



Seeds of Hope

Bereavement and Loss

Activity Book

Helping Children and Young People
Cope with Change Through Nature

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Contents

Imagine 7

Learning from Nature

The Medicine Wheel 10

What animals can teach us

Draw or Paint 13

Suggestions of drawing or painting things to do

Write 14

Suggestions of writing things to do

Memory and Loss Leaves 15

Leaves to cut out and draw or write on

Memory and Loss Tree 17

For sticking your leaves on

Big Leaves 18

Bigger leaves for a bigger tree

Changes 20

How change affects us

Lifetimes 24

Life cycles – long and short

Colouring 27

Pictures to colour in

Exploring the Feelings Tree 30

Finding out more

The Feelings Tree 31

Different feelings

Sticking Stickers 32

Things to do with stickers

Stickers 33

For sticking!

The Language of Flowers 34

Myths and meanings

Word Storms 40

A game to play

Snakes and Ladders of Loss 42

Another game

Feelings and Seasons 43

Thinking about feelings

Mandalas 44

What they are and how to use them

Labyrinths 49

What they are and how to walk them

Poems and Stuff 57

What other people have written

My Story 63

Sharing feelings

Information about Loss and Bereavement 69

What to expect

For Teachers 72

Information and suggested activities

Support Groups 78



Imagine

*You could either read this section yourself
or ask someone to read it for you while
you close your eyes and imagine...*

Nature is all around us, but to really see it you have to get out in it. So let's take a walk through the seasons and you'll find that loss and change are all around.

Imagine it's winter. It's been raining for days. Maybe the rain has turned to sleet or snow. You pile on coats and boots and walk into the wind. There's not much colour about. The landscape is cold and bare; the earth is hard. It's a time when we may feel like staying indoors and going inward, hibernating like a bear or a tortoise. Just like in the days soon after someone has died or moved away, life is tough. But it won't always be so. Under the ground, things are happening. Trees and plants are saving energy for the new growth that will come.



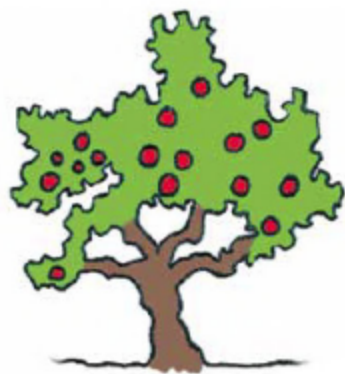
Seeds beneath the earth are beginning to stir, reminding us that life goes on. More colourful times are on the way. Spring is coming.



Walking into spring, the sun begins to shine more often. Colour is returning to the world. The immediate shock and pain you may feel when someone dies or goes away doesn't last forever. Blossom covers the trees; bulbs burst out of the ground. Bright fresh green leaves appear – new life shows us that loss and death can be a beginning as well as an end.



And then it's summer. The days are bright; the sun stays longer. Parks and gardens fill with colourful flowers; imagine you can smell them. Did you know many of them are symbols of things, like roses for love and rosemary for remembrance? They remind us that even in very sad times there are happy moments, when life is for living and it's OK to laugh and have fun.



When Bonfire Night approaches and the days begin to shorten and the leaves change colour and start blowing off the trees, you know you're walking into autumn. Fruits and berries show us that the outside shape of things changes as time passes. A bud becomes a flower, a flower becomes a fruit and the fruit will eventually drop from the tree. But inside the fruit are the seeds from which new life will grow.

Life is always a journey full of change.

So we arrive back where we started. Autumn leads to winter, winter leads to spring, spring to summer, summer to autumn and autumn back to winter. Each season would not be possible without the one that came before it. They are all joined in one cycle of the seasons.

part of life is part of death

Now let's take another walk...

back in time...

Imagine you are living hundreds of years ago. Our ancestors lived in a world which was much more in touch with the seasons and the wild animals that share our planet.

Imagine...there are no electric lights, no cars or buses, no planes, no big cities, no supermarkets, no cinemas, no television, no mobile phones, no play stations, no laptops. Imagine how dark the nights and how bright the stars are. Imagine it takes you days to walk to the nearest town; you have to grow your own food, make your own clothes, farm your own land. Horses are your new best friends!

