

# COPING WITH LOSS

As we go through life, people who we love will die. This could be our parents, relatives or friends. This is very hard to cope with. We feel sad, upset, shocked and sometimes angry. These feelings are normal, they are known as grief.

## Some things to expect when you lose someone close

- It will make you feel very upset and sad.
- You might cry a lot.
- You may feel shocked about what has happened.
- You might feel angry that the person has gone.
- You may find it hard to think clearly.
- You may not want to eat, or you may want to eat more.
- You may not be able to sleep, or you may want to sleep more.



## Things that might help

- Go to the person's funeral or memorial service. This is hard but will help you to realise that the person has died.
- Take flowers, send a card or read something out at the funeral.
- Keep something that belonged to the person who has died.
- Make a book about the person. Put their photograph into the book and write about what they were like.
- Talk about the person and remember the good times you had.
- Understand that although you feel sad now, these feelings will change and become easier as time passes.
- Don't feel guilty about laughing and getting on with your life – that's what the person would want you to do.

# Supporting a person through loss

Many people with learning disabilities are not supported well enough when they lose someone close. This is often because their carers don't feel that they understand what has happened. People have not attended funerals because their carers felt that they would be too upset. Everyone gets upset at funerals, to deny people the opportunity to take part means that they miss out on an important stage in the grieving process. If people don't grieve they may experience problems later on.

## What helps?

- Talking to the person about death before it happens.
- Make plans and ensure that the person knows what will happen to them after someone dies, especially if this is a parent or carer. The person should be as involved as possible in making decisions about their future.
- Support the person to attend the funeral. In some cases it may be appropriate for them to have an active part to play, such as a reading.
- Talk about emotions, assure the person that what they are feeling is natural and will pass as time goes on.
- Encourage them to talk about the person who has died and to remember the good times they spent with the person.
- Use Down's Syndrome Scotland's booklet 'Let's Talk About Death' to help the person to understand what has happened.
- Help them to make up a book, or memory box, using photos and souvenirs of the person who has died.
- Can the person keep something that belonged to the person who has died? This could be a photo, small ornament or an item of jewellery. It should be something that they associate with the person.
- Acknowledge that the person will have good days and bad days – allow them to go through the grieving process at their own pace.
- Encourage the person to look ahead to the future and to do things that they enjoy.



## Down's Syndrome

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