

# WORRY DOLLS (Page 1 of 2)



## Key Learning

To identify and address worries. To promote self-regulation.

## What You Need

- Clothes pins (one piece pegs)
- Pipe cleaners
- Coloured yarn
- Markers
- Small pouches
- Low temperature glue gun or double sided tape
- Craft supplies (buttons, beads, glitter, fabric scraps)

## No. of Children

- 1 or more

## Preparation Activities

1. Watch the YouTube video, **Worry Dolls (2012) by Pam Dyson** at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=35iKmlLk-Rl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35iKmlLk-Rl) in advance for ideas and to familiarize yourself with the craft process.

## How to Play

1. Normalize anxiety by explaining that everyone has worries. Some people worry about school, upcoming sports games, what we are wearing, getting in trouble, etc. When someone is dying/has died, sometimes we have more worries than usual.
2. Give the child(ren) an opportunity to share some of their worries.
  - What are some things that you worry about?
  - What sort of things might a child worry about when someone they care about is dying/has died?
3. Discuss the history of Guatemalan worry dolls with the child(ren):
  - Worry dolls are tiny dolls hand-crafted by artisans in Guatemala. According to legend, worry dolls hold onto a person's worries so they can sleep soundly at night.
4. Invite the child(ren) to make their own worry dolls and explain how they can use them as a coping tool:
  - Each night, before bed you can share your worries with your dolls (by saying them out loud or in your head). Once you have given away your worries, you can put them in the pouch to keep on your nightstand or under your pillow while you sleep. They will do the worrying for you so you do not have to.
  - If you have worries during the day, you can keep your worry dolls with you in your backpack and they will hold on to your worries for you while you are at school.
  - You can make worry dolls for yourself, or you can give them to someone else to help them with their worries.
5. Show the child(ren) some sample worry dolls so they understand the concept (make some samples yourself or provide images from online).
6. Encourage the child(ren) to select materials for their dolls in colours that make them feel peaceful and relaxed.
7. Support the child(ren) as they create their worry dolls.
8. Invite the child(ren) to give their dolls names.
9. Provide each child with a small pouch to hold their worry dolls.



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## Discussion

### Reflect

What kind of worries do you think you'll give to your worry dolls tonight?

### Connect

When you have a big worry what does it feel like in your body?

### Apply

One way we can let go of our worries is by giving them to our worry dolls. What are some other things that we can do to make us feel less worried or scared?

## Variations

1. With younger children you can make worry dolls using popsicle sticks. Depending on the child's abilities, they can colour the popsicle stick with markers instead of wrapping it with yarn.
2. Instead of making a worry doll, invite the child(ren) to make a worry monster out of playdough. When they are finished they can smash it up.

## 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](http://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](mailto:canada@righttoplay.com).

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