



Seasons for Growth Children and Young People Program

“The only thing in life that is permanent is change.
Change is the one constant in life”

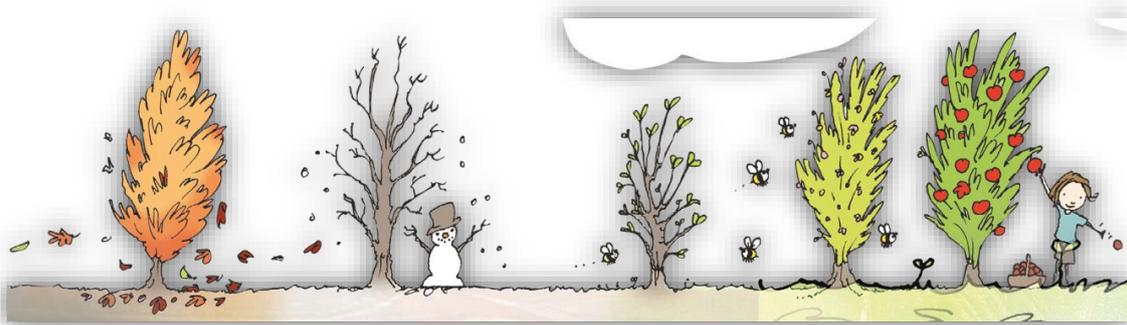
(Fallin, 2013, p.5)

The *Seasons for Growth* Children and Young Peoples program is an Australian early intervention education program based on the belief that change and loss are part of life, and grief is a normal response to these losses. Children and young people (aged 6-18 years) benefit from the opportunity to learn about how death, separation, divorce or other significant loss events may impact on their lives. The *Seasons for Growth* programs provide an opportunity for participants to learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand and respond well to such experiences.

Seasons for Growth, written by Professor Anne Graham AO, in 1996 aimed to address the lack of resources available for children and young people adjusting to death, family separation and divorce.

***Seasons for Growth* relies on research**, strategies and techniques consistent with high quality psychosocial education. *Seasons for Growth* has been adapted to support children and young people with experiences of suicide, forced migration, home-based care and Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

MacKillop has a long history of collaboration with agencies (Headspace schools, Emerging Minds, NALAG, Interrelate, CatholicCare) and school systems (Government, Catholic and Independent) in the adaptation and delivery of the programs.



Why “Seasons for Growth”?

The metaphor of the seasons provides a vivid, symbolic framework for exploring the experience of change and loss. For children and young people, the use of a metaphor is significant because it provides a concrete way of engaging with the more abstract experience of grief.



How Does it Work?

Seasons for Growth session content reflects key themes to support the children and young people process their experience and learn knowledge and skills to build emotional literacy and resilience.

The program’s foundation is built upon J. William Worden’s theory of grief, the disciplines of recognition and wellbeing and Childhood Studies. These foundations remind us to respect the dignity and self-worth of all children and young people and emphasizes the importance of young people’s active participation and ‘voice’, as an ‘expert’ in their own experience. The linchpin of the program is the quality of the learning experience, based on conversations with and between the young people.

The program has a sound curriculum structure and incorporates a wide range of age-appropriate activities including writing, drawing, discussion, stories, role plays, music, guided meditation and journaling.

What do Participants Learn in the Program?

Worden’s Tasks	Seasons for Growth Tasks		Session Content
To accept the reality of the loss	Learn that change and loss are part of life	AUTUMN	Session 1: Life is like the seasons Session 2: Change is part of life
To process the pain of grief	Learn about different ways people experience change and loss	WINTER	Session 3: Valuing my story Session 4: Naming my feelings
To adjust to a changed world after the loss	Learn skills to assist with adapting to change and loss	SPRING	Session 5: Caring for my feelings Session 6: Remembering the good times
To find an enduring connection with what has been lost while embarking on a new life	Learn about ways that help in moving forward with life	SUMMER	Session 7: Making good choices Session 8: Moving forward



Program Outcomes:

