Life story work and bereavement: Shared reflections on its usefulness

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Bereavement and grief, and the profound impact they can potentially have, can go unrecognised in people with learning disabilities. Here, Sue Read and Claire Bowler describe how life story work, which encourages individuals to reflect and take stock of life experiences, can be used to support a client through loss.

Supporting a person who has a learning disability with issues relating to loss and bereavement often challenges carers and counsellors alike as they seek creative approaches that help them to engage fully with the individual. Life story work is an approach that is being used increasingly with people with learning disabilities generally, and in this article is used to support the bereavement counselling and support process. The authors reflect on how life story work can help the bereaved to take stock and construct a personal transcript of their lives, which often includes the loss of those closest to them. Although the product itself is beneficial, the process is invaluable. As a therapeutic tool it can nurture an empathic relationship within which the person can identify aspects of their life (sad, happy or indifferent) upon which to reflect, share, explore and record in various creative and accessible ways.

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Grief work is hard. It takes its toll on my body. I... This story is one I wrote and shared last week on Facebook exactly a year after he drowned. With the encouragement of friends and family I have decided to share my thoughts on grief. If this story touches you, reach out and share with another. Grieving is hidden business but it needn't be. Kelly Abbott. Johnny's brother Mike lives there and has bought three contiguous houses on the block. They live in the middle house. One on one side, his mother-in-law.