comforting words to the body part and telling the child that it is perfectly normal to feel, for example, pain in the stomach or head. Then children learn that they aren't alone in their feelings and aren't weird or sick.

Parents and adults themselves can tell the child where in their body they feel the emotion. This can help the child to understand the universality of feelings, that others have also bodily experiences.

The body part the child shows can be spoken nicely to when the feeling is felt strongly.

PAINTING

Materials: painting paper, paint, brushes
alternatively watercolours, water cups



Anger emotion as a painting

There is a piece of paper on the table in front of the child, the child pretends to be or is really angry and crumples the paper into a ball.

Once the anger has been worked on paper and the child has calmed down, the next step is taken. The crumpled ball paper is opened, leaving the bumps and wrinkles from the crumpling. No attempt is made to make the paper smooth and straight.

Finally, the paper is painted.



1



1.2



2



3

Painting emotions as colour (2) or weather condition (3)

Based on the child's answers when playing parts 8 and 9, on page 6, the child can paint either the emotion (anger, sadness, fear) in a colour/s of their choice or as a weather condition.

If wished, can show to others.

MUSIC



Materials:

musical instruments or items that can make sounds, phone and loudspeaker

Sounds of emotions (sadness, fear, anger)

- Based on the child's response while playing to part 7, on page 6, the child should try to make his/her own emotion's sound with the instruments.
- The sounds for each emotion are made separately (for example, on different workshops/activity).
- Children can choose to show other children the sounds of their own emotion in turn in a circle.



Relaxation exercise

- The child settles into a comfortable and pleasant position (lying on his/her back) and closes his/her eyes if he/she wishes.
- Quiet music without words is played in the background and the child can rest for a while after the activities. Room's light can be dimmed.
- Stretching/massage can be done together if needed.

Singing about emotions

- You can learn and sing songs with the children that mention emotions.
 - Finnish songs' examples: "Leijonaa mä metsästän", "Kiukun kesytys - Kielinuppu", "Joskus tuntuu siltä - Liikkuva laulureppu".



HELP FOR THE FUTURE

WEBSITES

MLL : <https://www.mll.fi/en/>

Pelastakaa lapset ry : <https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/en/>

Mieli ry : <https://mieli.fi/en/>

Sos lapsikylä : <https://www.sos-lapsikyla.fi/in-english/>

Mentalhub.fi : <https://www.mielenterveystalo.fi/en>

Omaperhe (Ownfamily) : <https://omaperhe.fi/en>

BOOKS FOR SUPPORT

Creative coping skills for children : Emotional support though arts and crafts activities - Thomas Bonnie 2009

Grief in young children : A handbook for adults - Atle Dyregrov 2008

How to support a child of a young person when a loved one has died? : A guide for loved ones and people working with families-Uittomäki et al. 2023

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Emotional skills : <https://fanniemotions.com/foreign-rights/>

Activity booklet : <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/post/kip-miehinto-kasittelee-huolia-tehtavavihkonen-kaikki-kieliversiot>

Support for parents during divorce : https://issuu.com/ensijaturvakotienliitto/docs/parents_guide_divorcing_families

