



National Apostolate for  
Inclusion Ministry

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Friendship, Inc. provides  
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*Promoting the Full Participation of People with Intellectual/ Developmental  
Disabilities (IDD) in the Life of the Catholic Church*

## Introduction to Grief and Loss for People with IDD

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*By Helaine C. Arnold*

People with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) care about their family members, friends, coworkers, caregivers, support staff and teachers.

When a person in their life is ill, dying or has passed away, people with IDD need to be among those receiving information, visiting the sick and dying person, praying for the person and attending funeral services.

A person with IDD will have some sense or understanding of the situation, perhaps more of an intuitive sense than of a cognitive understanding.

A person with IDD may not immediately be able to show their grief. Full awareness that the person they cared for is “with God” may come much later. Words or gestures upwards can indicate their understanding.

A person with IDD may grieve for months after an event and it may go undetected. The person may be sad, irritable, or even depressed.

A person with IDD may express grief with what some may regard as inappropriate words or gestures.

The response of people with IDD to their grief must be acknowledged and respected.

People with IDD may in their openness of expression be able to offer comfort to their grieving family and friends.

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