

THE ADVENTURES OF HOPPY

The Adventures of Hoppy is written with the view of using it with students who have experienced geographical moves or transfer from one school to another. It is anticipated that the story could be used at any level, even with parents, though the interpretation and work following the telling would differ accordingly. The following are **suggestions only**, which could stimulate the creativity of teachers who know the students personally! Points of interest and connections are indicated in the margin of the story, which may spark further work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF 'ADVENTURES OF HOPPY'

- Read the story. Retell your favourite section. Discuss why it is your favourite part?
- Dramatise sections.
- Discuss personal experiences of endings - (surprise and anticipated), liminal experiences- (losses, new learnings, belonging and not belonging, waiting), new beginnings; feelings- (suppression and expression).
- Move to 'sad', 'exciting', 'lonely' music. How does it feel? Where do you feel it in your body? Share a time when I felt sad/ excited/ lonely.
- Draw a sad time, a happy time, a lonely time that Hoppy experienced, that you experienced.
- Write a story, 'Gone forever'
- Create a photo board of feeling pictures. Discuss.
- Share special treasures brought from another place.
- Share stories of farewell parties and rituals. Tap into feelings.
- Craft: Create a quiet corner for personal and group reflection time.
- Correlation: Mathematics - distances travelled; geographical features of coast and bushland; Natural Science - Australian Native Animals; Language - Alliteration, Maggie Magpie; story writing; craft frieze of the different scenes in the story; spelling; songs about Australian Animals etc ...

The following pages are suggestions for use with parents of children who are suffering loss, and are based on the writings of Attig, T., (1996) How We Grieve Relearning the World. NY Oxford Press

CHILDREN AND GRIEVING

For children, the challenge of grieving is compounded because: -

- they are still learning about the world
- emotional and psychological development and emotional experience is limited
- self identities are in formative stages and self-confidence and self-esteem are fragile
- they lack experience in giving direction in their own lives
- they depend on others for physical needs and are often in the midst of testing the trustworthiness of bonds when loss occurs
- they depend on others socially - parents 'know what is best for them'
- adults often believe children don't grieve
- children are often excluded from the decision making process
- they lack cognitive resources for understanding some decisions or losses
- they lack spiritual resources to discern meaning of death life and suffering

HOW CAN WE HELP CHILDREN IN GRIEVING?

Grieving is about learning how to act and be in the world differently in the light of our loss.

Psychological and emotional relearning -

- use active listening
- be empathic and comforting
- encourage satisfying or meaningful expression of emotion
- tolerate expression of emotion
- assist as they try out new and unfamiliar ways of doing things
- support as they try out new roles and patterns of living
- support self-esteem and confidence through acceptance of the new

Behavioural re-learning

- encourage testing of and recovery of confidence in the familiar
- gently assist when old behaviours no longer fit
- help in identifying, evaluating and choosing options and alternatives

Physical and biological re-learning

- help the child recognize physical needs - food, rest, shelter
- reinforce personal bonds by presence, touch, reassurance of worth
- encourage others to keep contact

Social re-learning

- support contact and interaction with family, friends, wider circle
- assist in rehearsing conversations and other interactions
- accompany them in initial social contact
- provide ways of continuing important contacts
- support development of new relationships
- encourage them in their seeking help from outside the family

Intellectual and spiritual re-learning

- help the child seek new meanings, adapt beliefs
- talk about predictable patterns of grieving
- listen to their hopes, desires about what coping will bring to them
- help in making new priorities, goals, hopes, aspirations
- support their seeking consolation, security, peace, feeling at home

How can we help our children?

