

“The Blues”

Are you just sad, or is it something more?

OBJECTIVE: To help a child contrast between feelings of normal sadness, grief and depression to more higher levels.

SKILL: Learning to identify symptoms of sadness, grief or depression and utilizing effective coping mechanisms



- Video
- Exercise Sheets
- Counsellor Interaction

CORE LEARNING

Sadness is a natural emotion, but it can become healthy under certain conditions.

What is Sadness?

Sadness is a very human and natural emotion. It functions like all emotions in that it comes and goes. How long our sadness lasts varies depending on what we are going through, and how much emotional pain we are feeling. At some point, everyone feels sad for one reason or another. However, how we cope with feeling sad makes a big difference on how quickly we bounce back to our normal selves.

Sadness becomes unhealthy under two conditions:

- If it lasts for too long
- If it happens too often

Feeling sad is a natural feeling to have for many situations like missing someone or losing someone. In these cases, sadness can be healthy, but it must be monitored to ensure it doesn't exceed a healthy duration or frequency.

Feeling sad can be due to

- 1) A personal problem
- 2) A loss of something or someone
- 3) Depression

If you feel sad because of depression, it's important to keep in mind that this is a mental health condition that needs attention.

Narrowing your options to one of these three categories will help you decide the next steps you can take.

SADNESS DUE TO A PERSONAL PROBLEM –

If someone or something has hurt you and this is causing you to feel sad, there are a number of problem solving techniques you can utilize.



1. Notice how you feel and why. Knowing your emotions helps you to understand and accept yourself. If you feel sad, notice it — but don't dwell on it too long or give it too much attention. Just tell yourself (or someone else) that you feel sad. Try to figure out why you feel that way and do something proactive about the problem.
2. Bounce back from disappointments or failures. When things don't go your way, don't give up! Stay in the game. There's always a next time. Give yourself credit for trying.
3. Think positive. Even if you're sad, think about what you can do and how things can get better. If you didn't get something you wanted, think of something else that can make you happy. There's always something good — look for it!

4. Think of solutions. Coming up with ways to solve a problem or cope with a situation can help you feel strong, confident, and good about yourself. It's hard to stay sad when you're feeling so capable!
5. Get support. Even the most capable kids need support. The people in your life who believe in you and care (i.e. parents, friends, teachers) can comfort you when you feel sad. Sometimes, someone just listening and understanding what you're going through is enough. They can help you work out a problem or help you think of happier things to get your mind off sadness or disappointment.
6. Put yourself in a good mood. Shake off a sad mood by doing things that put you in a more positive mood. Play a game or sport, ride a bike, dance or run, take a walk, make art or music, read, or spend time with someone you like. Relax, have some fun, and allow yourself to feel better.



SADNESS DUE TO GRIEF - There may be a time when you feel sad because someone you love has become sick or died. This is called grief. Grief is normal to experience, and there are some steps you can take to support yourself when you are going through grief.

Nearly everyone goes through grief at some point in their life. It will take time to process emotions and adjust to coping without that person in your life. It can be very difficult to predict or fully appreciate the impact of a loss. At the beginning, you may experience shock and disbelief. It is also common to feel emotionally numb for some time after. Everyone copes with grief in different ways. Some people cry a lot or talk to friends; others will deal with things quietly by themselves. A person may cope well with their experience of grief, or find it difficult to manage. It might only take a short while for your mood to settle. Then

again, it might take a lot longer than that to get back on track. The strongest emotions will gradually reduce in intensity and frequency over time.

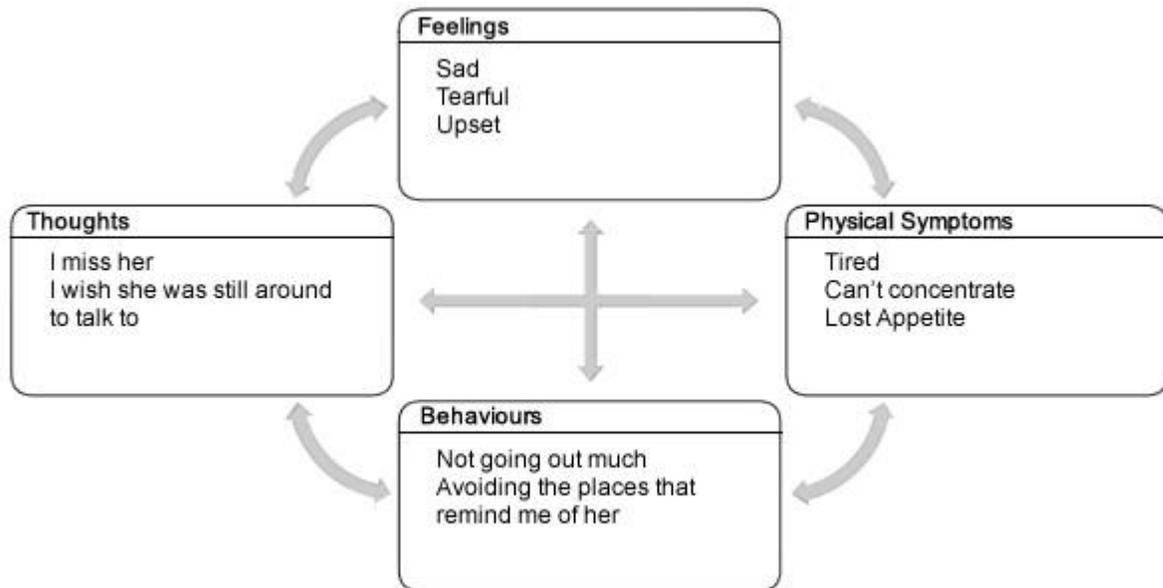
You might come across obstacles to the grieving process. This can make it more difficult to process and deal with. You might not realise at the time, but you might be coping with your loss in a normal way. That is, the same way as someone else would, if faced with a similar situation.

