



Research Study on Children and Grief

A new study published in the May 2008 journal, Research on Social Work Practice, links childhood post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to grief. Research conducted by the University of Georgia suggests grief therapy for children can be more effective with PTSD interventions through play therapy. These findings parallel the Camp Agape framework for therapeutic intervention which incorporates the use of expressive play therapy as a means by which children can cope with grief and trauma. The exploration of grief and the retelling of one's personal story of loss can evoke mental imagery, nightmares, intrusive memories and body sensations consistent with PTSD symptoms. Without the proper preparation and intervention, grief therapy may result in the retraumatization of children. When a child experiences the death of a loved one, the affects on the mind and body are such that a dual struggle is created: (1) unlike most adults, children do not possess the full range of cognitive abilities necessary to understand and process grief and (2) grief and trauma result in the temporary stunting of the cognitive abilities necessary for the full range of verbal and emotional expression. As a result, words are neither effective nor realistic for a child who desires to express feelings of grief and process traumatic experiences. The expressive therapies utilized at Camp Agape work where words may not. Through art, music, journaling, play and drama, children learn to identify their emotions and utilize therapeutic tools to help them process their grief experiences in a safe and nurturing group setting. This creative format reduces the trauma response and promotes effective coping. Read attached study from the University of Georgia, or view the findings at www.medicalnewstoday.com.

Camp Agape is especially unique in that the four-day program not only utilizes these therapeutic models, but also incorporates physical play and activities as well as faith-based applications to provide an experience for the whole **mind, body and spirit** of each child. Counseling therapy often avoids the spiritual dimension of our healing process. At Camp Agape we embrace the biblical teachings of Hope, and our spiritual leaders are available during camp to help address these questions that the children may have surrounding their loss. Our non-denominational summer camp program offers children a safe and nurturing environment to begin their healing process with the theme of offering true Hope for their future.

Please visit our website at www.campagapetexas.org for more information about our service for grieving children.