- assure them that their needs for food, shelter and love will be met
- use simple language
- explain in concrete terms new things the child may see and touch and feel and hear
- answer questions honestly and patiently
- help in getting in contact with reality, and not support fantasies
- help them find meaningful ways to express their feelings through play, drawing, or crying
- assure them their experiences are respected
- communicate trust and build self-confidence as they address grieving tasks
- assure them they are not alone, but grieve as part of a family and community

Story Writing Workshop for Adults

1. Read story 'Adventures of Hoppy'

2. Input: Why write stories?

- Thomas Merton writes that when we find our true self, we find God, and when we find God we find our true self. When we come to a greater truth about ourselves, we come to that place deep within us where we have found God, and God has found us.
- Stirrings within us call us beyond the known. Most of the time we search without really being aware of what is gnawing at us deep within. We search for meaning in our lives, and while the searching goes on, there is One who keeps seeking us out, calling to us.
- This inner source whom we call 'God', remains a mystery no matter what our image may be.
- I believe story writing helps us in our search for our true self, and in finding our true self, we find our God, and when we find our God we find our true self.

3. *Rules for story-writing:*

There are **no** rules for story-writing!!

- We can use pen, pencil, paint, lined book, blank book
- We can write poetry, prose, blank verse, single words
- It is our story -private and confidential – say, draw, what you like
- There are no set times for story writing
- There is no right or wrong way to write
- Grammar, neatness, logic, sequence etc don't count
- Each person's experience is unique
- You can say it as it is.

All we need is

- a readiness to begin
- a preparedness and ability to 'go with the flow'
- a willingness to **trust** the process

3. Invite responses to the question – What is story writing about ?

Story writing is: (possible responses)

- a way of getting in touch with feelings
- getting in touch with creativity
- getting in touch with God within
- a safety valve for emotion
- a means of externalising what is going on within us.
- a means of tapping into our inner wisdom

Exercises to get started in story writing.

Its time to...

Think of a transition you are in at present.

What was its ending? What is its new beginning?

Where are you now? What time is it for you now?

Write the emotions that are nearest the surface at the present.

Complete the sentences:-

It's too soon to...

It's too late to...

It's the right time to...

Reflection on the Seasons

Take time to centre yourself.

Reflect on the seasons.

Spring and new life.

Summer... What does it mean to you?

Autumn, preparation for winter, loss, colours.

Winter...

What season of my life am I in at the moment?

Draw blots, symbols or pictures to indicate

- what season it is for you now
- different seasons in your life.

STOP

Read over what you have written. What was the process like for you?

- Surprises? Discoveries? Any deeper wisdom?
- How do you feel about what you wrote?
- Share as much as you wish in twos. Feedback to the group.

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Experience : Write our own story.

The facilitator leads the group in an inner reflection:

Take a moment to get in touch with a strong experience you have had ... or to be in touch with where you are in your life now... or a relationship...

Mentally step into the situation ... hearing what you heard/can hear ... seeing what you saw/can see ... feeling what you felt/can feel ... Notice your internal images, sounds and/or feelings. ...(allow time for reflection) ...

Now **FORGET** all about it.

Write a story.

Take some time to write a story beginning "Once upon a time there was a ... (animal)" Let your pen flow. Don't worry about outcomes.... Remember there is no right or wrong... no good or bad...

Just enter into the process. Let whatever comes, come.

Share the experience. What was the process like? What did you notice? What happened? Any surprises?

Debriefing

Reflection:

1. What was the **process** of story writing like for you? What did you notice? How did you feel? Invite participants to share as much as they feel comfortable sharing.
2. Any surprises in what **you wrote**? Discoveries? Invite participants to share as much as they feel comfortable sharing.
3. You may like to invite participants to read their story silently in the first person. Be sensitive to where each participant is in the process.

Closing Ritual

Invite participants to share stories/part of story if they wish. There must be no pressure to do so. Each story is revered by the group giving a simple bow to the writer.

Or

Stories may be placed in the centre of the group. Each story is revered, perhaps by naming the title, or by the author touching/claiming the story. Each person extends his/her hand over the written word, and asks a blessing on the writer.

Adventures of Hoppy

In a quiet, lush part of the coastal scrub a young kangaroo named Hoppy lived with all her family and friends. She loved to nibble the choice leaves, hide in the scrub and play with her friends. She knew she was loved and cared for, and she knew every nook and cranny. One day Mr. and Mrs. Kangaroo told Hoppy that very soon the family would have to move away from the coast into the outback. Hoppy was shocked.

