Evaluation of Bibliotherapy Service

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Bibliotherapy

• Concept of bibliotherapy is not new
• Reading therapy, healthy reading
• Therapeutic use of reading material (written word)
Grief

- Death of a spouse ranks first out of 43 stressful events Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Holmes, 1970)

- Responses to grief may be emotional such as fear, guilt, anxiety, depression and anger; physical such as weight loss or gain, insomnia and increased risk of illness; behavioural and spiritual.
Objectives

1. To develop a list of recommended resources which will consist of evidence based self-help materials.

2. Selection of material, implementation and administration of the program.

3. To evaluate the impact of structured Bibliotherapy from the library, bereavement service users and social worker / volunteer perspectives.
Workbooks

- **Talking with Children and Young People about Death and Dying**
  - Second Edition
  - Mary Turner

- **When Someone Very Special Dies**
  - Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief
  - Written by Mary Turner
  - Illustrated by children

- **When Something Terrible Happens**
  - Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief
  - Written by Mary Turner
  - Illustrated by children
Evaluation

1. Semi structured interviews with focus group bereavement support volunteers, social workers to determine their attitudes and experiences of the MCC Bibliotherapy Service before and after

2. Audit of borrowing from the collection

3. Book comment sheets returned by book users—they included question such as (a) did you find this book useful? (b) would you recommend it to someone who
Qualitative Research

Semi-structured interviews
Social workers (n=5)

Focus Group
Bereavement support volunteers (n=5)
Three social workers had heard of the word “bibliotherapy”

One participant mentioned a book that she had read “Bibliotherapy for bereaved children”

One participant had worked with an art therapist who used stories with children

They all had used literature and recommended books to bereaved clients
How do you decide what literature to use?

• Depended on what material was available in the Social Work Department
• Searched for additional material on the internet
• Importance of material that is suitable and specific to the need of the individual
• Academic ability of the person, their relationship to the person who had died, their experience of it and how they want to come at it
What experiences have you had so far?

- All of the participants had experience of using literature such as leaflets & pamphlets for bereavement from Cruse

  - “They’re easy reading I suppose and they synopsise things for people”

- Some participants said they used it as “standard practice” a lot of the time or as the need arises

- BSV: “I don’t think I’ve ever in a group situation said I think it would be good for people to read x,y,z books..which now that I think of it - I wonder about because I think reading can have many benefits.”
How do you decide when and with whom to use it?

- Depends on the individual situation
- Participants generally know from their own assessment whether it would be beneficial
- Where an appointment with a social worker is not possible for awhile, sending out literature might provide a bridge
- If someone wasn’t open to engaging in one-to-one direct support
Experiences of using literature

• “It is good to give them something in writing as well as having a session....
  To take away with them even if they don’t read it straight away, they can go back to it...so I would use it quite a bit really in terms of bereavement work”

• “It’s always handy to have a reference or some booklet to explain things to people that are stuck in any way so they don’t have to take someone’s account as the only source of information - for affirmation”
Normalization of grief reactions

If someone is specifically looking for normalisation around their grief, I would often give them a 2 page sheet of paper with normal grief reactions. If I have a sense that they might be able for more, I might give them a leaflet. And if they come and say I’m really into reading books, then I might go to the next level, recommending a book.
I was even looking this morning .. I was sending out a girl stuff because she’d lost a grandparent and an uncle. I couldn’t find anything on the loss of a grandparent now. I’m sure there could be somewhere but that’s an example …… a lot of the stuff I’ve sent her out is on the loss of a parent or sibling …… whereas, looking for the more specific stuff is an ongoing thing… …
What responses have you had with those whom you have used it?

- Reactions to bibliotherapy had been mixed but overall it was positive.
- Can be difficult to know people’s response to it sometimes.
- Positive response: It can reduce people’s sense of isolation and that a lot of people have the same feelings as them.
- Negative effect: The opposite could be true. It may reinforce their sense of isolation further.

