

Luminaries

Support Group Program for Intellectually Disabled Persons Experiencing Loss



NEWS about Luminaries Support Groups **By: Sonia Panipinto, KenCrest Services of Pottstown, Pennsylvania**

KenCrest Services is a work based facility for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. Rainbows worked closely with Sonia Panipinto to develop our program called **LUMINARIES (Grief Support for the Intellectually Disabled)**. Luminaries is weekly peer support for individuals who have experienced any kind of loss/change. It could be due to a Death, Separation of Family, Staff Leaving, Change in Roommates etc. The pilot program was first instituted at Abilities of New Jersey by Sonia Panipinto who is now offering another Luminaries program at KenCrest Services in Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

Rationale of Luminaries:

Everyone knows that when an individual experiences a loss/change it affects them in every aspect of their lives. All emotions – joy-filled and pain-filled – are part of the individual. People who experience loss grieve deeply. These individuals need support to learn they are not alone and that the intense feelings they experience are normal.

Rainbows along with Sonia Panipinto have trained volunteers/staff to facilitate groups, to help individuals work through their grief and build a stronger sense of self-esteem, while beginning to accept what has taken place in their lives. Luminaries is not therapy or counseling, but rather peer support – sharing feelings and thoughts in a supportive setting to help heal their wounds of loss. Without support individuals often grieve alone and the way they cope can hurt even more, expressing difficult behaviors, depression, and low self-esteem, among other things.

What people are saying about Luminaries:

The first Pilot Program was completed in 2006. Our evaluation data has been very positive – not only from the consumers, but also from Guardians and Sponsors. Many of the consumers would like to go through the program again. Some of the Guardians would either like the participant to go through the program again or have asked if we could take another of their siblings.

Consumers were asked:

1. What they liked best about Luminaries,
2. How they felt Luminaries helped them.
3. Would they change anything about Luminaries?

“I like coming to Luminaries because we talk about other things.”

“It helped me understand the changes in my life.” (Robert Urgovitch)

“I will talk to the people. I will tell my feelings.” (Debbie Stickle)

“Talking. To be able to talk more.” (Barbara Banacki)

“We can tell peoples problems and it doesn’t spread to other people.”

“Helped me understand my changes.” (Chuck Boyd)

[For More Information:](#)

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If you would like detailed information about how the program was received with
the consumers and their staff, please call

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