Contentment

Familiarity

Hoppy knew she would be leaving her friends and familiar feeding ground, the sounds of the ocean roaring and her favourite play spots. She knew she would surely be lonely, but what lay out there beyond the next hills really stirred her curiosity, especially when Kooka Kookaburra told her stories of wide open spaces, and Maggie Magpie told her of many other joeys just like her. Kirsten Koala could not help but tell of the choice gum leaves and Platy Platypus told of the quiet, deep pools of clear spring water.

Anticipated transition

Excitement
Curiosity

Hoppy grew curious and excited. She packed her pouch with a few special treasures. But, just as the family was about to leave, she felt a tear in her eye, so she bit hard on her bottom lip, straightened her ears and made sure her tail was tall, for she did not want to let anyone know that tears were just under her eyelids.

Disengagement

Suppression of emotions

After several days Hoppy and her family finally came to a beautiful watering hole. Kooka, Maggie, Kirsten and Platy were right! It was beautiful! It was all so exciting! She unpacked her pouch and set about exploring. For a long time life felt very strange. Gradually, she learnt the rules of the bush, and discovered many new things, so that for a while she almost forgot how sad she was leaving home.

Initial excitement

New learnings

When the newness wore off and darkness fell and her new friend, Bobby Bandicoot had settled down for the night, Hoppy listened to the strange, eerie, empty sounds of her new home. How she longed for the reassuring sound of the waves and the wind through the grasses and above all the sound of familiar voices.

Disenchantment

Longing and loneliness

Days passed. Hoppy grew to like her new surroundings and friends, and threw herself into the life of the other young animals. She listened in awe to the wise old Kangaroos tell stories of drought and fire and flood. She tried to remember their wisdom and advice for she knew that she too might face fire or drought or flood.

Wisdom figures

Sure enough, a very severe drought soon came to Hoppy's new home. The older kangaroos gathered the bush creatures around them. "The time has come for you to move off", they said, 'for there is not sufficient food for so many of us'.

Forced and unexpected transition

The creatures nodded for they knew that the old kangaroos were very wise, and sadly each went off to pack his or her special treasures once again. Hoppy looked around sadly for she had made some special friends and she had grown to love the watering hole so much, she really didn't want to leave. But the time had come. So... she bit her lip, straightened her ears and held her tail high and when her pouch was packed, she set off with her family once again before the tears could fall.

Sadness
Loss of the familiar

Pattern of farewell

Hoppy and her family eventually bounded into a beautiful place full of choice gum tips just like Kirsten Koala had said. The creatures of the bush welcomed the family with open paws. Donny Dingo and Wally Wombat told stories of their own wanderings and searching for they too had been affected by the drought. They were happy to share their new home.

Feeling welcome

But Hoppy could not believe how much she missed the coastal scrub and the watering hole or her friends. She tried not to think about how sad or lonely she was, but no matter how hard she tried, the tears kept trickling down her face. Still she unpacked her pouch and tried to learn the ways of living among the gum trees. It was strange, oh so strange. The sounds were different, the roots and tips tasted different, the other joeys played different games, and Eddy Echidna looked so strange.

Loss, looking back
Settling in, new learnings

Strangeness & unfamiliarity
-sounds, tastes, games people

She wondered if perhaps leaving home had even been a mistake. She wondered if perhaps they could go back to the coast. She felt sad and lonely and strange and new. She didn't know the way to live among the gums. It hurt so much especially at night that she counted the stars, teased Eddy Echidna, chased Emmy Emu or ate eucalyptus tips until she was almost sick. She did anything to keep herself busy and to avoid admitting how she was feeling.

Disenchantment

Unusual behaviour
Compensation
Denial of feelings

Each day at sunrise and sunset, she listened to the strange calls of the parakeets and the galahs, and slowly, so slowly she learnt their language. One day she heard a great hubbub amongst the galahs. They were excitedly telling of a bush fire coming that way, whipped up by the desert wind. Hoppy listened. She knew almost instinctively that this would mean her home would be destroyed and she and her family could not waste any time for even as they chattered the smell of burning leaves reached her nostrils. This time she packed her pouch very quickly. She had no time for farewells or even to notice how she felt. She hardly had time to straighten her ears or lift her tail high, for she remembered the stories the old kangaroos had told of the speed and fury of the bushfire.

