

Grief Camp

Central Wyoming Hospice & Transitions hosts an annual grief camp for children ages 6-16 who have experienced a loss through the death of a loved one. Our hope is to assist each child or teen in understanding their grief and to provide them the opportunity to normalize their experience, and learn healthy coping tools. With the assistance of supportive, caring adults, our staff and trained volunteers assist the youth in developing positive memories of their loved one. This is achieved through games, sharing activities and finding some peace to reconcile their pain.



CWHTP History

- * CWHTP Started in 1981
- * CWHTP started offering Kids Camp in 2004
- * Free of charge to community, supported through the generosity of the Gertrude Kamps Memorial Foundation and New York Life
- * First camp at Reach 4A Star Riding Academy in 2015
- * Serves 30 participants





R4AS History

- * Therapeutic Riding program began in 1999 with a focus on Special Olympics
- * Moved to current site in 2004- opened doors in 2005 with 6 riders
- * Since 2005, grown to support up to 40 riders a week plus large groups and special events
- * Works with a wide population and variety of groups

How does this fit in to EAAT?

- * Equine Assisted Learning
- * This is NOT therapy- while a mental health professional is on site (from hospice), the focus is on a therapeutic experience.
 - * Normalizing
 - * Allows to relate to others with similar experience
 - * Teach healthy coping tools
 - * FUN!!!!

2015 Grief Camp- Structure

- * Participants grouped by age, 10 to a group:
 - * 7-9 years old
 - * 10-11 years old
 - * 12-16 years old
- * Within each group, participants “paired” during riding activities- 2 riders/horse
- * During other activities, entire group works individually
- * Day One: Morning as one large group

2015 Grief Camp- Schedule

- * During each day, participants rotate through 3 main “stations” in their groups.
 - * Riding activity
 - * Horse-based ground activity
 - * Hospice-led craft activity

Day 1- Activities

Each “station” runs for approximately 45 minutes

- * Morning activities done as a large group:
 - * Introduction and Orientation
 - * Horse behavior and introduction to safety
 - * Herd observation and journaling
- * Afternoon activities (broken into groups):
 - * “Riding”: Grooming and painting of horses
 - * “Ground”: Leading
 - * Hospice-led “Craft”



Day 2- Activities

Each “station” runs for approximately 1:15

- * Riding:
 - * Introduction to riding- basic steering and control
 - * Riding in pairs- Partner helps with leading as appropriate
- * Ground: Grooming and tacking
 - * Review grooming- purpose of each tool
 - * Saddling and unsaddling both English and Western
- * Craft
- * Stuffed Animals



Day 3- Activities

Each “station” runs for approximately 1:20

- * Riding:
 - * Review of basics
 - * Trotting as grand finale!
- * Ground: Horse health
 - * Horse vitals
 - * Basic health care
 - * Bathing
- * Craft
- * Butterfly Release



Children's Grief

Children experience similar feelings to adults following the death of a loved one. However, they often express their feelings differently, depending on their developmental age:

Age	Concept of Death	Possible Reactions
0-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No concept of death, separation or despair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May search repeatedly for the deceased Become clingy and afraid of strangers Feeding & sleeping difficulties
2-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death seen as reversible May feel they have caused the death Magical thinking – make up fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fears abandonment and separation Loud protest Despair Indignant at changes in patterns or routine Sleep problems May revert to "baby" behaviours
5-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More exposure to death and understanding of death as permanent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression Anger, guilt, temper tantrums, nightmares Behaviour, learning or school problems. Perfect child, brave & in control May become preoccupied with death
Adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death permanent Denial – it can't happen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdrawal, sadness, depression, loneliness Anger, rejection Joking, sarcasm Dependence or regressing to younger age Insecurity, low self-esteem

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is important to allow children to grieve in their own way and their own time. They may seesaw in and out of grief, needing time to play and have fun as well as to cry.

“Bereaved children need acknowledgement, understanding and holding, both physically and emotionally. Whatever role you may play in a bereaved child’s life, you can help him/her to express and share their sorrow by your support, encouragement and practical help.”

Cruse Bereavement Care
www.cruse.org.uk

Grief Activities/Crafts

Paint Branding: The kids will draw a symbol that reminds them of their loved ones who have died, then they will paint this brand on the side of the horse. This is a remembrance activity which allows the kids to express their love.

Calming Bottles: The children can shake these water bottles with glitter in them and use them as a relaxation technique. As they watch the chaos settle down, it will remind them that grief comes in waves from very intense to calm. The bottle will give them something to focus on and relax.

Feelings Cube: Grief comes with lots of emotions, so this activities helps kids to identify and talk about some of their feelings in a creative way. Roll the cube and discuss the specific feeling.

Photo Block: This craft allows kids to remember their loved ones and write special messages about them. It will hold their painted horse brand picture as well.

Journaling: This activity allows kids to: reflect, purge thoughts and feelings, release some of the intensity of grieving, and have a record of their grief journey.

Butterfly Release (a mourning activity): This activity allows individuals a time to remember their loved one and whisper a message to them to be carried on the wings of a Monarch butterfly.



