

Camp as a therapeutic-educational method supporting mourning children and youngsters

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Background

The Lionheart Camp is a therapeutic-educational method of working with mourning children and youngsters with the experience of losing a loved one in the family and represents an independent program of the Slovenian Hospice Association. So far, 21 camps have been held involving over 500 children. On average, the camp is attended by 25 children and lasts 4 days. The camp is free for all participants. The Lionheart Camp has been run by the Slovenian Hospice Association once a year since 2000, the first was held at Debeli rtič, and then the camps were held in different places. The need for the camp arose at the very beginning of the adult mourning program, as parents often faced incomprehensible behaviour of children in their mourning. With children and youngsters, mourning comes and goes like waves: at loss, shock comes first, then denial and confusion, followed by pain and anger, then adjustment and healing by accepting the loss. The camp supports and regulates this process with specifically designed workshops, activities and events.

Method

Together with users, professionals, and trained volunteers, the Slovenian Hospice Association developed a unique therapeutic-educational approach of working with mourning children and youngsters, which provides mourning children with support, a loving atmosphere, opportunities for play, self-expression, and relief. Camp work in the field of psychosocial work with young people includes the *deductive method*, where the approaches are based on international principles of hospice care in the process of mourning children, which is developmentally specific. The *empiricism* of the method is based on many years of experience with the camp work. *Experimentality* can be perceived through the program of experiential workshops, observing the process of mourning children and explore spontaneity and patterns in the process. Using the *survey method*, Slovenian Hospice Association collects applications and data upon registration and conducts interviews with parents and children before and after the camp. At the end, the children fill out a satisfaction questionnaire, by which Slovenian Hospice Association collects and processes data for research and statistical purposes.

Results

Each mourning is a unique path conditioned by a personal story. Allowing the mourning process to flow smoothly to its natural flow is often not an easy task for a mourning child. Along the way, children encounter obstacles resulting from a lack of understanding of the situation and fear, which in turn can slow down or even temporarily stop the mourning process. The compassionate companion has the role of a guardian, providing a safe space for the mourning process, perceiving the child's needs and allowing the child to satisfy them arbitrarily and independently, and to answer questions asked by the child when necessary.

Conclusion

The goal of the camp is not to solve all the problems of a growing individual, but to move forward from where he/she was before, so that mourning children do not remain ignored in their own mourning. This change offers new strength for vigilant monitoring of the basic laws of life: transience and constant change.

Tabor kot terapevtsko-edukativna metoda dela z žalujočimi otroki in mladostniki

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Ozadje

Tabor Levjesrčnih je terapevtsko-edukativna metoda dela z žalujočimi otroki in mladostniki z izkušnjo izgube bližnje osebe v družini in predstavlja samostojen program Slovenskega društva hospic. Do sedaj je bilo izvedenih 21 taborov, ki so vključevali preko 500 otrok. V povprečju se tabora udeleži 25 otrok in traja 4 dni. Tabor je za vse udeležence brezplačen. Tabor Levjesrčnih Slovensko društvo hospic od leta 2000 izvaja enkrat letno, prvi je bil izveden na Debelem rtiču, nato pa so se tabori izvajali po različnih krajih. Potreba po taboru se je pojavila že na samem začetku izvajanja programa žalovanja odraslih, saj so se starši po smrti v družini v svojem žalovanju pogosto soočali z njim nerazumljivim vedenjem otrok. Pri otrocih in mladostnikih žalost pride in odide podobno kot valovi: ob izgubi se najprej pojavi šok, nato zanikanje in zmedenost, sledita mu bolečina in jeza, nato prilagajanje in zdravljenje s sprejemanjem izgube. Tabor ta proces podpira in ureja s specifično zasnovanimi delavnicami, aktivnostmi in dogodki.

Metode

Slovensko društvo hospic je z uporabniki, strokovnjaki in usposobljenimi prostovoljci razvilo edinstven terapevtsko-edukativni pristop dela z žalujočimi otroki in mladostniki, ki žalujočim otrokom omogoča podporo, ljubečo atmosfero, zagotavlja jim priložnost za igro, izražanje sebe in razbremenjevanje. Taborsko delo na področju psihosocialnega dela z mladimi združuje *deduktivno* metodo, kjer so pristopi pri delu osnovani na mednarodnih načelih hospiške podpore v procesu žalovanja otrok, ki je razvojno specifičen. *Empiričnost* metode je utemeljena na podlagi dolgoletnih izkušenj s taborskimi delom. *Eksperimentalnost* je mogoče zaznati skozi program izkustvenih delavnic, opazovanjem procesa žalovanja otrok in raziskovanjem spontanosti ter vzorcev v procesu. Z metodo *anketiranja* Slovensko društvo hospic zbira vloge in podatke ob prijavi in opravi razgovore s starši in otroci pred in po taboru. Ob zaključku otroci izpolnijo anketni vprašalnik o zadovoljstvu, s katerim društvo zbira in obdeluje podatke v raziskovalne in statistične namene.

Rezultati

Vsako žalovanje je edinstvena pot, pogojena z osebno zgodbo. Dopuščanje procesu žalovanja, da lahko teče s svojim naravnim tokom, največkrat ni enostavna naloga za žalujočega otroka. Na tej poti se otroci srečujejo z ovirami, ki so posledica nerazumevanja situacije in strahu, kar posledično lahko upočasnjuje ali celo začasno zaustavi proces. Sočutni spremljevalec ima vlogo skrbnika, ki zagotovi varen prostor za potek žalovanja, zaznava otrokove potrebe in dopušča, da jih otrok samovoljno in samostojno zadovoljuje ter da po potrebi odgovori na vprašanja, ki mu jih otrok postavi.

Sklep

Cilj tabora ni rešitev vseh težav pri odraščajočem posamezniku, temveč v premiku naprej od tam, kjer je bil pred njim, da otroci ne ostanejo prezrti v lastnem žalovanju. V tem premiku se ponuja nova moč za čuječe spremljanje osnovne zakonitosti življenja: minljivost in nenehno spreminjanje.