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Grief and At-Risk Behavior: A Look at the Effectiveness of Grief Counseling Groups for Adolescents in Public Schools

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Grief & At-Risk Behavior: A Look At The Effectiveness of Grief Counseling Groups in Public Schools

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March 3, 2015

National Youth At-Risk Conference

Savannah Georgia

Endorsed by the International Association of Social Work with Groups, Inc.

Significance

- ❖ Charles and Anita Clayborn (My Parents)
- ❖ Grief (My Story)
- ❖ Adult vs. Adolescent
- ❖ School Social Work (My Experience)

“Can I participate in this group again?”

“Can we make group 1 hour and more than 8 weeks?”

“Can we bring in a photo of our parent(s)?”

My Parents Charles & Anita Clayborn



Significance

- ❖ Many adolescents who experience grief do not receive any form of counseling services to support them towards their grief recovery.

- ❖ In the United States, more than 2 million children and adolescents (3.4%) younger than 18 years have experienced the death of a parent.

(Christ, 2002).

At-Risk Behaviors

- ❖ Due to adolescents' level of cognitive, psychological, and social development, they may express inner turmoil through self-harm, physical complaints, or aggressive behaviors because of their reduced ability to conceptualize and verbalize distress.

(Cooper, Hooper, & Thompson, 2005).

At-Risk Behaviors

- ❖ Substance Abuse
- ❖ Suicide
- ❖ Eating Disorders
- ❖ Gang Violence
- ❖ Delinquency
- ❖ Self- Destructive Behavior
- ❖ Academic Problems

At-Risk Behaviors

- ❖ Adolescents who experience grief may struggle with understanding “ who they are” in the absence of a parent, due to death.
- ❖ Adolescents who experience the death of a parent may struggle with issues of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

(Thomas 2011)

Grief & Adolescents

- ❖ Grief is the normal psychological, social, and physical reaction to loss.
- ❖ Grief is also viewed as loss and bereavement.
- ❖ Grief is expressed through feelings, thoughts, and attitudes.

(Rando, 1988)

(Dune, 2004)

(Worden, 2009)

Grief & Adolescents

Stages of Grief:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

Grief is understood as a cyclical process

(Kubler-Ross, 1969)

Theoretical Framework

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory

- ❖ Attachment Theory describes the state and quality of an individual's attachments, to feel safe and secure.
- ❖ Attachment initially occurs between a child and parent and later between adult and adult.
- ❖ This theory rests on the belief that a secure attachment contributes to a healthy development.

(Bowlby, 1973; Dunne, 2004)

Grief Counseling Groups

- ❖ Few resources are available for grieving adolescents.
- ❖ Grief counseling groups are positive interventions for adolescents.
- ❖ Grief counseling groups help adolescents process their grief in a positive way.
- ❖ Grief counseling groups can assist adolescents in developing healthier coping skills.

(Lee & Swenson, 2005)

(Slyter, 2012)

Grief Counseling Groups

- ❖ The preferred intervention for grieving students is a support group.

- ❖ Group counseling is an effective intervention when working in a school setting.

(Perusee & Goodnough, 2009)

(Whiston & Sexton, 1998)

Grief Counseling Groups in Public Schools

- ❖ Group counseling can increase the number of students served in school counseling programs.
- ❖ Group counseling is an efficient intervention compared to individual counseling in a school setting.
- ❖ Group counseling supports student growth and development.

(Gladding, 2008; Greenberg, 2003)

(Perusee, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009)

(Sells & Hays, 1997).

Barriers to Grief Counseling Groups

- Academic Culture
- School Climate
- Scheduling Problems
- School Policies
- School Culture
- Administrative Support
- Student Caseload
- Time

(Dansby, 1996; Greenber, 2003; Ripley & Goodnough, 2011)

School Social Workers

- ❖ School social workers are excellent resources for grieving adolescents.
- ❖ 5% of social workers work in the public school setting.
- ❖ School social workers are responsible for providing clinical interventions at school when loss occurs.

