

Grief and Loss Within the I/DD Population

As part of our everyday lives, we all experience loss; The loss of a loved one, the loss of a relationship, status, ability to function and care for ourselves, the list goes on and on. After suffering a loss, some will go through a “normal” grief process, where we eventually recover. But some will have a tougher time returning to normal. Within the I/DD population we serve, we know that they’ve suffered great losses such as mentioned above. Some professionals still believe that persons with I/DD are incapable of understanding the finality of death; therefore, are unable to experience “normal” grief reactions. According to a study completed in (2008 by Harvard Medical School, Brickell and Munir) this simply is not true, and in fact people with I/DD have a wide variety of abilities. The truth is, we have much to learn about how much traumatic grief and loss impacts the lives of the I/DD population. Clinicians, family members and staff are always searching for interventions to help alleviate or address the pain associated with loss suffered by the clients they serve. I believe that in most cases, people with disabilities recover and experience a normal grief process. But what about those that don’t? Most of our population have some limitations in communication and cognition, therefore making it extremely important for staff to report changes in behavior to BSC’s and the team supporting the individual affected by grief. If this happens, an individual suffering through grief can get the needed help, and back to a healthy, happy life much sooner!

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