What makes grief harder to cope with?

- How long you knew the person
- How old they were
- What relationship you shared
- How the person died
- Whether the death was expected or unexpected
- Your past experience(s) of loss
- Experiencing multiple losses

We can develop some unhealthy patterns or habits during grief. One of the things we can do is become aware of these patterns and break them before they become a problem. Consider the following scenario of Anna. “Anna was an 11-year old girl who had been living with her grandma for as long as she could remember. Anna’s grandmother used to take her to the park and cook her special meals. Last Tuesday, Anna’s 84-year old grandmother died unexpectedly, and now Anna is experiencing some painful emotions.

Annie's pattern and cycle



When someone or a pet dies, it is very helpful to

- Talk about how you feel with those that care about you (i.e. parents, siblings, close friends).
- Anticipate certain things might happen because of the death (i.e. certain rituals like a burial or seeing people cry).
- Gently confront some truths (i.e. the person isn't coming back, it's not your fault the person died).
- Hold on to objects or memorabilia that remind you of the person.
- Experience grief your own way. You can cry or not cry. Everyone grieves differently as long you are sharing your pain with someone - however you do it is okay.

Hint for Counsellor

Remember that the child's grieving process will differ radically from your own. Children of this age live in the moment. They don't realize the full extent of the loss and will be uncomfortable with long intense displays of emotion. They will grieve sporadically with intense brief bursts over many years.

Making Good Use of Your Time

When we have experienced a recent loss, our motivation to do things often decreases. You may find that you give up hobbies or activities that you previously enjoyed; over time you might end up doing very little. This can lead you to feel sadder, and a cycle can begin to emerge which is difficult to escape from.

Review the list below of some activities you can engage in to try to feel brighter if you are grieving. On the right side, add some activities that are personal to you.

Suggestions	Your Ideas
Visit a friend Go to the cinema Do something active (take the dog for a walk; housework) Take part in a hobby or sport Treat yourself (e.g. buy something nice) Do something creative (e.g. draw; paint etc) Watch a movie Read a book Visit a relative	

SADNESS DUE TO DEPRESSION



Feeling depressed is more than just feeling sad. It's normal to feel sad as a result of being hurt or of losing something or someone special. However, depression affects people's thinking. They see themselves and the future negatively. Along with feeling sad or irritable, it may seem that nothing is worthwhile. From time to time everyone feels depressed, but it usually doesn't last. A

diagnosis of depression is made only when the depressed mood has lasted more than two weeks, when it is intense, and when the symptoms of depression interfere with the person's ability to manage everyday things.

