

## **Mental Health Curriculum for School Age Children**

### **Module #5, Anxiety and Depression**

#### **Teaching Activity #3: Story of Tony with Depression**

Tony is 12 years old and in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. He lives with his parents, 3 older brothers, 2 younger sisters, and his grandfather. Both of his parents work late hours at their business, and Tony shares a room with his 3 brothers. When Tony comes home from school, his grandfather fixes him a snack and then they go to the park together. He likes to shoot baskets at the park and his grandfather enjoys the fresh air and watching him play. His friends like Tony's grandfather because he always tells good stories and gives them money to buy ice cream. Tony doesn't like school. At home, Tony doesn't have a quiet place to do his homework or have time to himself. He is often scolded by his teachers for late assignments, and his parents get very stressed and upset when Tony brings home notes from the teacher or gets Cs and Ds on his report cards. His parents promise Tony that he can go to summer basketball camp if he brings up his grades and gets no grade below a C on his final report card. Tony tries very hard to get better grades and he is very excited hoping he will do well enough to go to camp with his friends. When his final grade card comes out, Tony can't believe it. He raised all his grades except for Math, where he got his only D. Tony is sad and disappointed. He feels angry at himself and says, "Why am I so stupid!" He begins picking fights with his younger sisters.

**What is the loss Tony has experienced? Why is he feeling so sad? How is Tony expressing his sadness?**

Tony confides in his grandpa and his grandfather tells him not to worry, he will grow up to be a fine young man. His grandfather promises that they can go fishing together instead of camp, and they will catch a whopper for sure.

**What resources does Tony have to cope with his loss?**

Not long after school is out, Tony's grandfather suddenly has to go to the hospital and within a week he dies. Tony's parents tell him his grandfather's heart was just too weak. Tony is sad and tearful for several weeks. He really misses his grandfather. Over the summer, Tony loses interest in going to the park and just hangs around the house watching TV or playing video games. He doesn't feel like eating much, and he starts waking up about 2 in the morning. He has trouble falling asleep again. When school starts up in the fall, Tony feels too tired to go and just wants to stay home. He no longer wants to spend time with his friends after school, and he doesn't care if he gets bad grades. His parents tell him to "Snap out of it!" They push him to focus on his grades because his grandfather would be disappointed in him.

**What's happening to Tony? What symptoms is he having? Do you think Tony is coping okay now? What can Tony and his parents do to help? What could Tony's friends do to help?**