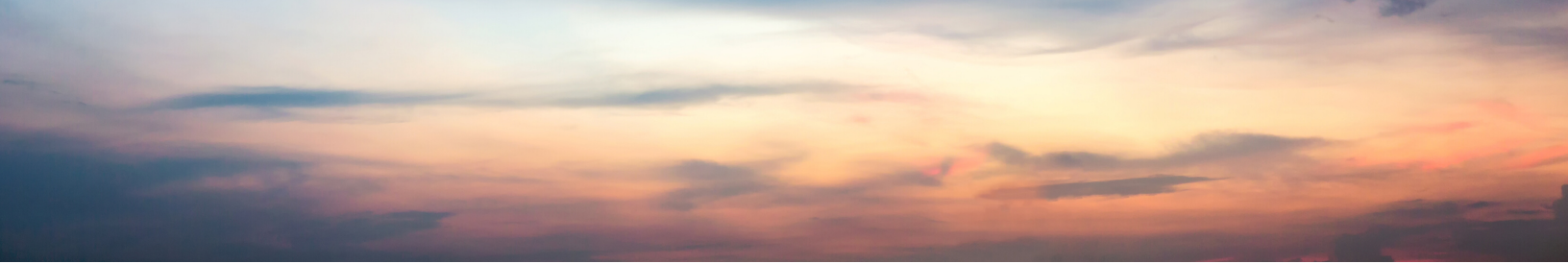


HELPING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PROCESS GRIEF

Professionals in the field of grief and loss suggest direct support professionals become familiar with the ways grief and loss impact people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The accumulation of losses over a lifespan can cause serious health concerns if unacknowledged/unsupported. The ideas below are stated in terms of helping individuals process the death of a person they valued but can be adapted to assist in processing any significant experience of loss or change. What is critical is that people have their loss and accompanying feelings acknowledged and be provided opportunities to experience the feelings and move, at their own pace, to their “new normal.”

- Use pictures (magazines/computer searches) to allow a person to concretely depict feelings, emotions, etc. about the deceased
- Engage in drawing activities to convey events, feelings, emotions, etc. about the deceased
- Create together a memory box of items that remind the individual of the deceased (don't forget items with smells—lotions, soaps, spices, coffee)
- Make a photo album or scrapbook about the deceased or times spent with the deceased
- Take a trip together to the graveside or previous home or former workplace or place of significance shared with the deceased
- Have the individual help plan the memorial or have a role in the memorial or goodbye celebration(s)
- Do something together that the person used to do with the deceased or do something that is in honor or in tribute of the deceased
- Use YouTube or TV shows/movies that portray people grieving to help illustrate and normalize the experience and its feelings
- Designate a “space” to keep a memorial item(s)—this may be used in conjunction with a calendar that marks significant dates
- Use pictures/photos to tell /share stories about the deceased
- Use colors to symbolize feelings
- Help the person illustrate (pictures/drawings/etc.) what they miss about the person

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- Create a “remember journal” that can be added to over time
 - Brainstorm ways to celebrate the deceased person’s life or the time enjoyed with him/her at a significant place(s) using an object of meaning and/or symbolism
 - Write letters to the deceased and bury them/burn them/etc.
 - Set a place at the table, set a photo visibly in that place, name the person in a “memory share” before the meal for a memorial and/or a holiday remembrance
 - Have a ceremony, show photos, tell stories, share what you’ll miss about the deceased and say good bye
 - Take an hour each month, on the anniversary day of a death to handle objects, look at photos, or to write about the loss experience
 - Plant a tree or flowers to honor the deceased or the occasion of a loss
 - <https://www.pinterest.ca/kmatitich/grief-activities/> for over 300 activities from which to choose

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