

The 2020 Social History of Learning Disability (SHLD) Conference:
Loss and Remembering

14th and 15th July 2020, the Open University, Milton Keynes
Ideas for presentations

The theme for our 2020 conference is 'loss and remembering'. People with learning disabilities – like everyone else – experience loss in their lives. Sometimes there has been a concern to protect people from loss. Other times, people with learning disabilities' experiences of loss have not been taken seriously. There are also many examples of people with learning disabilities being prevented from talking about the past, in case it stirs up painful memories that are difficult to deal with. But many history projects have shown us that people with learning disabilities do want to remember the past, including their experiences of loss. If people are well supported, remembering the past and reflecting on loss can be a positive experience.



Loss might be a bereavement (when a person dies) but it can mean lots of other things. For example:

- The loss of a relationship
- The loss of a job
- The loss of a home
- The loss of your own story
- Losses brought on by a change in your health.



How do we remember this loss? That is why the conference theme is also about 'remembering'. It is by remembering (or not forgetting) that people, places, experiences and ideas are kept alive in our minds. Remembering can connect us to others, perhaps help us feel we belong. It can be a very personal or private activity.

Also, remembering can be done with others. In the wider society after someone has died, for instance, it is often done with memorials and gravestones. This has not always been the case for people with learning disabilities. How we remember may be important in dealing with loss, whatever form it takes.



Some questions we would like to explore at the conference are:

- Why is it important to remember the past?
- How can people with learning disabilities be supported to remember things that are important to them?
- How can remembering help us to cope with loss?
- Are there times when it is better to forget?
- How can people with learning disabilities be supported through different experiences of loss?
- How can remembering help us to feel that we belong?
- How can remembering help us to re-connect to the people and places we used to know, or the things we used to enjoy?



We encourage talks from:

- People with learning disabilities
- Parents and carers
- Health and social care professionals
- Service providers
- Academic researchers
- Students
- Advocacy organisations and advocates

What next? Sending in your ideas for a talk

If you are interested in giving a talk at this conference, please send your idea to us by **Friday 13th March 2020**. Sometimes this is called an 'abstract', which means a summary of what you would talk about at the conference. We will also need a **title** for your presentation. The conference committee will review all of the summaries we receive and make a decision about which talks can be included. We will let you know our decision by Friday 27th March 2020.

Please remember that people with learning disabilities are on the conference committee. It is really important that your summary is accessible and easy to read. We have attached some guidelines on how to write an accessible summary and presentation.

Please send your summary to Adwowa Larbi-Ntim by 13th March at the following address:

Shld-conference@open.ac.uk

OR

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, The Open University,
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Useful information:

- SHLD conferences are inclusive events and everyone is welcome. If you plan a talk, please remember that it needs to be accessible.
- Conference presentations are usually 20 minutes, plus another 10 minutes for questions.
- Like most conferences, we have to charge fees for people to attend. But we also provide a number of free and cheaper places for people who need them. You will need to apply for these free or cheaper places nearer the time. We will send information round about this once the programme has been agreed.
- People who present at the conference will be offered a free place if they need one.
- We can reimburse reasonable national travel expenses for people who present at our conference if this is needed. We cannot cover accommodation costs. Please note that if you are planning to present as a bigger group (more than 4 people) we may not have the budget to pay for everyone's travel expenses.