(NASW, 2014) (Strobe et al., 2005)

(Rowling, 2005)

Summary

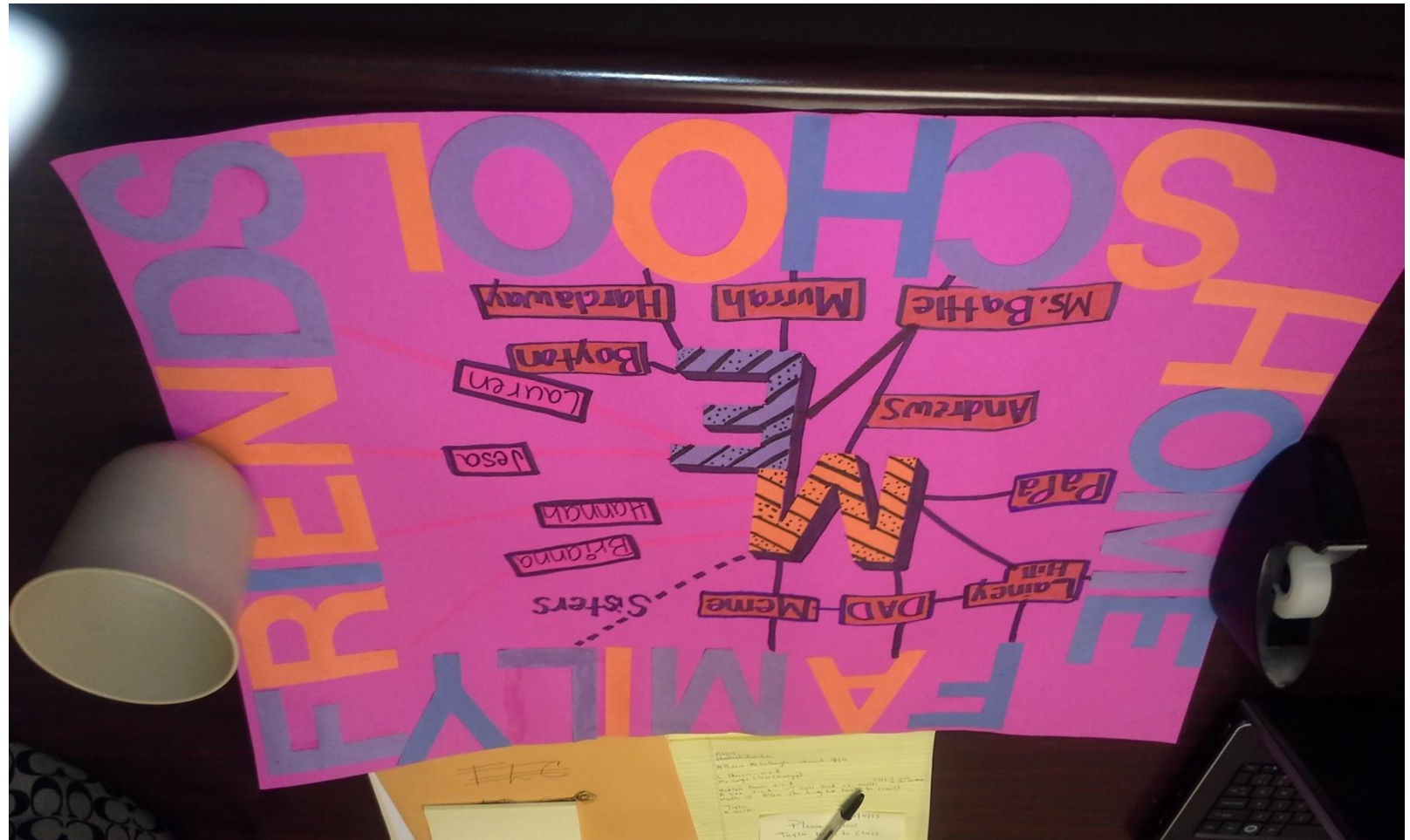
- ❖ 95 percent of respondents agreed that grief impacts and interferes with teaching and learning.
- ❖ 97 percent of respondents agreed that grief counseling groups are effective interventions for adolescents.
- ❖ 96 percent of respondents agreed that a comfort level with the topic of grief is required in order to conduct grief counseling groups.