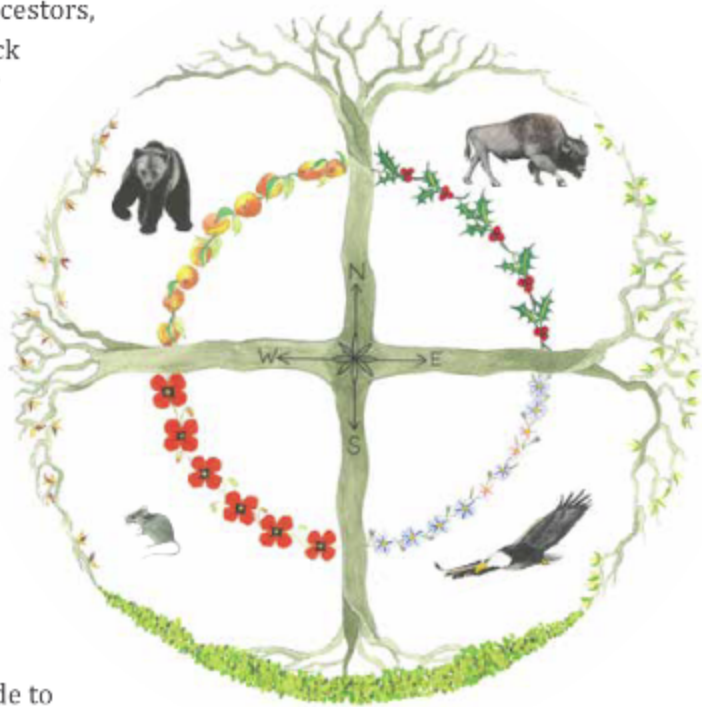
Humans needed animals in ways we have long forgotten; animals have always had much to teach us. Have a look at the four animals of the Medicine Wheel in the next chapter.



The Medicine Wheel

Exploring the Medicine Wheel can help us to think about how we see things and what's happening to us...

The Medicine Wheel has been around for thousands of years. To our ancestors, 'medicine' was for getting back into balance with the cycle of the seasons. The wheel is used to help find balance at times when everything feels out of control. Experiencing a big loss in our lives is bound to knock us off balance. It's not easy to keep balance in our lives at the best of times. Not surprising, considering our bodies are made up of over 50 per cent water. Just try holding a bowl that's half full of water, swaying from side to side and trying to keep the water level!



The Medicine Wheel, or the Wheel of Life, is divided into four parts, one for each direction – north, south, east and west. It is really a Wheel of the Year, with an animal for each season. Each animal has a special quality – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Thinking about these different qualities can help us to begin to take care of those four aspects of ourselves and so begin to get our balance back.



Eagle is the animal of spring and helps us to focus on our spiritual needs. Eagle flies the highest and sees the biggest picture. When we suffer a big loss, we often want to hide away; we may not want to see people and it can be hard to concentrate. It's important to remember there's a big world out there full of places that it might feel exciting to go to, people it might feel good to spend time with, things it might feel fun to do. Thinking about Eagle flying high helps us to see our loss as part of a bigger picture.



Mouse is the animal of summer and helps us to focus on our emotional needs. Mouse's world is small. Mouse teaches us that solutions to problems might be right under our noses. Mouse has a gentle way of being in the world, using whiskers to sense what is around. Thinking about Mouse's whiskers helps us to focus on our senses, our emotions. Sometimes it's helpful to get in touch with and release powerful feelings, as long as we can find a safe way of doing so.

Bear is the animal of autumn and helps us to focus on our physical needs. Bear feeds up well before hibernating and then wakes in the spring, ready for action. When we have experienced a big loss, Bear teaches us to look after ourselves – to eat well and get lots of sleep and exercise. Bear also teaches us that it's OK to go inwards and think about what's happened when so much is going on and we may feel so out of control.



Buffalo is the animal of winter and helps us to focus on our mental needs. Buffalo is very wise and is the great provider. If Buffalo is going to be killed, his wish is that all parts of his body will be used – for food or for clothes or for tools. Buffalo reminds us to be resourceful and use all that we have; he shows us that everything has a purpose and a use. Sadness, for example, shows us how good happiness is.

The way to achieve balance and keep well is to take care of all four of these aspects of ourselves.