<https://www.infofinland.fi/en/family/children/child-welfare>

https://www.surevankohtaaminen.fi/en/childhood_and_adolescent_grief/

1



happy

2



satisfied

3



neutral

4



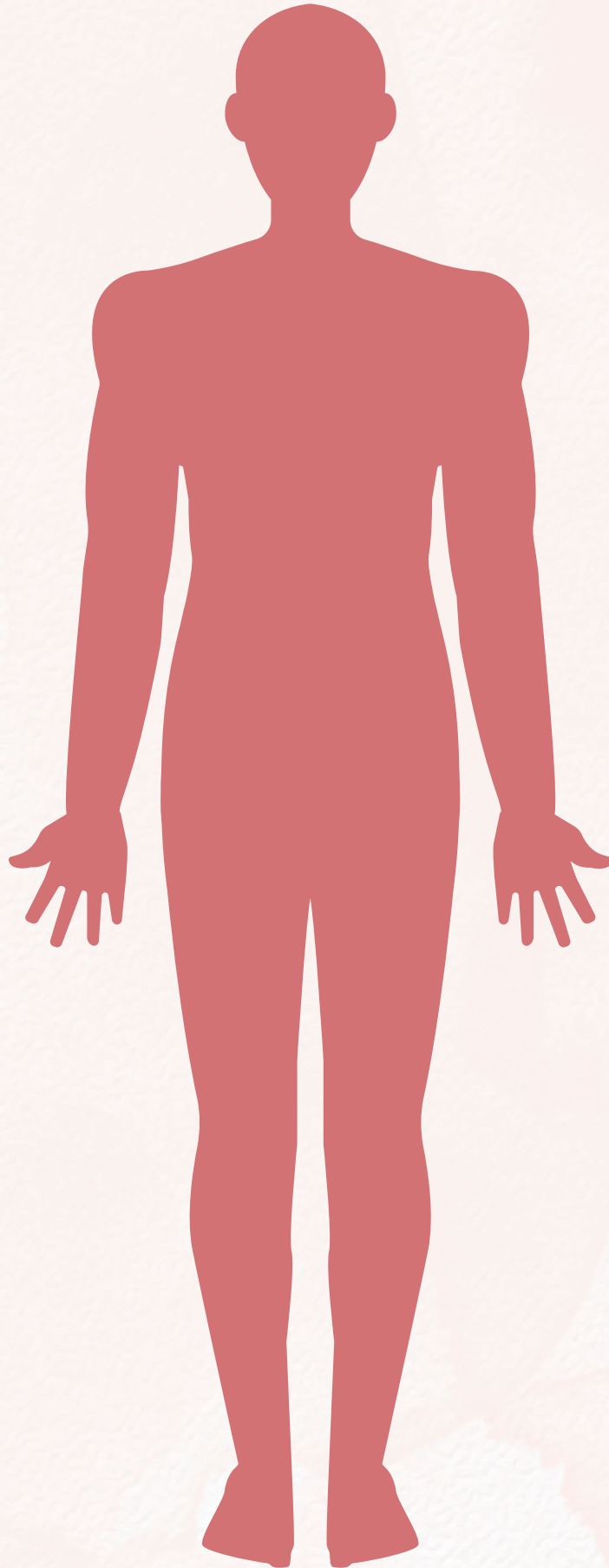
sad

5



angry

Feelings in the body - exercise



LUOVIA MENETELMIÄ SURUN KÄSITTELYYN 4-6-VUOTIAILLE

Erika Hafurova 2024



MANNERHEIMIN
LASTENSUOJELULIITTO

SISÄLLYS

ESITTELY	03
VAIKEAT ELÄMÄNTILANTEET	04
SURU & SEN TUOMAT TUNTEET	05
TOIMINTAHETKEN RAKENNE	06
KOLMEN TUNTEEN EMOJIT	07
LEIKKI	08
MAALAUUS	10
MUSIIKKI	11
APUA TULEVAAN	12
LIITTEET (lapsen palaute & tunteet kehossa - harjoitus)	13



ESITTELY



Lapsen suru ja sen käsittelyn vaikeudet. Tämä vihkonen on kehitetty ja kokeiltu osana toiminnallista opinnäytetyötä. Varhaiskasvatuksen henkilökunta, muuten lasten kanssa työskentelevät sekä lasten huoltajat voivat hyötyä tämän vihkosen materiaaleista. Kuten miten puhua surusta, miksi sitä on hyvä käsitellä lasten kanssa sekä mitä menetelmiä voi käyttää. Toimintahetken rakennetta voi hyödyntää oman tunne/luovuus työpajojen pitämisessä. Tätä vihkosta ei tule käyttää terapiana.

Vihkonen on kehitetty osana opinnäytetyötä Laurea AMK:ssa yhdessä MLL:n kanssa. Opinnäytetyön teoria englanniksi löytyy Theseuksesta nimellä Erika Hafurova - Supporting 4-6-year-old children grieving life crises through creative methods osoitteessa <https://www.theseus.fi/>.

Vihkosen fiktiiviset kuvat ovat Canvan ilmaisista kuvista ja valokuvat ovat toimintahetkissä kuvattu ja julkaistu osallistujien luvalla.

