

LIVING THROUGH LOSS COUNSELLING SOCIETY OF BC

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TALKING TO INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED ADULTS ABOUT DEATH

- Identify another person who is close or one who at least knows and is familiar with the person.
- Carefully choose the initial statement and the setting where the person is to be told:
 - a) I have something sad to tell you...
 - b) Suggest going to a quiet place
 - c) Ask the person if there were someone he/she would like to have present
 - d) Allow the person to leave the room if they need to but continue to check in with them.
- Explain the death in a way that maximizes the person's ability to understand. Use your knowledge of a person and your understanding to tell them what happened:
 - a) Explain the death using word you think the person will understand.
 - b) Use concrete images rather than abstract concepts.
 - c) Be open, direct, and honest.
 - d) Avoid phrases that have multiple meanings such as: she went to sleep or she flew to Heaven.
 - e) Invite questions and answer them honestly.
 - f) Use examples that the person may already have encountered: a pet dying for example.
- Remember that the person's ability to recover is not dependent on your doing and saying everything in a perfect manner. Grieving is a process.