

Rainbow's Remedy

Eloise Cole of Scottsdale, Arizona



Eloise Cole has been a bereavement specialist for 20 years. She had the idea of becoming a clown to help in her presentations and support groups in 1988. "I was looking for a way to get people out of their heads and into their hearts." Eloise went to clown school and then started her program -- "Rainbow's Remedy." She uses props to describe her feelings visually, while telling her own story.

Eloise is no stranger to loss having lost two children. She shares her own story in her presentation and tells of her own processes of mourning and grief. She speaks of the new love and hope she has found in her life. For example, she waves a butterfly which she says reminds her that she can have new stars in her horizon. "I learned that the magic and wonder of the rainbow really lies within you and me, and sometimes we need to rebuild our own rainbows." After her presentations she has a discussion or a support group.

Today, Eloise continues with Rainbow's Remedy, but also give presentations to groups on bereavement around the country. Often she does this by going in without makeup and "puts on a new face" during her presentation. This really makes the point that there is a new life, hope and love to come.

Poppy's Intervention

by Eloise Cole (as told to Shobi)

[Eloise works as a bereavement specialist at Hansen's Funeral Home in Scottsdale, Arizona.] "One day a man was not looking his best in his casket There was some bruising and some swelling after he died. The daughter (let's call her Mary for privacy) saw him in his casket and got frightened of him. She was concerned that he had become "a mean daddy" and that he was going to come back and hurt her. She began to have nightmares. Mary went to therapy for a while and finally the therapist called and asked if I would see Mary on a one time basis.

"First, I did extensive interviews with the mom about what was going on. The little girl was afraid that her daddy had gotten mean when he died and that he would come back and hurt her. She thought things were never going to be O.K. anymore and that she was afraid to cry because 'mommy will get upset and leave too.' So I arranged for Mary to come to my house to meet with Rainbow.

"I had the house set up like a birthday party. My husband was supposed to answer the door, but as it turned out he wasn't around so Rainbow answered the door. Well, Mary jumped back. So Rainbow jumped too and slammed the door. Rainbow then became very shy and peeked out of the door and closed it again. She did this about ten or twelve times. Mary finally kicked the door open and charged into the house.



“I had a clown hat for Mary and then did a little magic show for her. Once we got more familiar with each other I got out my little girl puppet “Poppy.” I said ‘Poppy, you have your sad hat on today.’ So Poppy started talking about a funeral she went to. ‘I went and there Uncle Joe was, but you know it wasn’t really him. He looked different. He was really scary.’ Poppy went on to tell of the nightmares she’d been having. ‘I keep dreaming that Uncle Joe is really big and scary and he comes into my room and hurts me.’

In this Poppy was playing out all of Mary’s fears. Rainbow got to say. ‘Oh that doesn’t mean he’s mean. It’s just that when we die, we sometimes just don’t look the same. But the person in the casket is still the one you love.’ ‘Are you sure?’ Poppy asked. ‘Oh yes!’ Rainbow replied. Then Rainbow got out paper plates and Mary got to draw her feelings. Rainbow drew the first time making a picture of a clown part happy and part sad. ‘You know you can feel several different ways at once.’ Mary then got to draw her picture. I gave her an “I am special” sticker and she was on her way.

“Well, the therapist and mother were there and were so pleased. Later the therapist was then able to “unjog” Mary’s feelings. It was a wonderful experience for me.

Eloise Cole is a trained and experienced bereavement specialist. Most of us clowns are not, but we are often invited into these special situations. It is important for us to know about them and take advantage of our potential, but the professional should always be present.

The clown and the puppet can reach to the play world of the child and talk on the child’s level. “Poppy and I talk about the kinds of things kids think and are afraid to ask.” In the case of Mary, it opened the door for more therapeutic intervention by an adult professional.

Rainbow’s Remedy a 22 minute video showing Rainbow’s presentation followed by a segment featuring a young brother and sister, a widow and a bereaved parent, who share some of the pain of their mourning and their eventual discovery of acceptance and renewal. Appropriate for individuals, support groups, classrooms and as a teaching tool for health care professionals and the clergy.

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