Considerations for Littles and Middles Group Facilitation

While the Littles and Middles are at Tu Nidito, they have a safe place to be themselves; a place where they can be the kids they need to be while still doing the important work of processing their grief related to a death or a diagnosis. Facilitators are an integral part in establishing and maintaining the balance between an atmosphere of emotional safety and fun.

As a facilitator, you are modeling what it means to be a caring adult who encourages grief work and play. You will do this effectively by operating within the structure of the group, maintaining the rules, and using reflective/active listening to demonstrate empathy.

Rules for Children's Support Group

1. Things in group are private.
2. "I pass."
3. The person with the Sharing Stick does the talking - everyone else listens.
4. Stop and I mean it!
5. No head shots.
6. No hurting other people's bodies, feelings, objects.
7. If it's wet and not yours, don't touch it.
8. Kids must have an adult with them at all times.
9. We do not compare losses, illnesses or situations.

3-Step Rule Enforcement

1. Rule reminder: When a child breaks a rule, remind them of the rule they broke.
2. Personal Visit: If the rule is broken a second time, speak to them one-on-one. Remind them of the rule they have broken and advise that if the rule is broken again there will be a consequence, such as a cool-down period or getting the Group Coordinator.
3. Immediate Consequence: At the third rule-break, enforce the consequence.

Sharing Circle:

- Sit in-between the children to demonstrate you are just as much a part of the group as they are. Sitting in between them also helps to manage distracting behaviors once the sharing begins.
- Self-disclose elements of your personal grief story to build rapport, create trust and model appropriate ways adults can discuss grief.
- Secondary losses may come up such as pet loss, incarceration, living situations etc.
- Subtly redirect distracting behaviors as they arise

- The facilitator(s) sitting next to the child may bring subtle attention to the distraction *for a moment* by calling a rule break
- Use reflection to acknowledge the behavior
    - If two children are having a side-conversation while another one is sharing, a facilitator would reflect, "We see that you both are having a lot of fun together, but right now Josh is sharing. Let's be respectful and listen to Josh."
- Give a child who is engaging in a distracting behavior a responsibility, like passing out the paper during the activity.
- Take a distracting child out of the Sharing Circle Room
    - Tell them that you notice they have a lot of energy or that they seem to have a hard time focusing. Offer to go get a drink of water or spend a few quiet moments outside so they can return to the Sharing Circle Room in a more productive manner.
- Acknowledge good behavior and efforts. This can be verbal ("good job!") and non-verbal (giving a thumbs up).
    - Focus the child's attention on the desired behavior rather than the misbehavior.

      Example: "Show us how well you can sit quietly," or "You're great at turning on your listening ears – let's make sure they're still on."

- Kids will be kids. they will not sit perfectly still and listen intently the entire time. Use your best judgement as when to redirect behaviors.
- Utilize your co-facilitators! They are your best allies and sources of support.
    - Be conscious of the support you need to give each other. If you see someone may need assistance in re-directing a child's behaviors, chime in as a way to help.

Free Time:

- Present all the options (Playground, Art Room, Volcano Room, and Imagination Room) and have the kids raise their hands indicating where they want to go. This will allow you to take a head-count and distribute yourselves evenly among the kids.
- Be present and engaged when you play
    - Swing with them on the swings, help them organize a game of basketball, play a board game of their choosing, participate in a game they invented, etc.
- Be inclusive
- If a child is by themselves, engage them in conversation or ask if they'd like to join the play with another child. If they do not, offer to do something with them. If they still want to be alone, let them know that you are will be nearby and will periodically ask them if they'd like to play.
- Engage in general conversation – ("how is school going? what TV shows do you like to watch? what do you like to do with your friends?")
- If a game gets too competitive, pause the play and attempt to work through any issues.
- Keep track of the time ("We have 10 more minutes left to play… Now we have 5 more minutes...now it's time to clean up.")
- Clean up and make sure the kids help.

- Don’t be afraid to call rule breaks. We have the rules for the physical and emotional safety of everyone at Tu Nidito.