Grief and Loss Interventions

Title: Hug Jar

Objective: The hug jar allows young children to nonverbally express needs even if they don’t have the words to articulate them.

Rationale: Infants and toddlers need to be reassured by physical touch. One of the biggest developmental needs during their grief is the need for secure attachment and consistent care.

Age-appropriateness: Toddlers, preschoolers, and elementary schoolers.

Materials needed: A jar and any small supplies to symbolize the hugs. They could be made from paper hearts, pom poms, felt hearts, or anything else small and reusable.

Instructions:

1. Start the intervention by talking about feelings and emotions. “When you feel sad or scared or hurt, does it make you feel better to get hugs or to be held?”

2. Next, explain the death and how it can make people very sad, and sometimes it’s hard to figure out how you feel. But, things like hugs from your loved ones can make you feel better.

3. Explain that we will make a hug jar to use whenever you feel like you need a hug.

4. The child can color the paper hearts or choose what colors to go into the jar.

5. Fill the jar with the “hugs”
6. Tell the child that whenever they have difficult feelings or just need some extra love, take a heart or pom pom from the jar and give it to someone to let them know how to help.

7. Encourage caregivers to help the child identify emotions when they use the hug jar as well and use it as a conversation starter (adapted from “The Hug Jar,” 2013)