VAIKEAT ELÄMÄNTILANTEET

LÄHIYMPÄRISTÖSSÄ TAPAHTUVA KUOLEMA

- Lapsen vanhempi, sisarus, isovanhempi, ystävä tai lemmikki voi menehtyä ja lapsi voi kokea yhteydenpidon loppumisen esimerkiksi avioeron vuoksi.
- Kuoleman mahdolliset vaikutukset lapseen: irtautuminen todellisuudesta, maaginen ajattelu (syyllisyys), kuolema ei ole henkilökohtainen vaan tilapäinen.
- Yleiset reaktioit kuoleman kuulemisesta: järkytys, epäusko, apatia, pelko tai sen hetken toiminnan jatkaminen reagoimatta.
- Surevan lapsen reaktioita shokin jälkeen: ahdistus, viha, peittely, keholliset reaktiot, kaipaus, uniongelmat, suru, huomion tarve, ja sairaudet.
- Aikuisen fyysinen läsnäolo ja huolenpito tärkeimpiä lapselle suruprosessissa.

VANHEMPIEN AVIERO/ERO

- Yksi suurin lapsen kokemista menetyksistä on päivittäisen yhteydenpidon menettäminen toiseen vanhempaan tai muihin perheenjäseniin avioeron takia.
- Lapset voivat tuntea eroprosessin aikana surua, vihaa, pettymystä, pelkoa, häpeää, yksinäisyyttä ja petetyksi tulemista.
- Lapset voivat kokea luottamuksen menetystä, pelkoa tulevaisuudesta ja avioeron todellisuuden tiedostamista avioeron myötä.
- Lapsen edun tulisi olla etusijalla myös avioeroprosessissa, joten vanhempien on kyettävä kunnioittamaan toisiaan ja pyrittävä puolueettomuuteen.

MUUTTO TOISEEN PAIKKAAN

- Lapsi kokee uuteen paikkaan muuttamisen tutun ympäristön menetyksenä.
- Sopeutuminen paremmin uuteen ympäristöön ja kotiin sekä uuden todellisuuden käsittäminen tapahtuu lasten mielikuvituksessa.
- Tutkimusten perusteella lapset tuntevat surua, huolta ja joskus vihaa niissä erotilanteissa, joissa yksi lapsista on muuttanut pois päiväkotiryhmästä.
- Pieniä lapsia tulisikin rohkaista tuomaan tuttu ja turvallinen lelu tai kuva vanhemmista uuteen päiväkotiin pelon ja surun lievittämiseksi.

SURU & SEN TUOMAT TUNTEET

SURU

- Merkkejä surusta ovat itku, tietynlainen vetäytyminen, kehon jännittyneisyys, ahdistuneisuusreaktiot, esineiden heittäminen ja kieltäytyminen puhumasta.
- Ulospäin saattaa näyttää siltä, että pieniltä lapsilta puuttuisi surua, koska joskus he yrittävät välttää surun tunteiden aiheuttamaa kipua.
- Pieniä lapsia tulisi rohkaista ilmaisemaan suruaan, sillä vaikka he ovat vielä pieniä, he ovat kykeneviä siihen kehitykseltään.
- Lapset ovat hyviä lukemaan tilanteita ja herkkiä, joten on tärkeää, että aikuiset tukevat lasta olemaan oma itsensä ja opettavat tunteiden tuntemista.

VIHA

- Vihan ilmaisemiseen kuuluvia tuntemuksia ovat turhautuminen, ärtymys, raivon tunteet ja itse vihan tunne.
- Viha voi peittää alleen muita tunteita, kuten surua, pelkoa, kipua, häpeää ja turvattomuutta, kun lapsen elämässä on tapahtunut jotain traumaattista.
- Jos lapsi ei pysty käsittelemään sietämättömiä tunteita, voi syntyä raivokohtaus, jossa lapsi kiljuu, huutaa, lyö päätä seinään ja lyö nyrkeillä.
- Aikuisten on tarjottava lapselle turvallinen paikka ja aika ilmaista vihaansa ja varmistettava, että tunteen syy tulee kuulluksi eikä lasta nöyrytetä.

PELKO

- Pelko voi tuntua kehossa käsien vapinana, hikoiluna, kurkun kireytenä, kasvojen kalpeutena ja sydämen sykkeenä.
- Lapset voivat pelätä erilaisia asioita, ja monikerroksinen pelko voi tuntua ahdistuksena, turvattomuutena ja joskus jopa pelkona itse pelon tunteesta.
- Lapsi voi vältellä voimakkaiden tunnetilojen takia paikkoja, joissa on tapahtunut jotain paha, tai ihmisiä, jotka muistuttavat vaikeasta tilanteesta.
- Lapsen on helpointa kohdata pelko päivänvalossa turvallisten aikuisten kanssa ja tutussa paikassa lapsen tahdissa, missä asioille annetaan merkitys.