Evaluation

Areas measured

- * Filled out by participants at close of time at R4AS
- * Overall: very positive
- * Based on satisfaction (adapted for each age group)
- * Logistics (food, transportation)
- * Activities
- * Environment
- * Staff/volunteers
- * Emotions- nervous, safe space to talk
- * Overall satisfaction (fun, glad came to camp)

Ages 7-9 (9 out of 10 attendees)

Food and Snacks	8-😊 1-😐 ☹️
Journals	6-😊 1-😐 2-☹️
Art/Craft Activities	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Learning about horses	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Riding horses	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Reach 4A Star Riding Academy Building (environment)	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Hospice Leaders	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Riding Academy people	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Being with other kids	9-😊 😐 ☹️
Riding the bus	6-😊 1-😐 2-☹️
I had fun	9-😊 😐 ☹️

Best thing at camp: 6-riding horses; 2-art/craft activities; 1-“meeting people who have felt what I have”

Worst thing at camp: 4-nothing; 2-bus; 1-journals; 2-left blank

What would you like to do at next year's camp? 5-Riding horses/“go to reach 4A star riding academy”; 1-I “dunno”; 1-“fun fun fun!!!”; 1-more “barbricyu” (barbeque); 1-left blank

Ages 9-11 (9 out of 9 attendees)

I was nervous coming to camp.	YES 3- SORT OF 6- NO
I liked learning about horses.	9-YES SORT OF NO
I liked riding horses.	9-YES SORT OF NO
I liked using my journal.	6-YES 2-SORT OF 1-NO
I liked doing the art/craft activities.	8-YES 1-SORT OF NO
The food and snacks were good.	7-YES 1-SORT OF 1- NO
I liked camp at Reach 4A Star Riding Academy (environment).	9-YES SORT OF NO
The hospice leaders helped me.	8-YES 1-SORT OF NO
I liked the riding academy people.	9-YES SORT OF NO
I felt okay to talk about the person who died.	5-YES 3-SORT OF 1- NO
It helped being with other kids like me.	7-YES 1-SORT OF 1-NO
I liked riding the bus.	8-YES 1-SORT OF NO
Camp was fun.	9-YES SORT OF NO
I am glad I came to camp.	9-YES SORT OF NO

Ages 12-16 (8 out of 10 attendees)

I was nervous coming to camp.	1-YES 4-SORT OF 3-NO
I liked learning about horses.	8-YES SORT OF NO
I liked riding horses.	7-YES SORT OF NO 1-blank
I liked using my journal.	4-YES 3-SORT OF 1-NO
I liked doing the art/craft activities.	3-YES 4- SORT OF NO 1-blank
The food and snacks were good.	8-YES SORT OF NO
I liked camp at Reach 4A Star Riding Academy (environment).	8-YES SORT OF NO
The hospice leaders helped me.	8-YES SORT OF NO
I liked the riding academy people.	8-YES SORT OF NO
I felt okay to talk about the person who died.	4-YES 4-SORT OF NO
It helped being with other kids who are grieving.	7-YES 1-SORT OF NO
I liked riding the bus.	5-YES 3-SORT OF NO
Camp was fun.	8-YES SORT OF NO
I am glad I came to camp.	8-YES SORT OF NO
I would encourage other kids to come to grief camp.	8-YES SORT OF NO

Highlights of Evaluation Comments

26 total participant surveys completed

Best thing at camp:

22 out of 26 participants stated that riding/being with the horses

1 participant said “meeting people who have felt what I have”

Worst thing at camp: 4-nothing; 2-bus; 1-journals; 2-left blank

What would you like to do at next year's camp?

12 out of 26 participants indicated that they wanted to work with horses again

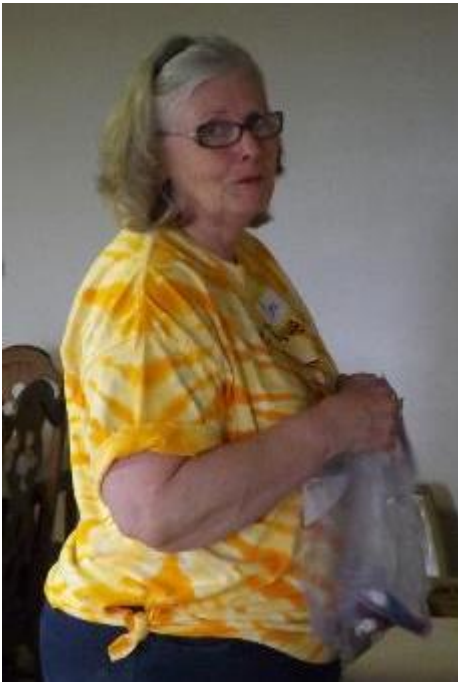
1 participant said more “barbricyu” (barbeque)

Helpful Resources

- Cruse Bereavement Care www.cruse.org.uk
- The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families www.dougy.org
- The Center for Loss and Transition www.centerforloss.com



BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS WHO MADE THE 2015 KIDS GRIEF CAMP A SUCCESS!!



- 
- Thoughts for the 2016 Kids Grief Camp
 - Questions and Comments