



Seasons™

Grief and Loss Program

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to 2009, which is proving to be another exciting year for Seasons™. In the first part of this financial year, Centacare undertook an organisational restructure. The key outcome for Seasons was that the program became part of Centacare's Pastoral Services, joining the prison, youth justice, public health, mental health and HIV /AIDS ministries.

In the subsequent development of the Strategic Direction for Pastoral Services, the Seasons Team crystallised the vision of Seasons in the following words:

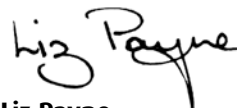
'To Have Hope'

For those of you who work daily in the support of children, young people and their families experiencing loss and grief, these words will resonate as they identify the core role of the Seasons Program. It is an energising time for Seasons as it refocusses and strengthens for the future.

This newsletter's key article addresses the issues of childhood anxiety and resilience development. This is based on the presentation by Pat Boyhan - one of Centacare's most experienced managers and counsellors. Thank you Pat for giving so generously of your time and expertise.

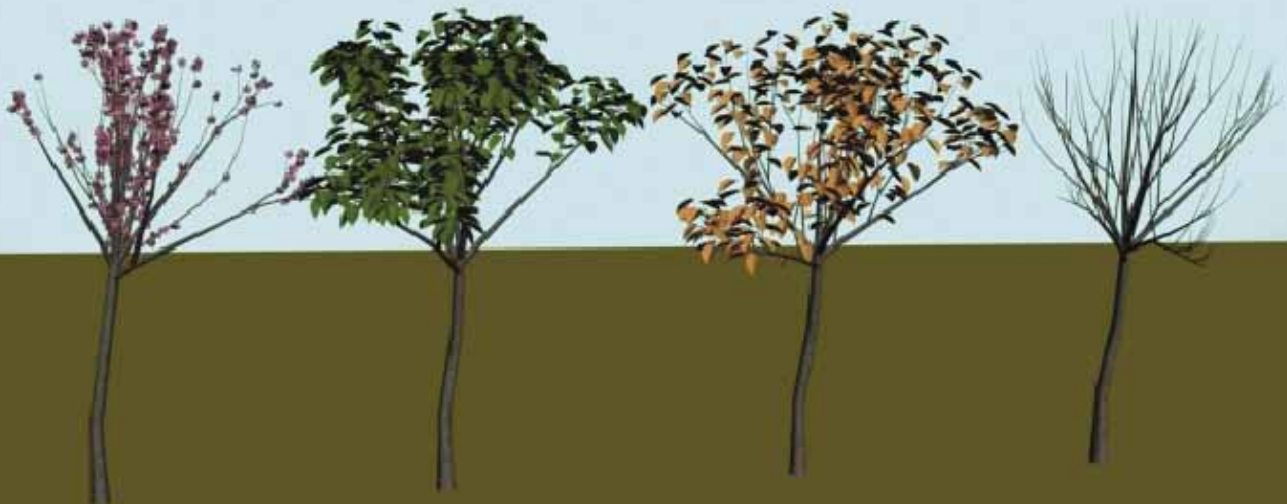
The horrific bushfires that devastated many Victorian communities and families will have a life long impact on the lives of those affected. Loss and grief issues are at the forefront and will take on many different guises. Centacare has provided and continues to provide a range of services. The expertise of Seasons supports these ongoing responses.

Take Care,



Liz Payne

Pastoral Services Manager, C.C.F.S., Melbourne



Childhood Anxiety and Developing Resilience

The Seasons Second Network for 2008 was presented by Centacare's Pat Boyhan. Pat shared some of her knowledge and wisdom from her many years' experience as a psychologist and family therapist. The interest in the Network was such that a second presentation was offered. We were very fortunate that Pat, during a difficult period in her own life, once again gave her time so generously. Those of us who attended the second presentation were indeed privileged to be a part of Pat's journey of reflection in relation to the Network focus.

We know you will find Pat's following article on 'Resilience in Children' a great resource in your work with young people.



Paula Sharp
Education Officer Seasons™ Loss and Grief Program



Resilience in Children

Adversity is part of everyone's life, but some children are more able to cope with stressful events than others. The work of the late Dr Edith Grotberg (1999a), an American psychologist, contributed to the knowledge we have about the development of resilience in children and I would like to share some of her wisdom with you.

Children are not protected from the stressors of adult life. Rather through media coverage of events such as the present devastating bushfires, and sometimes being directly involved in family or peer conflict, they are frequently exposed to a whole spectrum of life's negative realities. Additionally, adversities in their everyday life such as being sick, not having friends, being bullied or humiliated, failing academically, family break-up, losing someone through death, a friend moving interstate, etc. can be a challenge, and it is important for primary people in children's lives to have the knowledge and skills to protect them from becoming overwhelmed.

When children do become overwhelmed by adversity, they may become depressed or develop negative patterns of behaviour such as school refusal, self harm, eating disorders or social withdrawal. Edith Grotberg's research and skills training focuses on teaching children they are not powerless or incapable, rather they have the ability to do something about their situations – to meet their challenges and find successful solutions. In order to do this they must have resources in their lives, and have the knowledge and ability to draw on these social supports.

