



CAPT Bereavement, Grief and Loss Certificate Working with Children through Grief and Loss

**Friday, Saturday and Sunday, August 24 – 26, 2018
St. John's, Newfoundland**

Certificate Program Instructor

Irena Razanas MSW, RSW, CPT-S, RPT-S

Irena Razanas is a Clinical Social Worker, and Registered Play Therapist Supervisor. She is the Director of Clinical Support Services at Hospice of Waterloo Region, a charity that provides support to people needing palliative care. She also has a private practice in Ayr, Ontario www.yellowdoorcounselling.com. Irena completed her undergraduate work at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec and has a Master's Degree in Social Work from Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON.

Prior to moving to Ontario 20 years ago, Irena practiced health social work at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal and then became the Coordinator of Hope and Cope, a support system for people living with cancer. She developed some of the first support groups in Canada for women with breast cancer and groups for young adults with cancer.

Irena was the Executive Director of Hospice of Waterloo Region until 2012. She helped them realize their dream of establishing "The Hospice Family Centre" which opened in Kitchener in the spring of 2010. In addition to her administrative duties, Irena fuelled her passion for working with children by creating the Families First Program at Hospice which includes: group sessions for children and teens who are bereaved, a parenting through grief support group, individual counselling for adults and play therapy for children whose lives have been touched by a life threatening illness and loss.

Irena believes in the healing power of play for both adults and children. She has had extensive training in Sandtray Worldplay therapy and uses expressive play therapy in her work with adults and children who are anticipating a loss or have recently experienced a death of a loved one.

Overview: Working with Children who are anticipating a loss or who have recently experienced a loss through death or separation demands a great deal of the therapist. Therapists need to have a solid understanding of child development and how death and separation is viewed at each age. They need to know the difference between a normal and a complex grief reaction and how to appropriately and simultaneously support children and the adults who care for them as they navigate through this often-tumultuous time in their lives. The application of this knowledge rests on the assumption that the therapist is aware of their own experience with grief and loss, and comes to the playroom knowing that the activities they provide and the interactions they support will have a profound effect on the people they treat. In turn they too will be affected by the stories they hear and bear witness to.

Learning objectives:

Upon completion of this certificate participants will :

1. Be able to Identify common life events that cause significant change resulting in a loss
2. Be able to Identify many significant losses in their own lives and how they have or have not dealt with these losses
3. Be able to identify tasks associated with grieving (Worden) : acknowledging the loss, express manifest and latent emotion, adjust to a changed life, relocate the loss, or finding an enduring connection with the deceased, reconstitute faith and philosophical systems challenged by the loss
4. Have participated in a play based activity that explores transference and counter transference when working with clients who are sharing their experience with loss
5. Be able to explain what a fulsome understanding of death is
6. Common barriers to talking with children and adolescents about an impending death
7. Learn what children and teenagers understand about death at each age
8. Understand the difference between normal and complicated grief reactions and what that looks like from infancy to teenage
9. Understand what children need to manage at each age
10. Understand the limits and the strengths of the grieving parent and how to support them
11. Understand how to assess and when to recommend individual, filial, group or peer support
12. Have participated in play therapy based activities that help with assessment, engagement, and supporting a child's and teens ability to learn about death and manage the changes that have come with loss
13. Participated in discussions that focus on children and adoption, multiple losses, multiple separations including separation and divorce and how these losses affect these children as well as their caregivers (foster parents, residential staff) and how therapists can support caregivers to support children in their care.
14. Come away with practical ideas on working with children that have been removed from their home, that are in foster care or other kinship care
15. Have explored different approaches to dealing with a death depending on the nature of the death, cultural differences, parents' perception of what children can handle and how much they want to share i.e. suicide completion, witnessing or finding the deceased, having to be with the deceased before help arrives. What to be aware of and how to proceed in the playroom.
16. Understand the importance of self-care, debriefing with another professional and how to ask for what we need to do this kind of work in a supportive way.

Certificate Program Course Delivery and Format:

The course objectives described above will be achieved through a combination of individual and group expressive play therapy activities and lecturing. Each hour of the course will involve either: physical movement, group discussion and exchange, art activities, or other activity-based counselling examples that the instructor has used in her practice. There are a number of goals in teaching through play. Primarily, we want participants to understand the impact of play therapy activities. Participants will be asked to take part in the suggested activities, reflect on their own process, take notes and share what they have learned at the end of each day.

Examples of activities over the three days include:

- completing life stress inventory in a group movement activity
- the use of metaphor through collage
- sandtray worlds
- water worlds
- scribbling activities
- bubble play
- 7 different Theraplay engagement activities
- yoga pretzel activities
- individual and group mandalas
- story telling
- opportunities to handle games used and created by the instructor
- practicing bibliotherapy using children and adolescent books
- creating Double Dip feeling sticks, glitter/mood jars, and alpha poems

Workshop Attendees

This Certificate Program would be of interest to those working with agencies and departments engaged in grief counselling including shelters, adoption agencies, victim witness programs, community living agencies and programs focusing on grief and loss. Also, those working as marriage and family counsellors, child life specialists, educators interested in gaining familiarity with play therapy and would be most valuable to people working with children and families in the mental health field.