A National Connection for Self-Advocates

SARTAC

Self Advocacy and Beyond

Today's Topic

Grief

Dealing with a loss is hard. People with disabilities can be left out of the picture. Often people think we can't handle the deep emotions when someone dies. Here is an important opportunity to come up with ways our self-advocacy groups can help us all deal with loss.

What is Grief?

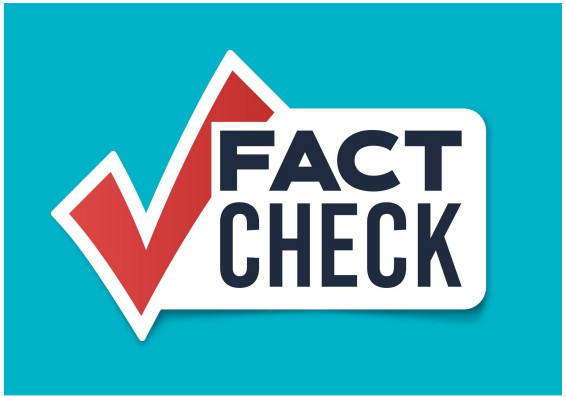
Grief is a strong and overwhelming emotion for people. It comes from the loss of a loved one.

False Ideas about People with Intellectual Disabilities and Grief

- People with intellectual disabilities don't understand what it means when someone dies.
- People with intellectual disabilities don't show any emotions when someone passes away.
- Talking about it would be too upsetting for them.

The truth is….

- People with intellectual disabilities experience loss in basically the same way as people without disabilities.
- Sometimes, the feelings they have after a major loss can last a long time.
- People with intellectual disabilities sometimes experience:
  - more anxiety,
  - more depression
  - more feelings of frustration or anger



Small Group Discussion

What can you say?

If someone says a person with a disability should not go to a funeral because they don't understand death.

What is looks like when a person is feeling grief

- A person might be sad, crying a lot, or feeling depressed.
- They might have sleep problems
- Might get frustrated or angry a lot more quickly than usual

Basics of what to do

- Give honest information
- Explain what death is
- Include them in the funeral if they want to go. Get them involved in other social events celebrating the person who died.
- Make sure they spend time with people who support them.
- Tell the person that they are not to blame. It is not their fault
- Talk about their loved one

- to honor the lost life
- to remember the love they shared
- to think about what the person who has died might want for the individual

Come Up With Ways to Further Express Their Grief and Hold On to Memories

- Look at pictures and share memories
- Make a book or a memory box about the person who died
- Give them something that belonged to the person
- Light a candle in honor of the person
- Visit places they used to go together
- Talk about how much the person who is gone would be happy about a present activity

Small Group Discussion

1. What helps? What are ways to cope with your feelings when someone dies?

2. What can you do or say to help you remember the person?