

About Bill Wilson Center

Bill Wilson Center is a nonprofit, community-based agency providing services to Santa Clara County since 1973. Bill Wilson Center's mission is to support and strengthen the community by serving youth and families through counseling, housing, education, and advocacy. Each year Bill Wilson Center serves more than 10,000 clients through the following programs:

- Family & Individual Counseling
- Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter
- Homeless Youth Drop-In Center
- Transitional Housing Program
- Centre for Living with Dying
- Independent Living Skills Program
- School Outreach Counseling
- Contact Cares
- Quetzal House
- Restorative Justice Program
- Safe Place
- Peer Educator Program

Bill Wilson Center

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Centre for Living With Dying

Centre for Living With Dying provides emotional support services to adults and children facing life-threatening illness or the trauma of having a loved one die.

Services include:

- Consultation with crisis intervention teams
- Classroom support visits
- Faculty support visits
- Facilitation of support group meetings
- Assistance planning a memorial tribute
- Follow-up support, information and referrals
- Seminars addressing loss, trauma, life-threatening illness, and stress of grief
- Peer support team training sessions
- Written and audio-visual materials to assist the learning process of coping with death, grief and loss



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Bill Wilson Center

counseling • housing • education • advocacy

Centre for Living With Dying

Healing Heart Program



About the Program

Grieving the death of a loved one is tough at any age. But, too often, children and teenagers experience isolation in their grief.

Centre for Living with Dying's Healing Heart program is a resource where families and youth can connect in life-altering times of change. The program offers grief groups for youth ages 5-17, as well as concurrent parent/caretaker groups to assist adults supporting children through the grieving process.

Children seen by Healing Heart volunteers are encouraged to express the full range of their feelings - mad, sad, scared, worried, confused, and guilty. We tell children, "There are no bad feelings, no wrong ways to feel, when someone you love dies."

Addressing the needs of a child requires a holistic approach, which includes the whole family. For this reason, the Healing Heart program also offers special grief groups for the adults. Often, parents focus solely on services for their children and minimize their own needs.

Parents' groups are run concurrently with childrens' groups so the parent is afforded the time to address their own grief and loss.

Centre for Living With Dying is a program of Bill Wilson Center.

Services

Grief support services are available for children, adolescents, and families as well as for the educators and caregivers who support them.

A child's grief is as individual as a fingerprint. Children may express grief, shock, anxiety, anger, guilt, and sadness. Or, they may show no outward signs of sadness and play much in the same way as always. But, just because a child isn't displaying grief, doesn't mean they aren't feeling sad.

Also, children often ask questions that make adults uncomfortable, such as how a loved one died, or what happens to buried bodies. Healing Heart volunteers can provide support, comfort, and guidance in addressing these tough questions.

Ultimately, grieving takes time and energy. Even though we all face loss, the experience can feel very isolating, as though no one else has felt it *like this* before. The process is inevitably life changing. Some changes are temporary and immediate; others take time and appear gradually. Finding acceptance is key.



The Centre for Living With Dying provides emotional support to adults and children facing life-threatening illness or the trauma of having a loved one die.

Grief and the Young

There is often a wall of silence around the painful issues of death, dying and grief. It can create a sense of disconnect, and this is especially true of children and adolescents. When young people are forced to cope with the harsh realities of illness or death, they grieve and often feel as deeply and powerfully as adults do.

However, the young are often "protected" or pushed aside by well-meaning adults. This can lead to feelings of isolation and a belief that they cannot safely share their feelings. The Healing Heart Program is a resource for those who would like to break down those walls of isolation.



"My Mother had a beautiful smile. I didn't see her last one, but my Dad did and he told me about it."

~ M.M., age 5