

# IF DEATH WAS TOLD TO ME

## Youth Literature as a Creative Means to Discussing Death

Deborah UMMEL, Ph.D, psychologue, Département de psychoéducation

Émilie LAUZIÈRE, étudiante à la maîtrise en psychoéducation

Jessica RASSY, Ph.D., Faculté de médecine et des sciences de la santé

Université de Sherbrooke, Qc, Canada

### BACKGROUND

Throughout their development, children will experience various losses, such as the death of a pet or of a grandparent. However, the acquisition of the concept of death varies according to factors such as developmental stage, experiences of death in the family and upbringing, and family, school, religious, and cultural influences. Even if between the ages of 9 to 11, the concept of death is generally understood and integrated (D'Antonio, 2011), many parents and caregivers of school-age children do not know how to appropriately approach this potentially delicate subject with them.

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology we used for this study can be separated in three distinct phases: 1) literature review, 2) adaptation of the novel, and 3) validation using two rounds of Delphi.

We first conducted a comprehensive literature review which confirmed that Slaughter and Griffiths (2007)'s five major dimensions of death understanding for school-age children should be included in our chosen novel. Then, research assistants independently read the novel to assess the presence of the five aspects of death within the novel and the adequacy of this representation. The third and final phase of our research closely followed the Delphi method, of which we conducted two rounds online with three separate categories of experts: parents of children aged 5 to 12 (n=10), scholars (n=7), and youth psychosocial workers (n=6).

### OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this pilot study is to obtain expert consensus on the content and the form of the French novel titled "**Grandpa Mario's death**", written by Anne-Marie Lebrun, as a psychoeducational tool to facilitate discussions of the topic of death with children aged 5 to 12.



### THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF DEATH

(Slaughter & Griffiths, 2007)



IRREVERSIBILITY

INEVITABILITY



CESSATION



UNIVERSALITY