

October 2011

CASE STUDY 1

This family consisted of a mum and a daughter (age 8). Mum contacted our charity following the death of her husband and her mother, these deaths had occurred within a few months of each other. Mum had heard about our service through her daughter's primary school and Rowcroft Hospice.

Mum was struggling with her own grief following the death of her husband when her mum died quite suddenly. This left mum feeling unable to cope with her grief whilst trying to support her 8 year old daughter.

Following a telephone assessment with mum, two therapists were assigned to prepare this family for our therapeutic weekend, which was to be held in 2 months time.

On the first visit myself and another therapist went to the family home. The daughter didn't want to speak to us as she felt so upset and didn't want to talk about the death of her dad and granny. We talked to mum and heard about their experience, mum spoke of her own grief and that of her daughters. We introduced ourselves to the daughter and said that we would come back and see her in a few weeks' time and bring a game with us.

On our return a few week's later the daughter was keen to see us and engaged immediately in playing "all about me" which is a therapeutic game aimed at encouraging conversation around the lives of those who play it. It gently asks questions about the lives of the players that help players to talk about the things that are good and difficult in their lives. It asks questions like "what do you do if you feel sad?" "What is the worst thing that has happened to you this year" and "if you could meet anyone, who would it be?"

This second visit felt very positive and the daughter was now opening up and even brought out her dad's ashes, which were in a beautiful wooden casket with photos of the family on it. She asked us both if we could like to hold 'daddy' and talked about the pictures on the casket and why they had chosen them. We were already noticing a huge shift in feelings and openness from mum and daughter.

This family attended our therapeutic weekend in October 2011 along with 2 other families. We had thought that 5 families were attending but the other 2 families dropped out at the last minute.

During the weekend both mum and daughter had an opportunity to talk about the death of their family members. We used creative story telling, drama and artwork to help the daughter express her feelings. Mum benefitted from talking to the other adults at the weekend when the adults and children were separated for some sessions. Both mum and daughter engaged in the memory jar activity. Using coloured chalks and salt mixed together the different colours are poured into a jar and layered to represent different memories. This activity helps the

families to talk and share their memories with each other. Mum and daughter found this exercise very special and clearly engaged in the sharing of their memories with each other.

After the weekend we arranged a closing visit for myself and the other therapist to visit this family. At our closing visit we could visibly see the difference that the weekend had made to this family. Both mum and daughter were talking more freely and spoke of feeling 'lighter' since the weekend.

This family was keen to stay in touch with our charity and was keen to have ongoing invitations to our social events. Mum also offered to help our charity by raising money for us in the future.

Francesca Raymont
Lead Therapist
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