Strangeness

Sudden and unexpected transition
Lack of closure, ritual

The Kangaroo family bounded away their strong hind legs taking them safely away from the danger. Tired and hungry from the long trek, Hoppy sat by a river to sip its cool water and nibble the juicy grasses along its bank. She looked around. Where were her friends? Where was her familiar water hole? Where were the galahs and emus and echidnas? What was that weird screech? Why did the strange creature run from her? Where could she safely rest? So many questions flooded her mind. Once again everything was new. She knew she would have to learn the special skills of the river plain, so she set about in a determined way.

Loss, sadness, disorientation, questioning

She tried pretending to herself she was not sad. And sometimes that worked. Actually, she was glad her friends could not see the sadness in her eyes or notice how her ears drooped. She began to settle into her new surroundings and actually enjoyed meeting Polly Platypus and Bluey Bluetongue, and tried not to think too much about her lost friends because it hurt too much.

Denial

She unpacked her pouch and set about making herself at home, only this time she noticed she did not fully unpack, for she wondered if she could stay long in that place. She wondered if she should make friends with Polly and Bluey, because she remembered how hard it was each time she moved on. Loving could be so painful. So she smiled and joked and pretended, and kept busy, oh so busy, because she didn't want to feel.

Cumulative reaction
Patterns of transition
Affectional bonds
Denial

More new learnings

The days and weeks passed. Hoppy learnt the mysteries of living by the riverside. She thought she was happy. She had met new friends and found rich grasses and grown used to the sounds. She was feeling safe again. But still she hadn't unpacked completely and still she didn't let herself really learn to love the river creatures.

Touching reality

As all creatures that live along the river know, the winter rains change all that is familiar. Hoppy listened to Polly tell of the dangers and changes to be expected. Hoppy learnt the warning signs. She listened to the stories of years gone by. Polly shared her own story of sadness and loss and fear and loneliness as well as the fun times. Polly was a great storyteller, and Hoppy loved to sit with the other creatures and listen.

Story telling and sharing of experiences
Sharing memories

Then one day Hoppy found herself telling her story of life on the coast, near the water hole and among the eucalyptus. Memories of friends came flooding back. Adventures came to mind and Hoppy shared these. Little Bluey noticed the tears in Hoppy's eyes even before Hoppy did. As she talked, the sadness and loneliness bottled up inside over the years came tumbling out. Hoppy began to realise how special her friends Bluey and Polly were. They listened as she told her story of the losses, the separation from friends and favourite places and the emptiness. Hoppy found that her friends sometimes felt sad at leaving or even mad at having to leave. Sometimes they felt scared or glad and excited.

Caregivers

Getting in touch with feelings

Empathetic listening

Even though Hoppy didn't mean to get close to her new friends, in fact she realized she really did love them. Hoppy realized they loved her too.

Winter rains were on their way. Hoppy knew that the time was coming for the family to move on. It was time to go back to the familiar water hole. This time she took time to say good-bye to all her new friends. She picked up a special pebble to take with her as a reminder of the river. She knew she felt sad and lonely and didn't want to leave. She knew she was loved, and loved her friends deeply. She knew she had grown, and wondered if Eddy Echidna and Emmy Emu would notice. She felt different inside. The greens and blues and reds of the countryside looked brighter, the sounds were clearer and somehow musical. She felt the twigs underfoot, and even the grasses tasted sweeter, but she also knew there was sadness in her heart.

She sat quietly by the riverside and felt her sadness. She knew how helpful it was sharing her story even though at times it was hard to do. And deep inside she knew she was not alone.

Facing the new journey, somehow Hoppy felt a new confidence. She knew moving on would never be easy, but she knew that when she straightened her ears, and made sure her tail was tall, she was free to feel the tears and even let the tears fall. She would feel sad and sometimes mad. She might even feel glad or scared. But she also knew it was OK to feel mad or sad, glad or scared.

Ritual

Transformation

Being in touch

Courage to go
on to new
beginnings
A new pattern
of behaviour