It's just like... it's just like what other people feel A phenomenological exploration of using a children's picture book in the context of bereavement therapy


Abstract

The principle aim of this study was to uncover and produce a phenomenological description of the experiences involved when reading and discussing with others a book about death and dying. Although fictional literature is frequently used within bereavement services, there is a dearth of research to support evidence based practice. The methodological design was based on the work of Edmund Husserl, in particular his transcendental phenomenological approach to enquiry.

The participants for the study consisted of 11 bereaved young people, four of whom had Down’s syndrome. A therapeutic bereavement session was attended by the group, during which a member of staff read Michael Rosen’s SAD BOOK (Rosen, 2004). Afterwards a series of questions guided and stimulated discussion, gradually leading onto an exploration of their unique experiences. The participants listened, discussed, debated and shared stories, not only about reading the book but of their own grief.

The main therapeutic session was video recorded and provided data that included verbal and non-verbal language, together with details of the context in which the interactions took place. The analysis uncovered findings that included:

1) a connection to other bereaved people
2) discussion of crying and sadness
3) a focus on prose and illustrations, especially one page which read:

This is me being sad
Maybe you think I’m being happy in this picture
Really I’m being sad but pretending to be happy
I’m doing that because I think people won’t like me if I look sad

The findings were transformed to produce a phenomenological description of the experience when reading and discussing with others a book about death and dying. It is anticipated that this research will be of benefit to a wide range of multi-professional staff working with bereaved young people, some of whom may have a learning disability.
Caring about whether people like us is exhausting. After all, a lot of the time someone’s feelings about us are out of our control. It’s why how to stop worrying about what other people think is a valuable life skill that can serve us all incredibly. Murcko noted that sometimes just visualizing how good this will feel encourages us to make it a reality. She would constantly remind us that sometimes doing the right thing — whether it be right in the context of a situation or simply making a decision that we know is right for us personally — won’t always make us liked by others. Conversely, sometimes doing the things that make us liked aren’t always right. I’ve always found that keeping this in mind helps me to care less what others think. Nowadays, technology is developing at a speed that people could not even imagine in the past. It is quite common to see people walking on the street with their IPADs or smart phones showing the latest news. The debate whether the electronic media will replace the traditional printed media has attracted much attention. It’s just like what other people feel. A phenomenological exploration of using a children’s picture book in the context of bereavement therapy. Tools. The main therapeutic session was video recorded and provided data that included verbal and non-verbal language, together with details of the context in which the interactions took place. The analysis uncovered findings that included: 1) a connection to other bereaved people 2) discussion of crying and sadness 3) a focus on prose and illustrations, especially one page which read: This is me being sad. Maybe you think I’m being happy in this picture. Really I’m being sad but pretending to be happy. I’m doing that because I think people won’t like me if I look sad.