TOIMINTAHETKEN RAKENNE

ALOITUSKERTA

- Aloitus:** 1. Välipala
2. Alkupiiri (tutustumisleikkejä)
3. Yhteiset säännöt
4. Johdatus aiheeseen kolmen tunne emojiin avulla

- Työskentelyvaihe:** 1. Viha emojiin näyttö ja kysymyksiä
2. Viha tunteen maalaus värinä tai säätilana

3. Tunteet kehossa harjoitus

- Lopetus:** 1. Rauhallisessa musiikissa rentoutumisharjoitus patjoilla/tyynyillä
2. Lapsilta yksitellen palautteen saaminen
3. Loppupiirissä juttelua ja heipat

KESKIKOHDAT

- Aloitus:** 1. Välipala
2. Alkupiiri (nimileikki, iät, lempiväri, kannustusrinki)

3. Yhteisten sääntöjen kertaus

- Työskentelyvaihe:** 1. Suru tai pelko emojiin näyttö ja juttelua

2. Tunteiden omakohtainen ymmärtäminen leikin keinoin kohdista 1-6, sivulta -

3. Tunne musiikkina kohta 7

4. Tunteet kehossa harjoitus

- Lopetus:** 1. Rentoutuminen venyttelyillä/hieronnulla

2. Lapsilta yksitellen palautteen saaminen

3. Loppupiirissä juttelua ja heipat

LOPETUSKERTA

- Aloitus:** 1. Välipala
2. Alkupiiri (lempieläin, kannustusrinki)
3. Yhteisten sääntöjen kertaus

- Työskentelyvaihe:** 1. Kaikkien kolmen tunteiden läpikäynti emojiin avulla ja kysymyksiä lapsille

2. Vihan tunne maalaukseksi sivulla - tehtävä 1

3. Surun tunne leikkinä kohta 1 sivulla -

4. Pelon tunne musiikkina ja laulamista

5. Tunteet kehossa harjoitus eri variaatiolla

6. Mahdollisesti näyttely valmistuneista taideteoksista

- Lopetus:** 1. Rentoutuminen tyynyillä tai patjoilla pitäen silmät kiinni

2. Lapsilta yksitellen emoji palautteet

3. Kiitokset ja toiveiden kuunteleminen tuleville kerroille

KESTO

Aloitus:

15 min

Työskentelyvaihe:

30 min

Lopetus:

15 min



SURU



VIHA



PELKO



LEIKKI

Toimintahetken alussa voidaan tehdä minkä tahansa tyyppisiä piirileikkejä lasten kanssa. Tutustumisleikkejä (nimet, iät, lempiasiat jne.), kannustusrinki, seuraa johtajaa.

Tunteiden omakohtainen ymmärtäminen (suru, viha, pelko)

