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Abstract for Individual Paper session:

Themes expressed by grieving children through song writing in music therapy

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Songwriting, commonly used in music therapy, allows clients to express important thoughts, feelings and messages about their lives (O'Callaghan, 1996, 1997). Recent reports have highlighted that songwriting can allow grieving clients to express grief related themes (Dalton & Krout, 2005, 2006; Krout, 2005a, 2005b; Roberts, 2006). This paper will present the findings of a study that examined the themes expressed by grieving children through songwriting in music therapy. This study, conducted for a master's research degree, adopted a mixed methods approach. Participants were 14 grieving children aged between 7-12 years of age who had experienced the death of a family member. Children were recruited to participate in songwriting sessions. Following these sessions the researcher collected song lyrics written by the children along with demographic and bereavement related information. Content analysis strategies were used to examine both qualitative and quantitative elements of the song lyrics. The demographic and bereavement related information was used to contextualise the song lyrics. Relevant literature, methods of songwriting in music therapy, case material and both qualitative and quantitative findings of this study will be presented. This paper will provide grief support workers with useful information about grief-related themes that children may express through therapeutically creative interventions.

References

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