



# Helping People With IDD In Grief

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHEN SOMEONE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IS GRIEVING

## Grief Behaviors You May See

GRIEF IS OFTEN EXPRESSED THROUGH BEHAVIOR CHANGES, SUCH AS:

- **Showing little emotion or too much emotion**
- **Repetitive movements or self-talk**
- **Not speaking, even though previously verbal**
- **Disrupted routines, such as those involving eating, sleeping, or hygiene**

## Coping Activity Ideas

Create a memory box where a favorite item or a few items of the deceased is kept. A memory garden is another option to honor the deceased.

Help the person to find a poem, saying, or song that helps them remember the deceased person, but that also brings a sense of comfort.

Assist the person in writing an unsent letter to the deceased if they felt they had things to say that they couldn't say at the time, or never had the chance to say.

## Tips On How To Help

### LANGUAGE

Be deliberate and clear with your words. Avoid using metaphors for death that could be misinterpreted, such as "gone to sleep" or "passed on".

For example, "You were close with your friend, and it's sad that they died."

### CHOICES

Offer choices regarding how to cope. The person with IDD should be given the option whether or not to participate in the rituals associated with death.

For example, "Do you want to look at pictures of you and your friend, or do you need time alone?"

### SUPPORT

Always give the news of death with honesty and be open to listening. Identifying feelings might be difficult, so it may be helpful to ask what they think about the circumstances rather than what they feel.

MORE  
GREAT  
RESOURCES!

- [www.autismandgrief.org](http://www.autismandgrief.org)
- [www.mhddcenter.org/grief-loss-in-individuals-with-i-dd](http://www.mhddcenter.org/grief-loss-in-individuals-with-i-dd)
- <https://thearc.org/resource/grief-and-loss-in-the-lives-of-people-with-i-dd>