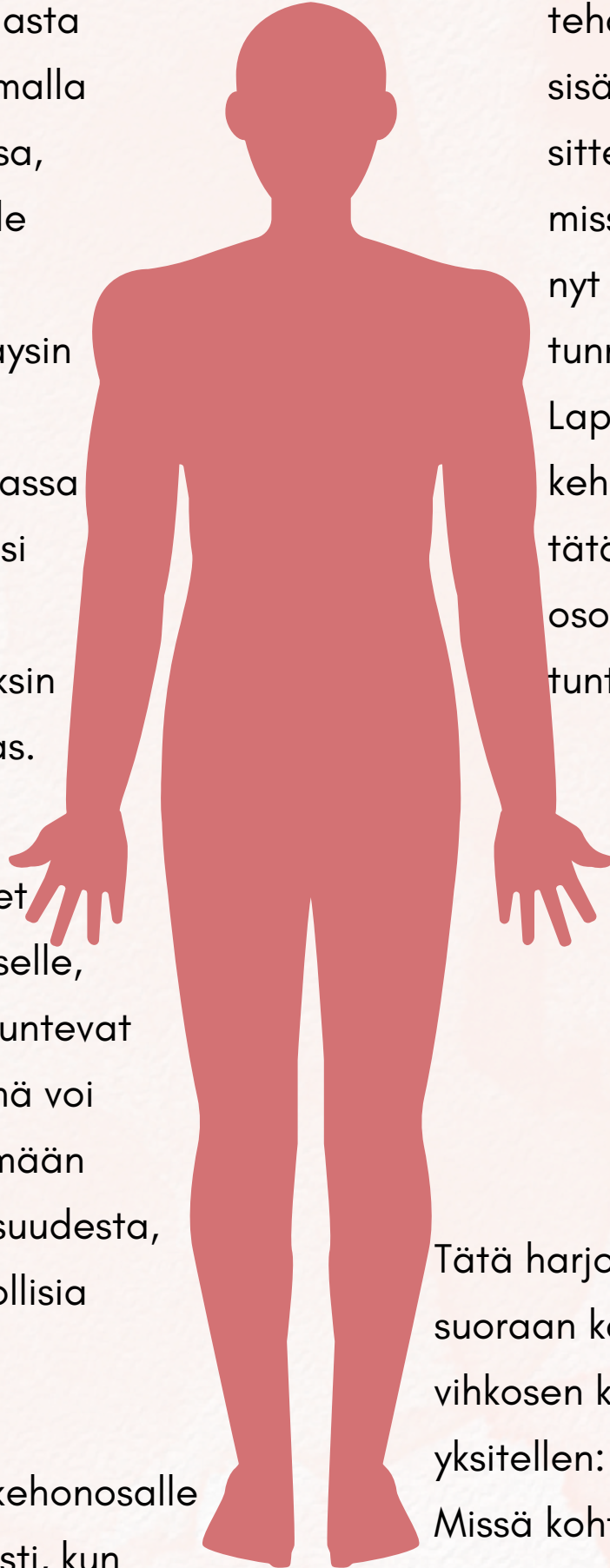
1. Mikä eläin tämä tunne on?
2. Miten tämä tunne liikkuu (millainen liike)?
3. Kuinka nopea tämä tunne on?
4. Mikä tämän tunteen lämpötila on?
5. Miltä tämä tunne haisee?
6. Miltä tämä tunne maistuu?
7. Miltä tämä tunne kuulostaa?
8. Minkälainen säätila (vuodenaika) tämä tunne on?
9. Minkä värinen tämä tunne on?
10. Missä kohdassa kehoa tämä tunne sijaitsee?

Ohjeet

- Lapsi/lapset voivat leikkiä kohdat 1-4 yksin tai ryhmässä.
- Ryhmässä voidaan leikkiä niin, että jokainen vuorollaan esittää oman tunteensa eläimenä, nopeutena, liikkeenä ja lämpötilana. Lapsi voi oppia samalla miltä toisen lapsen sama tunne näyttää. Leikkimistä voidaan jatkaa jos lapset haluavat.
- Kohta 10 on tärkeä, sillä näin lasta osataan paremmin tukea.

Tunteet kehossa - harjoitus

**Missä kohdassa kehoa
tämä tunne sijaitsee?**



Tämän harjoituksen voi tehdä hengittämällä sisään ja ulos pari kertaa, sitten kysymällä lapselta, missä kohtaa kehoa juuri nyt on tuntemuksia ja mikä tunne se voisi olla ja miksi. Lapsi voi näyttää omasta kehostaan tai hyödyntää tätä viereistä kuvaa osoittamaan omalle tuntemukselleen kohdan.

Vihkosen liitteistä löytyy tämä sivu ilman näitä ohjeita, minkä voi tulostaa ja täyttää lapsen kertomilla kohdilla ja asioilla.

Tätä harjoitusta voi myös tehdä suoraan käymällä läpi tämän viikosen kolmea tunnetta yksitellen: vihaa, surua ja pelkoa. Missä kohtaa kehoa lapsi tuntee yleisesti kyseisen tunteen?

Tätä vihkostä käyttävät aikuiset voivat tukea lasta halaamalla, koskettamalla kehonosaa tarvittaessa, puhumalla kehonosalle lohduttavia sanoja ja kertomalla, että on täysin normaalia tuntea esimerkiksi kipua vatsassa tai päässä, jolloin lapsi oppii, ettei hän ole tunteidensa kanssa yksin eikä ole outo tai sairas.

