

Seasons for Growth



Children and young people's program

Seasons for Growth strengthens the emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people who are adapting to experiences of change, loss and grief in their lives, such as following death, separation and divorce.

The program is evidence-based and uses the imagery of the seasons to describe and understand the experience of change, loss and grief. Trained adult 'Companions' facilitate small groups where participants support and learn from each other in age appropriate and engaging activities. Participants learn that change and loss are a natural part of life and that they are not alone in dealing with the effects of these experiences. They also learn communication, decision making and problem-solving skills to support them to adapt to their new circumstances.

Who is it for?

Children and young people aged 6-18 who are living with the effects of change and loss. Many factors can cause change such as:

- Friends can come and go
- Loss of someone or something you love
- Parents and families separate
- Moving to a new place
- Impact of illness
- Family work-life changes
- Impacts of COVID-19

Change affects everyone differently, as does grief. It's the impact of the change, not the event itself that Seasons for Growth focuses on.

We suggest that anyone affected by bereavement wait 6-12 months before participating in a Seasons for Growth program.



How does it work?

Seasons for Growth is a small group program that combines psychology and education with peer support, within a person centred learning approach. It uses the metaphor of the seasons to explore the cyclic nature of grief, and is underpinned by William Worden's tasks of grieving.

The Children and Young People's program contains developmentally appropriate discussions and activities. Seasons for Growth normalises participants' experiences, and can increase protective factors (including building personal resilience and social skills) while minimising some risk factors (including isolation) that influence mental health and wellbeing. The program also supports the development of communication, decision making and problem solving skills.



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How is it delivered?

The program is run over 8 sessions with groups of 4-7 participants and is facilitated by trained adults called "Companions". Teachers, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, chaplains and health professionals are endorsed by their school or organisation to undertake a two-day training workshop to implement the program and to qualify to become a Companion.

The children and young people participating in the group are provided with a safe space to learn, share and reflect and are supported by richly illustrated participant journals.

Outcomes

Seasons for Growth provides the support and space for children and young people to:

- **Learn** about how different people respond to change, loss and grief
- **Understand** that it is normal to experience a range of grief reactions
- **Explore** new approaches to dealing with change, loss and grief in their lives
- **Build** communication, decision making and problem solving skills
- **Participate** in a supportive network of peers and adults
- **Integrate** their new learning into their relationships with family, friends and others

Evidence and evaluation

Seasons for Growth has been evaluated extensively over its 25 year history. The most recent evaluations concluded that the Seasons for Growth Program increases children and young people's wellbeing over time and specifically:

- **Builds** understanding and skills
- **Improves** participants' emotional wellbeing
- **Enables** participants to express their views, thoughts and feelings
- **Strengthens** participants' social and support networks.

The Seasons for Growth Children and Young People's Program is listed in the Australian Government, Child Family Community Australia [Evidence-Based Programme Guidebook](#). The impact of the Program has been recognised in both the 2018/19 [Australian Research Council's Engagement and Impact Assessment](#) and [Research Impact NSW 2019](#) reports.

Further information on program evaluation is available at www.mackillopseasons.org.au

Seasons for Growth is endorsed by the school's mental health program menus in NSW, VIC and SA.



Get in touch

- 📍 PO Box 1023, North Sydney NSW 2059 Australia
- ☎ 1300 379 569
- ✉ seasons@mackillop.org.au