

The End of Life

Key Stage 1 and 2

Subjects covered: Circle of life, Emotional literacy. PSHE, Citizenship and Science

Lesson Aim

To enable children to explore their natural interest in ageing, death and dying.

Objectives

Pupils will:

1. Become more aware of the permanence of death.
2. Become more familiar with words associated with death and dying.
3. Develop some strategies for coping when sad things happen.
4. Appreciate the importance of remembering happy times with dead people or pets.

Time

Flexible, but approximately 30 minutes

Resources

- A collection of objects from the natural world, which were once alive e.g. seashells, dried flowers, seed pods, dried roots, bark, drift wood, dead leaves, small animal skeletons, dead insects.
- A bunch of seedless grapes.
- Some raisins.

Setting the scene.

Display the objects to arouse the children's curiosity.

Invite the children to pick up the objects, and to say what they feel like:

- Hold a piece of bark and feel the texture and the pattern. Trace grooves in the driftwood with fingers.
- Hold a seashell to your ear. Can you hear anything? Explore the hole with fingers.
- Scrunch dry leaves and listen to the crackling sound, Look at the beautiful shapes of the seed heads.
- Notice that nothing moves.

It is hoped that the children will decide that the objects are dead or that they are part of something that has died. Ask how do we know that they are dead? Encourage words such as "still", "dry" and "not moving".

With the class, make a list of all the characteristics of something alive and of something dead. Compare the two. Highlight that being asleep is not the same as being dead and that dead things can not come back to life. It is important to reassure the children that when dead, people and animals feel nothing and are not in pain.

Give each child some grapes and raisins.

Offer each child a grape and ask them to put it into their mouth and explore the texture and taste with their tongue. Encourage words such as “sweet”, “juicy” and “smooth”. Offer each child a raisin and ask them to look at it carefully before putting it into their mouth and again explore the taste and texture. Does it feel and taste the same as the grape? Encourage words such as “wrinkled”, “dry” and “sweet”. Explain that although the raisin is a “*dead*” grape, it still tastes very good. Compare with although very sad when someone we know, or a pet, dies the memory of the good times that we had with them can never be taken away.

This can also be used as an opportunity to talk about ageing in a positive way, (the wrinkled grape) and the importance of grandparents or other elderly people in the children`s lives. . Acknowledge that not all the memories will be good ones but the not so good are just as important as they all help to make up the reality of who that person was.

End of Session

Invite the children to talk about how they remember people or pets who have died or are gone from their lives. Encourage ideas such as looking at photographs, keeping a memento, watching a video, listening to stories.

Extension work

The book *Badgers Parting Gifts* by Susan Varley published by Collins Picture Lions £5.00 approximately would make an excellent follow on to this lesson at circle time. When old badger dies, his friends think that they will be sad for ever. Gradually, they are able to remember the very happy times they all had in his company. This story would reinforce the learning objectives of the lesson, and is sensitively written, but note that the scenario is one of a death occurring as a result of old age.

The children could put together their own collage of drawings, photographs, memories of a person or pet they knew who has died or gone from their lives.