Vanhemmat ja aikuiset itse voivat kertoa lapselle, missä kohtaa kehoa tuntevat kyseisen tunteen. Tämä voi tukea lasta ymmärtämään tunteiden universaalisuudesta, että muillakin on kehollisia tuntemuksia.

Lapsen osoittamalle kehonosalle voidaan puhua kauniisti, kun tunne tuntuu voimakkaalta.

MAALAUS

Tarvikkeet: vaihtoehtoisesti
maalapaperia, vesivärit, vesikupit
maalia, pensseleitä



Vihan tunne maalaukseksi

Pöydällä on yksi paperi lapsen edessä, lapsi leikkii olevansa tai on oikeasti vihainen ja ryttää paperin palloksi.

Kun viha on purettu paperille ja lapsi on rauhoittunut siirytään seuraavaan vaiheeseen. Rytätty pallopaperi avataan jättäen siihen ryttäyksen tuomat kohoumat ja rypyt. Paperia ei yritetä tehdä sileäksi ja suoraksi.

Lopuksi maalataan paperille.



Tunteiden maalaus värinä (2) tai säätilana (3)

Perustuen lapsen vastauksiin leikkiessä kohdat 8 ja 9, sivulla 6, lapsi voi maalata joko tunteet (viha, suru, pelko) tiettyinä valitseminaan väreinä (yksi väri tai enemmän) tai säätilana.

Halutessaan voi näyttää toisille.

MUSIIKKI

Tarvikkeet:

soittimia tai esineitä, joilla voi tehdä ääniä, puhelin ja kaiutin



Tunteiden äänet (suru, viha, pelko)

- Perustuen lapsen vastaukseen leikkiessä kohta 7, sivulla 6, lapsi saa kokeilla tehdä oman tunteensa äänen instrumenteilla.
- Jokaisen tunteen äänet tehdään erikseen (esimerkiksi eri kerroilla).
- Lapset voivat halutessaan näyttää toisille lapsille vuorotellen piirissä oman tunteensa äänet.



Rentoutumisharjoitus

- Lapsi ottaa itselleen mukavan ja sopivan asennon (maaten selällään) ja halutessaan sulkee silmät.
- Rauhallinen musiikki ilman sanoja laitetaan taustalle ja lapsi saa olla rauhassa tuokion jälkeen hetken.
- Venyttelyä ja hierontaa voi tehdä yhdessä tarvittaessa.

Lauluhetki tunteista

- Lasten kanssa opetella ja laulaa lauluja, joissa tunteita mainitaan.
- Esimerkkejä: "Leijonaa mä metsästä", "Kiukun kesytys - Kielinuppu", "Joskus tuntuu siltä - Liikkuva laulureppu".



APUA TULEVAAN

NETTISIVUSTOT

MLL : <https://www.mll.fi/>

Pelastakaa lapset ry : <https://www.pelastakaalapset.fi/>

Mieli ry : <https://mieli.fi/>

Sos lapsikylä : <https://www.sos-lapsikyla.fi/>

Mielenterveystalo.fi : <https://www.mielenterveystalo.fi/fi>

Viitottu Rakkaus : <https://viitotturakkaus.fi/>

KIRJAT TUEKSI

Lapsi ja kriisi : Selviytymisen tukeminen - Soili Poijula 2016

Tunnelintu:Elämyksellistä tunnekasvatusta lapsille - Mirkka Auvinen 2023

Miten tukea lasta ja nuorta kun läheinen on kuollut?-Uittomäki ym. 2022

Yhdessä suru on helpompi kantaa : Opas lasten ja nuorten sururyhmien ohjaajille - Tuettu suruprojekti, Suomen Mielenterveysseura 2004

LISÄMATERIAALIT

Pelkötöykirja: https://cdn.mll.fi/prod/2017/07/28154132/JKK_Pelko_TK_pieni.pdf

Vanhemmille : <https://www.vanhemmuudentuki.fi/>

Tunnetaidoista : <https://fanniemotions.com/>

Ilmaisia : <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/aineistopankki>

<https://www.surevankohtaaminen.fi/lapsenjanuorensuru/>

<https://omaperhe.fi/perhe-elama/kriisi-lapsiperheessa/ero>

1



onnellinen

2



tyytyväinen

3



neutraali

4



surullinen

5



vihainen

Tunteet kehossa - harjoitus