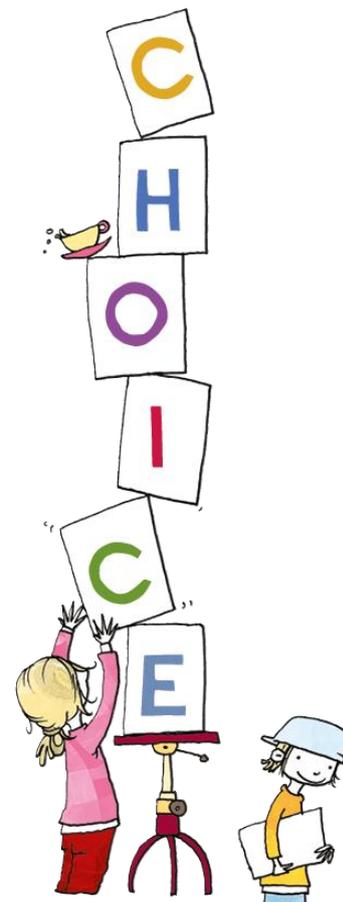
- Supports children and young people to understand and respond well to their experience of loss
- Assists children and young people to understand that their feelings and other reactions are normal
- Develops skills for coping, problem solving and decision making
- Builds a peer support network
- Helps restore self-confidence and self-esteem
- Educates children and young people about the grief process.

How is the Program Structured?

Seasons for Growth is a small group program (4-7 participants) and caters for ages 6-18 years. Children and young people are invited to attend the appropriate group level:

- Level 1** (6 - 8 years): 40 min sessions
- Level 2** (9 -10 years): 40 min sessions
- Level 3** (11-12 years): 45 min sessions
- Level 4** (13-18 years): 50 min sessions

There are 8 formal sessions.





Who can Deliver *Seasons for Growth*?

***Seasons for Growth* is delivered by one adult facilitator or 'Companion'.** Companions may be teachers, counsellors, psychologist, social workers, chaplains, health professionals who undertake a one-day training workshop. All Companions must be endorsed by their school/agency ensuring the appropriate state or territory child protection requirements.

How are Companions Supported with *Seasons for Growth* Implementation?

1. Face-to-face training and *Seasons for Growth* Companion Manual and Participant Journals
2. Additional evidence-informed information and access to online resources
3. Ongoing support from MacKillop Family Services Trainers
4. Structured debriefing with identified professional within their school or agency
5. Reconnector network and learning sessions, newsletters, conferences

Communities Supported by *Seasons for Growth*

***Seasons for Growth* has supported in excess of 300,000 children and young people in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales.**

About Research and Evaluation

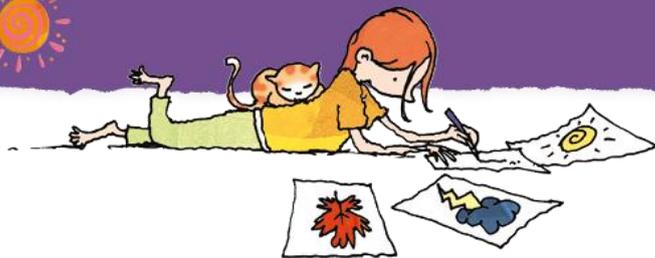
Research and evaluation are the cornerstones of our programs. MacKillop Family Services has a partnership with Southern Cross University for ongoing support from program author, Professor Anne Graham AO, Director of the Centre for Children and Young People.

There have been six different evaluations of *Seasons for Growth*, conducted in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2010, 2011 and 2019. The evaluations consistently report the program helps children and young people experiencing change, loss and grief; builds participants' understanding and skills and enables them to express their views, thoughts and feelings; strengthens participants' social and support networks and improves participants' emotional wellbeing. The 2019 evaluation showed a statistically significant increase in the ratings of children/young people's wellbeing over time.

***Seasons for Growth* endorsement and review:**

- **BeYOU** - a national wellbeing initiative in education
- Evidence-Based Programme Guidebook by the Child Family Community Australia, **AIFS**
- **'High impact'** rating in Australian Research Council's Engagement and Impact Assessment 2018–19 National Report
- **NSW Parliament Showcase** (2019), Southern Cross University





... no season lasts forever,
... not even Winter.

