



Understanding how moving can be a loss for people.

Why are we talking about loss?

We tend to think about loss when there has been a death and someone is bereaved. We know that bereavement can lead to grief. This is a complex process for anyone to go through; and we know that it can be equally or more complicated for someone with a learning disability to understand. However, we don't always think of other losses that people go through; and how these take time to process and adjust to as well.

People who are moving might be really excited about the new place they are going to. It might be something that they think is a 'good thing'. The people around them also might talk about it being a 'good thing'.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that moving means a lot of losses. These include:

- Loss of a way of life that they have got to know. The person is likely to have got used to a certain structure or routine, and this will now change.
- Loss of relationships. Moving probably involves moving away from people you know well. This might be family, staff or other residents / prisoners / patients. Even if the person moving doesn't get on with everyone all the time, they may feel comfortable in these relationships. They might feel like everyone knows who they are, and be worried about new people not knowing them.
- Loss of local community. If the person is moving far, they might have to get to know a whole new area. They might have known the local bus routes and community services, but might now feel a bit uprooted once they move.
- Loss of a sense of belonging. Knowing the people and environment around us gives us a sense of belonging. The person might now feel an outsider after moving - they used to have a sense that they belonged somewhere, but now have to start again in the unknown. They might have felt known in their local community - e.g. if the local shop owner always said hello, or the bus driver knew to give them a bit longer to get their bus pass out.
- Loss of an identity. The person might have been somewhere so long that it became part of their identity. This could be the identity of a 'patient' if they were in hospital, or a 'prisoner' if in a forensic service. Or it might be that they saw themselves as 'someone who lives in X place' (eg a Londoner or a Geordie). It might be a long process for them to work out who they are now (and who they want to be) once this identity doesn't fit any more.





And even after negotiating all this in the move, there might be more losses ahead. We know that people with learning disabilities frequently have to cope with losses to their relationships. Staff leave or change roles, and keyworkers come and go. Other professionals might get involved for a short piece of work (e.g. an Occupational Therapist), only to then not see them again once the work finishes. People might not always understand why these relationships end. Lots of people don't have many friendships, and their main or only relationships are with paid staff who might not (in fact rarely do) last forever.

These losses might also make people grieve, just like bereavement does. Grief is a different process for everyone - there is no 'one way' to do grief, and it can be very different for different people, or for the same person at different times in their life.

What might loss look like

How these losses affect people will be different, person to person. Someone might be sad or tearful; denial, confusion, anger

How long might it last

Hard to say - might come back up at different points.

Might seem ok but still sad even years later.

It's all normal

There is not timeframe in which someone 'should' be over the loss.

What can you do help

Staff can be scared about 'opening a can of worms' if someone is sad to talk about the past, so might avoid it. But actually you already have a lot of skills which are helpful for people. However, it's important to have good supervision to help you deal with the emotions that come up.

Here are some recommendations:

- Don't deny someone's sadness or 'negative' emotions
- Let them talk
- Go over old photos
- Make a memory book
- Help celebrate and mark the transition / change

