

Worksheet:

Balancing memories

About this activity

Some memories are fantastic and spark joy, others can be very difficult for a child to manage. Processing separation and, in some cases, grief is about balancing memories. Whilst talking about a range of memories is often hard, a child's memory muscle must be exercised and strengthened. This activity can help a child to understand that we can't ignore the difficult stuff, nor can we let it dominate, and it will guide you in supporting a child as they think and talk about different types of memories.



Outcomes

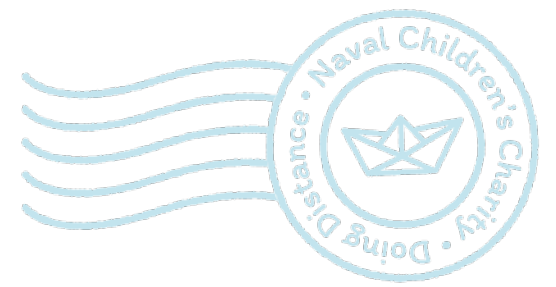
- ✓ To encourage a child to describe difficult memories and the different impact on their senses (what they saw, thought, heard, smelt, touched etc.)
- ✓ To encourage a child to edit and balance their memories
- ✓ To help improve concentration

What you will need

- ✓ One dark-coloured rock that is rough to the touch
- ✓ One light-coloured or smooth pebble
- ✓ Pieces of colourful glass or a polished gem stone(s), or just a pretty stone from the garden
- ✓ A small bag or box to keep the stones together; the stones need to be small enough to fit in a child's hand together

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Since Mummy went away all my different memories are like actors coming into a stage. I can't stop them coming on. Some actors make me sad, others make me smile. With my stones I now have learned how to shine a spotlight on the memories I want to remember most.”



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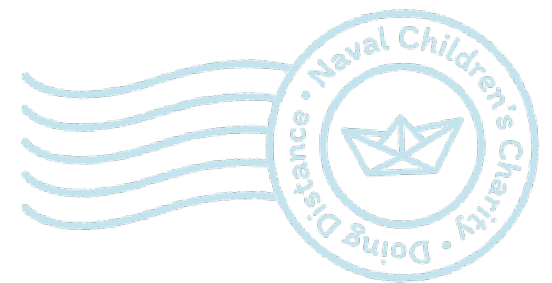
What to do

- 1 When you know you have plenty of time, sit with the child in a quiet place where they feel comfortable. Perhaps invite them to light a candle to signal this is some special work you are doing together.
- 2 Explain that you have an activity that may help them to think and talk about their different types of memories, whether that is memories of separation or when all the family is together. Allow the child to look at, touch, and hold the stones in their hands.
- 3 The first memory stone to use is the smooth and light-coloured pebble, representing ordinary, normal days when the whole family is together. Ask the child to hold it and encourage them to tell you what everyday life was like for them. This can often be the most important stone for a child, as they recall things they miss all the time, like being all together for family meals, or missing their school or friends that they no longer live close to. If the pebble is flat and pale enough, you could ask the child to draw a little picture on it of something that symbolises a normal day.
- 4 The second memory stone is the rough rock. Ask the child to clench this tightly. Notice how it is different from the smooth, warm pebble. Holding this rock, feeling its rough or sharp edges, say, 'I wonder if you can think of a memory that is difficult to handle, just like this rough rock?' The child may be able to tell you about a difficult memory they have, or they may prefer to draw it out on paper. Please remember, children can get very anxious about drawing, so reassure them it is okay to use stick people and simple outlines to express their memory.



If it's too hard to talk about on this occasion, you could say, 'I can sense this memory is very important but also very tough and difficult to share right now... do you think we could maybe come back to this rough rock next week?'





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- 5 When you meet again remind them that you are aware there is a rough memory that you want to help them to share so it is not taking up so much space in their minds. To support them with this, you may want to show them the part of the 'Balancing Memories' video where we use a wastepaper bin to reflect what is happening in the brain.
- 6 The third type of stones are for exploring special memories, using coloured glass, gemstones or a shiny small stone. While they hold this stone, encourage the child to think about the very special memories they might want to share. Allow them to really connect with these stories and, if they start to cry, allow the tears to flow.

Your role is to see beyond the sadness and realise that you are giving the child a gift to engage with aspects of their life that were very special (and always will be) despite being 'happy/sad tears' at this moment in their lives. If they talk about them regularly then they will become more happy/sad but then happy again tears.
- 7 Finally, holding all three stones together in one hand can be a way of symbolising that these different memories can sit alongside each other in our minds, in a balanced way.



As a child uses the stones to think about their memories, there may be emotions. In your role as a supporter, it is important to remember that you have not made them cry, or made them feel guilt, shame or anger, but rather you have allowed them to safely explore a range of emotions.

The stones can also be used to regularly check in at the start of your session. For example, the smooth stone may represent something that is feeling okay now, the rough stone could be something that feels difficult or is worrying the child, and the special stone could be a way of sharing one nice thing.

