



## Information Sheet

### Disenfranchised Grief

Carers are often unsure if they should talk to a person with ID/DD about their illness or that of a loved one.

Common misconceptions about grief:

- People with intellectual disabilities don't understand or can't comprehend death.
- People with intellectual disabilities don't show grief, therefore experience no grief.
- Talking about it would be too upsetting for him/her.

There is a danger of creating a “conspiracy of silence,” where professionals, family and friends all know about the illness and impending death but will not talk about it in the presence of the person. Arguments such as “He won't understand” or “The truth is too upsetting” are often used.

The unintended consequence of this action is generally an increase in anxiety through confusion about what is happening or has happened.