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Key Learning

Validate the connection between youth and the person who is dying. Support opportunities for youth to give and receive care and comfort.

What You Need

- Permanent or fabric markers
- Fabric paints
- Brushes
- Scissors
- Fabric (at least 10" wide by 3' - 5' long)
- Optional: needle & thread, scrap fabric, sequins, ribbons, buttons

No. of Youth

- 1 or more

This activity has been provided by Ceilidh Eaton Russell, PhD (c), CCLS.

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How to Play

1. Explain that when someone is dying/has died we can still stay connected to them. We can do this by sharing special memories; thinking and talking about the person, the things you have in common and the things that you've learned from one another.
2. Invite youth to make a 'hug.' They get to decide what to do with the hug that they make. Remind youth that they can keep the hug for themselves as comfort or they can give it to someone else (the person who is dying, another family member, etc.).
 - ⚠ Some youth may wish to put the Hug in the person's casket prior to cremation or burial.
3. Lay a piece of fabric out on a flat surface. Help youth trace their hands, one at a time, on either end of the strip of fabric. If possible, try to space their traced hands about the same distance as their reach, so that when the fabric is wrapped around someone, it represents the young person's hug as closely as possible.
4. After both hands have been traced, the young person may want to connect the lines so that it resembles a scarf with hands on each end. Some youth want to cut out their hugs, others want to keep a strip of fabric or a whole blanket intact. Encourage them to do whatever feels right for them.
5. Support youth to 'infuse' their hugs with feelings, wishes and memories.
 - They can draw, paint or sew
 - They can use images, words, symbols, patterns and/or decorations

Some young people will be immediately open to the creative, crafty and connective nature of this activity, while others may be reluctant, perceiving it to be an activity for younger children. In the latter case, some young people are more receptive to the idea that the dying person may appreciate the care and connection with the young person, and benefit from knowing that people of all ages can adapt this activity to their own circumstances — no one is "too old" for a hug.



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 **Discussion**
Reflect

What thoughts and feelings came up for you during the activity?

Connect

Do you have any other items that help you to feel connected to the person who is dying?

Apply

What are some other ways you can show you care and feel connected to the person who is dying?

 **Variations**

1. Although any soft fabric will work, using a sheet or piece of clothing belonging to the person who is dying can make this activity even more personal and meaningful.
2. This activity can be done individually or as a family to give to the person who is dying.
3. Youth may want help to make a hug by tracing the hands of the person who is dying to keep for comfort after they have died. Seek permission from the person who is ill before providing this option to youth.

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OUR NETWORK**OUR VISION**

Every child and youth has honest information and well-informed support when someone they care about is dying or has died.

OUR MISSION

To advocate for educational opportunities and support services that will benefit children and youth who are grieving the dying or the death of someone they care about.

www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

RIGHT TO PLAY
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

Right To Play is an international organization that uses the transformative power of sport and play to educate and empower children and youth living in adversity to overcome the effects of poverty, conflict and disease. Partnering with more than 85 First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and urban organizations across four provinces, the PLAY program is led by locally-hired Community Mentors who are trained and supported by Right To Play staff to implement regular weekly play-based programs that build and enhance essential life-skills. We would like to thank Right To Play for sharing the organization's experiential learning methodology (Reflect – Connect – Apply) for the activities included in this resource to support youth through their grief. To learn more, visit Right To Play's website or email canada@righttoplay.com.

Source: Children and Youth Grief Network. (2018). A Handbook for Supporters: Extending Compassion and Care to Grieving Youth, CHILDREN AND YOUTH GRIEF NETWORK, (P. 96 & 97). Section 3: Activities for Grieving Youth.