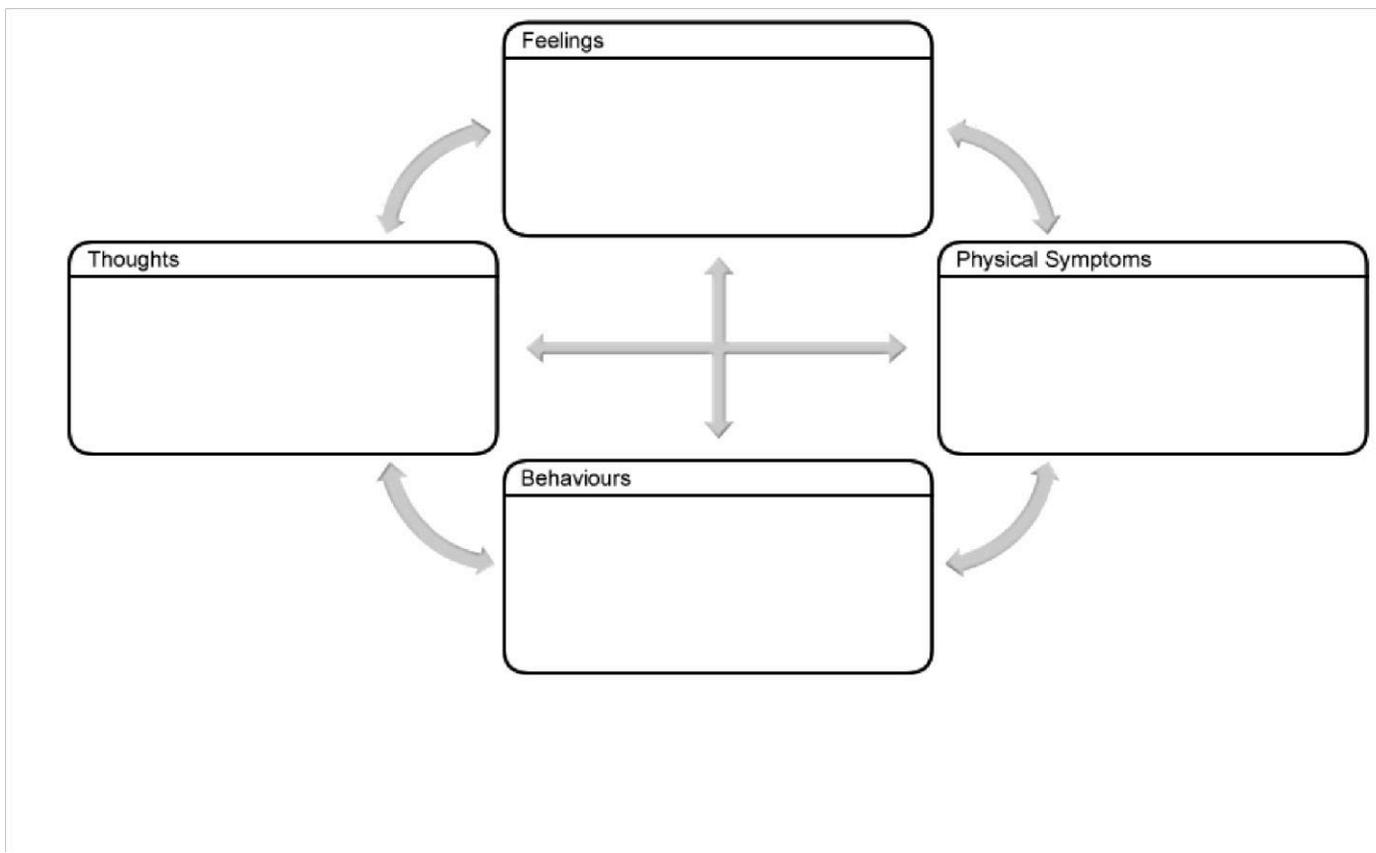


<i>SIGN OF DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN</i>	
<i>Apathy Bored, hard to motivate</i>	<i>Fatigue Tired all the time</i>
<i>Psychomotor retardation (slowed movements)</i>	<i>Dawdling, dragging self around</i>
<i>Restlessness Fidgeting, can't settle</i>	<i>Irritability Cranky, bad-tempered</i>
<i>Agitation Nervous, jumpy</i>	<i>Sleep problems Problems going to sleep or staying asleep sleeping a lot</i>
<i>Sadness Unhappy, seems 'down' most of the time</i>	<i>Worthlessness, Feeling unloved</i>
<i>Feels bad about him/herself Guilt Blames him/herself excessively</i>	<i>Social withdrawal Lonely, avoids other people</i>

<i>Accident prone,</i>	<i>thoughts of suicide Talks about death or hurting him/herself</i>
<i>Poor concentration Doesn't listen, can't focus on tasks</i>	<i>Memory difficulties Forgets details, forgets to do task</i>
<i>Impaired thinking processes</i>	<i>Impaired decision-making Can't make up mind</i>
<i>Loss of pleasure</i>	<i>Uninterested</i>

Activity

This activity will help you identify certain depressive thoughts that lead to low feelings and ultimately to negative behavior. Try to chart your feelings over the course of the next month to identify any thoughts that may seem depressive.



INSIDE STORY

Maneesh is a 13-year old boy who lives with his mom and his sister Monisha. Lately, he's been feeling very down. He wakes up and feels unmotivated to go to school or do anything. When his friends call him to go out, he says, "no". He's been feeling like this for the last month, ever since his father left. Maneesh loves his dad dearly, but right before he left, there were so many fights and outburst between his mom and dad and he felt completely helpless. His dad disabled and unable to work so Maneesh feels extreme guilt and compassion for his dad. He can't talk to his mom about how he feels, but he's feeling more alone and alone. He has lost his appetite lately and if he could sleep in all day, he would.

Discuss the following (remember there are no right or wrong answers):

- 1) Are Maneesh's symptoms of normal sadness or something more?
- 2) Can someone as young as 13 experience depression?
- 3) What do you think Maneesh should do? Should he talk to someone about what he is going through?

Suggested Video Sources

www.everydayspeech.com

www.You tube.com