“The negative has been that people feel that it doesn’t really reflect their experience, it’s the opposite effect. They feel there the only ones who feel that particular way.”
Positive feedback from parent

Z was a parent whose child was terminally ill. She was able to track down an article from the Library that was on adults coping with a child with life-long illness and they found that so helpful. It was a massive support to them.
Comments

• “Books aren’t written for individuals. They’re written to give generic advice and how there interpreted or perceived then depends very much on the individual and where there at. You definitely get a variety of feedback”

• BSV “The feedback I would be getting is that they are looking for something. It came up towards the end of a session one night”

• “They’re apologizing.. they don’t have the time…sometimes when it comes to it, they may not have the inclination and that’s more for books,…..sometimes people feel they can maybe dip in and out of it so they read a little bit and come back to it in their own time .”
What I would find is that a lot of people come back and say *I was finding it hard to find someone who knew what I was talking about but when I read the booklet, it showed me the feelings were normal...that I wasn’t going mad cause, sometimes when people are grieving, they can be afraid they’re loosing their mind nearly, they’re so distraught so it helps that as well*
Are there any barriers to its implementation or use?

- Whether to loan books and the process for borrowing - difficulty getting books back
- Illiteracy
- Some people don’t like reading
- Books might be written too theoretical/academic, small print, no pictures - might be off-putting for some people
What do you feel the benefits of bibliotherapy have been?

- Reassurance for people that what they are feeling is normal
- It allows people “to do for themselves”
- Less dependent on others for support
- Allows people to do use it in the privacy of their own home and in their own time
- People have more control over whether they take it on board and when
- Could be considered more objective when it is written down
Children’s books

I certainly think that with the parents that it does aid communication and conversations happening between parents and children in preparation for a death or trying to make sense of the grief afterwards.
Difficulties

- Awareness
- Logistical
- Ensure the trolley is marked clearly
- Not enough time in the group session
- Difficulty concentrating on reading
Do you think it would be beneficial in a bereavement support service?

All of the participants said it would be beneficial in bereavement support.

It can complement other therapies.

“Been able to tailor it to the specific need”

“Some people aren’t open to one-to-one support...they just don’t want to go there...in that way bibliotherapy could be useful...they could get a bit of support from the literature”
Audit

Total number of books in the trolley 58

Number of books for Children 13

Number of books for Teenagers 7

Number of books borrowed from January to December 58

Brochures and Leaflets from Irish Hospice Foundation, Cruse, HSE, and Barnardos were also available 13
Feedback from Bereaved Clients

- Fourteen book comment forms were received
- Seventy-five per cent were female
- Twelve were referring to adults books.
- 86% was positive feedback.
- 93% would recommend the book to someone who had a loss.

Negative:
- One person felt the material in “The Orphaned Adult” was suited to someone who lost their parents when they were in their 40’s/50’s.
- One individual didn’t identify with the personal stories in “Widow to Widow”
Role of bibliotherapy

- NICE Guidelines have shown that Bibliotherapy is effective in the early stages of stepped care programmes for anxiety and depression and for alleviating mild or moderate psychological distress (NICE 2004)
For future

- Ensuring the trolley is open at the start of the night
- It’s better to have it at the very start i.e. the 1st or 2nd week after the group starts
- Ensure the trolley is stocked with leaflets / brochures
- Ensure updated list of available books / resources is provided to Social workers and BSV
- Have duplicate copies of books that are heavily used e.g. “The Courage to grieve”
- Greater accessibility to the trolley
- Availability of DVDs or CDs
Links with Compassionate Communities

- First project in Ireland, project in Limerick city and Newcastle West
- Watch House Cross Public Library, Moyross, 40% of books borrowed from bibliotherapy collection were specifically dealing with death
- Dooradoyle Public Library
- Poetry Display
A book is the only place in which you can examine a fragile thought without breaking it, or explore an explosive idea without fear it will go off in your face. It is one of the few havens remaining where a man's mind can get both provocation and privacy.

~Edward P. Morgan
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