

*Exploring  
Your Own  
Personal  
Childhood  
Experiences  
with Death*

My experience as a grief counselor has taught me that all too often caregivers-in-training want to rush into learning "techniques" to help children before they have even explored their own personal encounters with grief.

The purpose of this activity is to help you recall and explore your own early experiences with death. To help bereaved children, we as adults will find it invaluable to embrace our personal losses (not only death, but other life losses and transitions as well) and discuss how our grief has changed our lives. In

doing so, we can become more available to the children we want to help. In addition, we can remain conscious of not projecting our own "unfinished business" onto the children with whom we work.

If you allow this activity some time and reflection, you may find it helps you determine the unwritten rules about death that your family abided by, as well as recognize that the anxiety you may feel in the loss situations of others (including the children you help) is often a reflection of your own loss fears.

So that you have an opportunity to process your findings and feelings about this exercise, I encourage you to discuss your responses with others—perhaps a trusted friend or a small group of colleagues. I have found that such discussions open all kinds of doors to understanding that the exercise in and of itself cannot.

Please complete each of the following sentences. Be honest and thorough. Remember, there are no good or bad, right or wrong answers.

1. My first experience with death was \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Right after this first experience, I felt \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



*To help bereaved children, we as adults must embrace our personal losses.*