

Title

Symbols of the Heart.

Grade Level

Intended for use in an individual counseling setting for individuals aged K-12.

Theme

School counseling.

Duration

Approximately one semester.

Goal

Students will identify area of grief and become comfortable discussing and processing grief.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Learn about the stages of the grieving process through art.
2. Feel comfortable in the therapy process by focusing on the mandala creation process.
3. Begin discussing their individual experiences while creating a visual manifestation of grief in the mandala.
4. Begin to heal from loss by seeing the beauty created in the mandala.
5. Honor the loss through Lakota cultural symbols incorporated in the mandala.
6. Possess a tangible connection to loss with the completed mandala.

South Dakota Standards

Not applicable.

Cultural Concept

This approach to counseling would allow students to heal through Lakota art and culture.

Cultural Background

Symbols and circles are meaningful components of Lakota culture. Circles embody Lakota culture in that they embrace all of life comprehensively. Symbols have long been used in winter counts and the like to represent personal and familial associations. The mandala is a combination of circles and symbols and works well as an artistic tool for American Indians. By including symbols or drawings of that which symbolizes the loss (e.g., drawing a tipi for home), students will be able to remember and honor what has been lost to them. This will be accomplished by drawing a mandala that includes symbols that they affiliate with the loss.

Student Activities

In the confidential and safe counseling environment, students will be able to disclose information to help them process and begin to heal from loss. Activities central to this process include

1. Drawing. Students will create a circle; within that circle, students will draw symbols that represent the loss and allow students to reflect upon the loss.
2. Talking. Students often feel uncomfortable during the counseling process, particularly at the onset of counseling. Creating a mandala will serve as a means

- of alleviating anxiety while offering students a hands-on activity. Giving students the option to draw will ease them and facilitate talk.
3. Inquiring. In order to select symbols that most link students to the loss, students may wish to consult with others to learn which symbols best represent that which has been lost. In so doing, students will find grief healing in communicating not only with the counselor about the loss, but also with others.
 4. Thinking. As counseling continues, students, as part of the healing process, may better understand the loss through the mandala they are creating.
 5. Healing. By finishing the mandala, students will possess a tangible tribute to that which has been lost.

Resources

Students will need paper and pencil to begin the project. A sample mandala should also be shown so that students understand the completed project (see examples as listed under references). Depending upon the student's age and ability level, various mediums (crayons, markers, colored pencils, watercolors, etc.) will be needed for students to create the mandala. Students will also need a safe, confidential environment for discussion while they are creating.

Assessment

From a counseling perspective, the counselor will be able to see progress in the client as he or she further discusses and develops an understanding of grief. This will be reflected in what the student includes in the mandala and may be further determined by the level of disclosure and discourse during both the creative and counseling process.

References

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