Summary

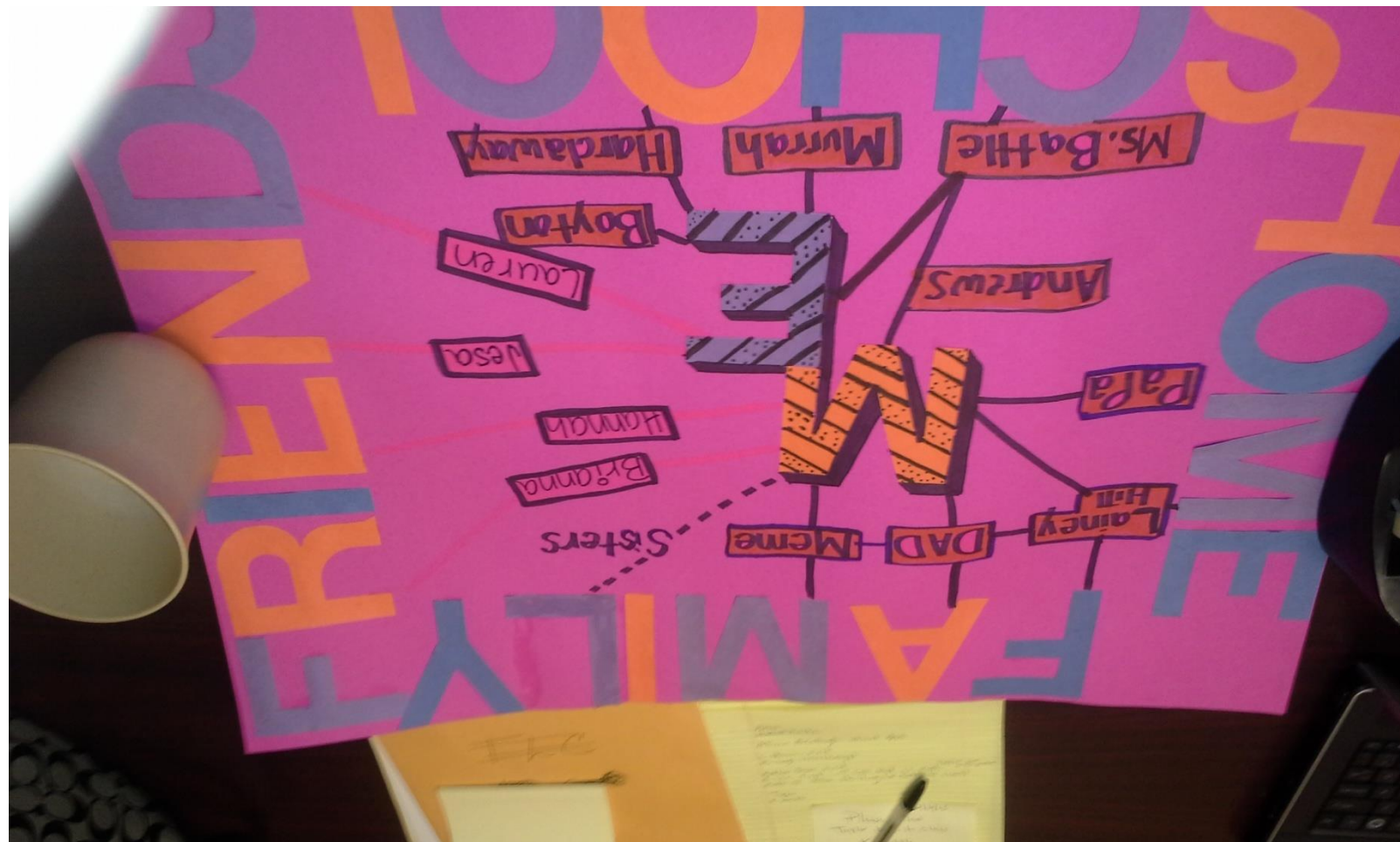
- ❖ Frequency data reveals that grief counseling groups are not being conducted at higher percentages by school social workers for adolescents.
- ❖ 56 percent of respondents have never conducted grief counseling groups.

Georgia public school social workers who are members of the School Social Workers Association of Georgia recognize the importance of grief counseling as an effective intervention for adolescents, however grief counseling groups continue to be underutilized.

Will Your Name Be Listed????



Will Your Name Be Listed????



Thank You

Remember, **all** youth and young adults can be successful. The key is helping them to find success their own way and in their own time!

Kiana Battle, LMSW

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“Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed”.

Booker T. Washington