Teaching resilience

Children can be encouraged to respond to adversity in a way that overcomes feelings of powerlessness by teaching the five basic building blocks of resilience: trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and identity. These five building blocks correspond to the first five developmental stages of life (Erikson, 1985) and contribute to a child's ability to face, overcome, be strengthened by, or even be transformed by, experiences of adversity (Grotberg 1999b). The building blocks incorporate a paradigm of resilience that forms the process for dealing with life's challenges. The paradigm consists of three components (Grotberg 1999c):

Paradigm of Resilience

COMPONENT	DEFINITION	BUILDING BLOCKS
<i>I HAVE</i>	Supports around each individual to promote resilience	Trust
<i>I AM</i>	Encouragement in developing the inner strengths of confidence, self-esteem and responsibility	Autonomy Identity
<i>I CAN</i>	Acquisition of interpersonal and problem solving skills	Initiative Industry

Building Block 1: Trust

Children learn to trust by experiencing safe and trusting relationships from birth. Firstly, they learn to trust they will be fed, comforted and protected by their primary carer. As they grow they learn to trust themselves through the experience of being close to someone with whom they are emotionally attached, loved and bonded. Later they learn to trust others, not necessarily to love them, but to have good feelings about them. Children who have trusting relationships know they are not alone and this is an important part of being able to cope with life's adversities.

Building Block 2: Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as independence or freedom – the ability of the child to make his/her own decisions. Autonomy begins to develop from about 2 years of age (the terrible twos!!!). When children learn they can say 'No' they start to realise they have some power over others. Parents and teachers need to balance the child's need for independence with the development of personal responsibility by the child for his/her behaviour and choices, and also the responsibility of the care-giver to ensure the child's safety. Children need to be introduced to the concept that it is okay to make mistakes – they are a learning tool. Experimentation, risk-taking and mistake-making should be encouraged, and success and achievements rewarded and celebrated.

Building Block 3: Initiative

It is the willingness to try that builds initiative. From the age of 4 or 5 children start to think about things they can do on their own. Primary adults should encourage creative ideas, new inventions and problem-solving in every area of children's lives. When they are faced with adversity, they are in a strong position to cope if they are able to take the initiative for finding creative responses. Blocks to the development of initiative are criticism, guilt, rejection from those who are in a position to help, or rejection from people to whom children offer help.

Building Block 4: Industry

Industry is defined as working diligently at a task, and this can be developed in children during their school years, up to their teens. Parents and teachers encourage the mastering of academic and social skills by providing a good learning environment, encouraging the completion of tasks, creating a safe environment to ask questions, allowing personal responsibility for children's own work, and focusing on pride in their achievements. If children are teased, bullied or excluded from groups they may develop feelings of inferiority, frustration and anger which may cause them to withdraw or become troublemakers. Parents and teachers should encourage autonomy, independence, co-operation, good communication, assertiveness and listening skills.



Building Block 5: Identity

Major questions relating to the development of identity are:

- Who am I?
- How do I compare to others?
- What are my relationships with parents/teachers/peers?
- What have I accomplished?
- Where do I go from here?

When children feel confident with whom they are and where they 'fit' in social structures, they learn to monitor their own behaviour. Their identities develop through their relationships with others and how they perceive they are valued, loved and accepted. They need to know they are loved unconditionally, and they can make valuable contributions as community members. Parents and teachers can demonstrate 'good citizenship' to children by modeling responsible behaviour and encouraging involvement in community activities.

Strength Cards – St Luke's Innovative Resources



Summary

Edith Grotberg acknowledges there is no guaranteed antidote to feelings of powerlessness and depression in the challenging society in which we live. However she claims the five building blocks presented in this paper have proven effective in fostering and strengthening resilience in children. Parents and teachers have the opportunity to provide supportive relationships and to teach children to face, overcome and be strengthened, or even transformed, by experiences of adversity.

Pat Boyhan

Regional Manager,
Mitcham & Bundoora Offices

References

- Erikson, E. (1985). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Grotberg, E. (1999a). *Countering depression with the five building blocks of resilience*. *Reaching To-day's Youth 4* (1, Fall) pp 66-72.
- Grotberg, E. (1999b). *The International Resilience Research Project*. In R. Roswith (Ed.), *Psychologist/acing the challenge of a global culture with human rights and mental health* (pp. 239-256).
- Grotberg, E. (1999c) *Tapping your inner strength*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Counselling and other services are also available at Centacare branches. Visit our website www.centacaremelbourne.org.au for further information.

Training Program 2009

Seasons™ Program	Program Number	Location	Program Dates	
			Day One	Day Two
5-18yrs Seasons™ (Core Program)	1	East Melbourne	24th February	3rd March
5-18yrs Seasons™ (Core Program)	2	East Melbourne	5th May	12th May
Seasons™ Life Threatening Illness. Training in the Core Program a prerequisite	3	East Melbourne	23rd June	N/A
5-18yrs Seasons™ (Core Program)	4	East Melbourne	28th July	4th August
5-18yrs Seasons™ (Core Program)	Regional 1	Geelong	8th September	15th Sept TBC
5-18yrs Seasons™ (Core Program)	5	East Melbourne	13th October	20th October

Seasons™ Adults one day training. Training in the Core Program a prerequisite. Expressions of interest via email. TBC

Network 3hr Professional Development Mornings	31st March	21st July	27th October
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Grief and Loss Resources

Speechmark publishing has come to our attention as having some interesting resources for use in Seasons™ groups or in units working with emotions and life skills. Checkout the website www.speechmark.net. Double F is an Australian company distributing these resources.

A catalogue can be ordered by faxing details to Fax: 02 94899041



'A BOX FULL OF FEELINGS'
Activity set for children aged 4yrs – 7yrs by Marina Kog and Julia Moons.