

# Living and Dying – Class in a Bag

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The Class In A Bag activity is a learning and teaching activity undertaken by senior student nurses as part of a module in Part 3 of the BSc Adult Nursing programme. This activity includes the use of a resource developed by UWS known as Class in a Bag (CIAB); literally a bag which includes any resources that could be used in order to deliver a session on a specific topic.

The students are given a brief and are then supported by an academic lecturer to develop the activity which is then delivered to a group of Primary School children. As this was a new CIAB topic the lecturer worked in partnership with two students to develop the activity. This was undertaken in line with the suggested partnership values outlined by the Higher Education Academy(HEA) (2015) : **authenticity**, **inclusivity**, **honesty** , **reciprocity**, **empowerment**, **trust**, **courage**, **plurality** and **responsibility**.

# Background

The literature suggests that there is good evidence for including death education in schools (Bowie, 2000, Penfold-Mounce, 2018, Paul, 2015). Less recently, Doyle (1989) and Wells (1988) noted that there were benefits to addressing death as a natural part of life before bereavement occurs. GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child, Scottish Government 2008), aims to ensure the health and wellbeing of all Scotland's children including mental health and well-being; death education addresses experiences and learning outcomes from two curriculum areas: Health and Wellbeing and Science, identified in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government, 2008). A public health approach to palliative and end of life care is active in Scotland with policy continuing to promote the need for dialogue on death, dying and bereavement in the community in order to help prevent negative experiences in relation to end of life bereavement (ScotPHN, 2016, Scottish Government, 2010).

# Techniques and Methods

The students developed an interactive presentation which was visually engaging. The topics began with a focus on the life cycle of various animals, plants and humans engaging the children with a round of quick fire questions. Objects were then displayed which were dead and the children engaged in a discussion about how they knew that these objects were dead and not alive. This led on to a discussion about the permanence of death allowing time for questions. Additional topics included how to live well and moved on to a discussion about grief and how to support others who were dealing with grief. The emphasis was on normalising the topic for conversation and equipping the children with positive ways in which they could be kind, share and look after anyone they knew who may need support through grief.

The work of Paul and Quinn (2015), The Resilience Project, was used as a framework for the development of the CIAB Living and Dying resource.

# Outcome and Conclusion

It was exciting to be part of this CIAB pilot. To have been able to work with the two students, watching their enthusiasm for the subject matter develop as well as their skills in presentation, enquiry, planning, evaluation and communication progressing was very satisfying and encouraging.

There was an authenticity and honesty about the experience which felt as the session developed that the students felt empowered, included and increasingly confident and able to take responsibility for the activity and the topic. The aim is that this topic will now be delivered as a CIAB option on each of the four campuses of UWS; in addition that this maybe a resource that schools would be interested in accessing.

The session was well received and well evaluated by the children and by the class and head teacher. The students stated that they had learned a great deal about the topic as well as developing confidence in discussing the topic.