



Death and Dying: Practical Skills for Working with Bereaved Children and Adolescents

SPPAC 2017 Preconference Workshop (3 CEs)

As pediatric psychologists who work with children with chronic or life-limiting illnesses, we are uniquely positioned to provide clinical care to patients at the end of life and/or children and families who experience the death of a loved one. Gaining comfort working with children and families who experience a significant loss is an important skill for pediatric psychologists across settings, but one that is rarely taught as part of formal training curricula. Providers often feel uncomfortable speaking openly about death and dying and may not know how they can be helpful to grieving patients and families. Furthermore, mental health professionals often struggle to address their own self-care needs in the context of working under these emotionally challenging circumstances.

This workshop is designed for students and clinicians who are currently working with patients with life-threatening illness and their families, hope to work with them in the future, or simply recognize that loss and grief are universal issues that have the potential to impact the children and families in our care. In this workshop, Dr. Thompson will provide practical information to providers with the goals of enhancing their skills 1) talking to young children about death and dying, 2) understanding behavioral and emotional reactions to loss across development, 3) working with bereaved individuals in the therapy setting, and 4) practicing thoughtful and proactive self-care to prevent compassion fatigue and burnout. To meet these goals, Dr. Thompson will combine didactic lecture with case examples from her practice. She will also facilitate small group discussion regarding attendees' experiences working with the bereaved, with a focus on challenges experienced or anticipated. Finally, Dr. Thompson will emphasize collaboration with caregivers and extended family members, community supports, and school personnel in the clinical care of bereaved children and adolescents.

Based on the content of this talk, participants will be able to:

1. Explain key strategies for communicating with young children about death and dying.
2. Describe at least three common behavioral and emotional reactions to loss.
3. Develop a plan of action for self-care to implement in their own clinical practice.

Target Learner Level: Introductory

Registration cap: 30

Presenters: Amanda Thompson, PhD

Dr. Amanda Thompson is a pediatric psychologist and Director of Patient Support Services in the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at Children's National Health System in Washington DC, where she provides clinical services to children in all phases of treatment for pediatric cancer and oversees a large multidisciplinary psychosocial team. Dr. Thompson is currently an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. She is an active member of the Children's Oncology Group and is the current co-chair of the Hematology Oncology Special Interest Group of SPP. Dr. Thompson has over a decade of clinical experience working with patients with life threatening illness. With her focus on hematology/oncology, she has developed a special interest and expertise in teaching providers how to talk to children about death and dying and helping them to gain comfort working with patients near the end of life and with families who are bereaved. She has provided didactic lectures on this topic to hundreds of providers (including psychology trainees, medical fellows and residents, and area pediatricians), and was recently featured on an iTunes 'new and notable' pediatric podcast, The Child Repair Guide.

COI Statement: The speaker has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Session Date/Time: Thursday, March 30th, 2017; 1:30 – 4:30 pm



The Society of Pediatric Psychology (Division 54 of the American Psychological Association) is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Society of Pediatric Psychology maintains responsibility for this program and its contents.