

# Using Inclusive Grief Language



## Be Gender & Identity-Inclusive

- Use language that respects the identity of both the griever/their family and the person who died.
- Example: Saying “the person who died” instead of assuming a role like “dad” or “wife”



## Be Inclusive of All Relationships

- It’s important not to assume who died, how they died, or the importance or closeness of a relationship. Estrangement, chosen family, and LGBTQIA+ family structures matter.
- Example: Refer to family members or caregivers as “your adult” or “your grown-up” when supporting children and teens.



## Be Mindful of Everyday Language & Casual Metaphors

- Some everyday phrases can accidentally hurt or upset someone who has had a loss. Choosing your words carefully can help create a kinder, more caring space. Examples:
  - Instead of “I’ll shoot you a text.” try “I’ll send you a text.”
  - Instead of “Here are some bullet points.” try “Here’s a short list of key points.”
  - Instead of “I’m totally drowning at work.” try “Work has been really busy lately.”



## Honor Cultural & Spiritual Differences

- **Culture:** Individuals can have differing and distinct mourning rituals, timelines, communication styles, and expressions of grief.
- **Spirituality/Religion:** Individuals may follow faith-based practices, prayer traditions, or beliefs about death and afterlife that shape their grief experience.
- Example: Instead of assuming a certain ritual or service took place, invite individuals to share what traditions, if any, were meaningful to them.

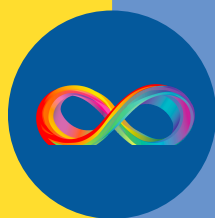


# Using Inclusive Grief Language



## Naming Loss Without Assumptions

- Avoid making assumptions about the role, gender, or number of people someone has had die in their life.
- Example: Using open, inclusive language like “your person” or “your people” honors chosen family, non-traditional relationships, multiple losses, and varying identities.



## Neurodiversity & Grief

- People grieve in different ways. For neurodivergent people, their way of showing grief might look different from what others expect
- Example: Someone may not cry or show outward sadness but might repeat the same questions about the death, engage in focused interests, or need more time alone



## Stigmatized Deaths

- Some deaths—like those by suicide, overdose, violence, or COVID-19—can be judged unfairly by society. Be careful not to use words that add to that judgment.
- Example: Instead of saying: “They committed suicide.”, say: “They died from suicide.” This is a more compassionate, and nonjudgmental way to acknowledge the loss.



## Trauma & Loss

- Grief can be layered with trauma, but remember that not all losses are experienced as traumatic.
- Example: People often think that expected deaths (like after a long illness) aren’t traumatic, or that sudden deaths (like accidents) always are. But in truth, trauma is subjective, and is determined by each person.

