

Me, Too. & Company

supporting children
and families in grief

2008-2009

SCHEDULE

9/30-11/18 (fall)

1/27-3/17 (winter)

3/31-5/19 (spring)

call to register
503.220.1000 or
503.215.CARE

What is Me, Too. & Company?

Me, Too. & Company is a program supporting children and families who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, child, relative, or friend. We offer support groups for children, teens, and adults in their lives. All of the groups meet at the same location, at the same time, in different rooms. The groups are led by a professional facilitator and volunteers with special training and experience. Typically, there is one facilitator or volunteer for every two children.

Me, Too. & Company is a program of Legacy Hospice Services, the Oregon Hospice Association and Providence Hospice Programs. Groups are conveniently located close in the Portland-Metro area. Services are offered to participants at no cost. Me, Too. & Company has no religious affiliation, although groups meet at a local church that contributes their space for our use.

The **children's group** is for kids ages 5-11. Kids are invited to express their thoughts and feelings through a talking circle and a variety of play activities.

The **teen group** is for kids ages 12-18. In the company of peers, teens participate in a talking circle and expressive arts activities, including mask-making, working with clay and compiling memory books to honor the person who died in their lives.

The **adult group** has a dual focus. Participants receive support for their own grief and gain a better understanding of how children grieve. Adults also learn how to support their children in having a productive grief process.

Me, Too. & Company is not the same as therapy or counseling. The program combines peer support and education for families. Support groups can be an effective means of helping children, teens, and adults after someone has died.

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What are the goals of Me, Too. & Company groups?

Me, Too. & Company strives to create safe and supportive groups which help participants express their thoughts and feelings through discussion and activities. All participants, even those as young as 5, can better understand their own grief process, learn about the grief of others in their family, and develop a confidence in their own grieving.

How do I know if my child needs a grief support program? My child is not "acting out" and does not appear to be sad about the death. Is that normal?

Children may be affected by loss in a variety of ways, and not all children will have behavior problems following a loss. It is not uncommon for children, especially teenagers, to give the appearance that everything is fine, while hurting deeply inside. Children often do not have the same abilities as adults have to talk about their feelings or to ask for the help they need. For this reason, Me, Too. & Company provides children with other outlets, such as play and art activities to express their sad, hurt or angry feelings. Even children that are not outwardly struggling report benefits from the program. The Me, Too. & Company clinical coordinators can help you explore whether your child or family might benefit from a grief support program.

Do You Know a Child or Teen who Needs Grief Support?

Common Grief Reactions in Children and Teens

- Regressive behavior. Behaviors that a child or teen has outgrown may reappear.
- The "perfect" child. In contrast to the regressive child, this child takes on responsibilities beyond his or her years.
- Increased irritability. A child or teen may begin lashing out physically or verbally at seemingly random incidents.
- Body distress. Physical complaints may increase such as stomach aches, headaches, sleeplessness and decreased energy.
- Difficulty concentrating. Children or teens may have trouble completing tasks or have difficulties in school.
- Reluctance to talk. A child or teen may have a tough time talking about their grief experience or the person who died.
- Increased sense of isolation. Grieving families often feel a need to pull together for support. Just at the time teens most need their peers, they feel isolated by their deep sense of loss.

What Helps Children and Teens?

- An environment that invites the safe expression of the many feelings of grief.
- Routines, structure and reasonable expectations provide continuity at a time of constant change and adjustment.
- Participation in peer support groups that allow multiple ways of expressing grief.