 **NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Expanding the Language of Grief: Working with Bereaved Youth with Disabilities’ conference film clip recording**

**Speaker**: Jennifer Wiles, Director, HEARTplay Program and Camp Erin Boston, Good Shepherd Community Care

Hello, my name is Jennifer Wiles and I am the director of the HEARTplay Program, which is a grief support programme. And we are part of Good Shepherd Community Care, which is a hospice organisation in Newton, Massachusetts, which is right outside of Boston, Massachusetts in the US. I want to tell you a little bit about my work and the programme that I run and some ideas that I will be sharing with you.

So first, I have unusual qualifications. I am a licensed mental health counselor, I am a board-certified dance movement therapist, and I, I hold a fellow in thanatology. And this unique combination of interests and skills lends a very unique approach to grief work that I've been doing for the past 20 years.

So I want to tell you a little bit more about the HEARTplay program. We are a heart-centered bereavement programme, and our mission is to support children, teens, and young adults of all abilities and their families who have experienced either the serious illness or the death of a significant person in their lives. And we do this through groups, through individual sessions, through virtual and in person sessions. We also hold family events, day camps, family camps, and other community-based events to support families in grief. I intentionally say that we support people of all abilities in our work, and this is significant to the work that I do and also what I'll be talking about in the programme.

So we firmly believe that all people should have access to compassionate and responsive grief support. We feel this very deeply and it has become the mission of our programme to make sure that anyone who is grieving has access to this support. So in incorporating the skills of expressive arts therapy with mental health counseling, we find we have many approaches that we can use with people who are perhaps nonverbal or for people who communicate in other ways, people who identify as being neurodivergent, people who somehow maybe left out of that circle of grief support that many families have access to. So we use music, we use movement, we use art, we use storytelling, different creative approaches to allow people to express their grief and the feelings around grief with each other and to form community around grief. So as an expressive therapist, as I say, I use many different multimodal approaches to grief work and I will be sharing some of those with you and we will be able to practice together.

My work has also taken on a project called Expanding the Language of Grief, and that is the title of my presentation as well. So this multi-year project is really focused on the following areas - creating curriculum to work with people of all abilities who are grieving, to support other bereavement professionals who would like to expand their work to include all people in, in their work.

And the third thing is to really develop ways for all people to honor the person who has died to learn about grief and its impact on them, and to develop coping skills that will help them navigate through the journey of grief.

So we take a creative and compassionate approach to the work, and I really enjoy sharing about it and interacting with people who might be interested in it, to find ways that we can unite in this mission to support all people who are grieving and include them in a compassionate circle of grief support.

I look forward to meeting with you and to having you join me. Thank you.

The film was produced in September 2025 and can be found at <https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/conference/> or <https://vimeo.com/1118788364>

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact [supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk)

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