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**Grief Support after a Death**  Chris Newlon, NADS Parent Support and Outreach Coordinator, 5/2020

Perspective from a Mom of child with Ds (age 7) after spouse’s sudden death:

-Initial concerns were that daughter would think Dad abandoned her (history of walking out due to addiction).

-Identify a place where child can “feel” their loved ones’ presence, such as a quiet part of the yard, a beachfront setting, a church, etc. One can be created in the home, but it also helps to keep this special place out of the home when a child wants to “go to” that person. Child is encouraged to write a letter, say a prayer, or simply talk to them. Acknowledge that the person who died cannot respond but will hear them.

-Get counseling for all family individuals, regardless of your personal beliefs as to whether it’ll work or not. Art therapy can be an amazing outlet for a partially verbal of non-verbal individual.

-Create a memory box, write cards, get a locket and put the loved one’s picture inside etc.

-Do not underestimate how deeply children can absorb the feelings of others around them as well as their own. All individuals need to be given the tools to express what they feel inside.

-Kids need consistency now more than ever. Do not let others pop into their lives at will. If someone promises to visit/contact individual and doesn’t, it might be better to not let them at all.

-Use concrete and direct language. Do not say “Daddy went to sleep” or “daddy is gone because he got sick.” These phrases create fear. It’s best to say “Daddy died.”

-Expect to see regression during times of stress. This would be a good time to decrease expectations (be flexible) if you know a stressful time is approaching (i.e. birthday, holiday or anniversary of the death.)

-Schools need to be informed of ongoing need for support. Depending upon the age of the child, this type of support and awareness of stressful days (see above) might need to be recognized for a number of years.

**Blog posts on grief:**

<http://www.confessionsofthechromosomallyenhanced.com/2018/09/>  This is excellent.

<http://www.confessionsofthechromosomallyenhanced.com/search?q=grief>

<http://www.confessionsofthechromosomallyenhanced.com/2018/10/>

<http://adultdownsyndromeclinic.blogspot.com/2015/07/grief.html>

<https://www.exceptionallives.org/blog/special-needs-grief-counseling>

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**Articles etc.**

<https://www.massgeneral.org/children/down-syndrome/how-to-help-when-your-loved-one-is-grieving>

<https://dsagsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Grief-Packet.pdf>  This is an online booklet with more resources at the end.

https://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art8788.asp

https://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art35602.asp

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