

THE ROLE OF CLERGY AND FAITH LEADERS IN SUPPORTING ADULTS WITH AUTISM THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS



DESCRIPTION:

A 90-minute continuing education program for clergy, chaplains, pastoral care professionals, youth ministry leaders, religious educators, and others from any spiritual or faith tradition focusing on supporting adults with autism cope with grief and loss. The program will explain ways in which adults with autism may experience and express grief. The expert presenter will provide tools, resources, and strategies for clergy to use in their faith communities in order to enfranchise and support those with autism throughout their grief journey.

PROGRAM DETAILS:

This recorded presentation features an experienced professional offering his own expertise on the topic. On the screen, you will see the slide presentation and will be able to hear the expert talking and presenting. Videos will also be used to enhance the presentation.

DATES AVAILABLE:	Beginning August 15, 2022
LENGTH:	90 minutes
CEs:	1.5 hours for a wide variety of professional boards* *CE approvals expire 8/14/25
FEES:	Complimentary program viewing and CEs
CONTENT LEVEL:	The program is mainly for professionals already working in the field but is practical for all levels of education – entry level, intermediate or advanced.
TARGET AUDIENCE:	Clergy, chaplains, pastoral care professionals, youth ministry leaders, religious educators, social service clinicians and others working in counseling, funeral home or faith community environments.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

To view this online program, you will need a computer and screen, reliable internet access, and speakers.

PROGRAM ACCESS / MATERIALS:

View the program and access course materials from HFA's website at:
<https://hospicefoundation.org/Education/Autism-and-Grief-Clergy-Program>.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

1. Understand basic facts about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
2. Discuss current grief principles.
3. Identify how autistic adults may react (or not react) to loss.
4. Identify how traditional religious beliefs and practices can present both benefits and barriers for adults with autism.
5. Discuss how spirituality may be expressed by adults with autism.
6. Delineate three techniques that clergy and others can utilize to assist autistics in navigating rituals.
7. Identify three possible ways to offer support to an adult with autism in faith communities and through their grief journey, beyond the immediate period of the funeral and burial.

PROGRAM OUTLINE:

1. What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? (10 mins)
 - a. Prevalence
 - b. Language usage
 - c. Characteristics
 2. Grief and Autism (15 mins)
 - a. Types of loss
 - b. Possible reactions
 - c. Grieving styles
 - d. How clergy should interact
 3. Spirituality (10 mins)
 - a. Rituals as comfort
 - b. Using social stories
 - c. Inclusion in congregations
 4. Importance of Rituals (20 mins)
 - a. Need for preparation
 - b. Tools for navigating rituals after a death
 5. Disenfranchisement (10 mins)
 - a. Social settings as stressful
 - b. Issues in Black congregations
 6. How to Enfranchise (15 mins)
 - a. Tips for funerals
 - b. Alternative rituals
 - c. Strategies for congregations
 7. Ongoing Journey (10 mins)
 - a. Making faith communities inclusive
 - b. Ongoing grief support
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CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE) CREDITS:

This program is valid for 1.5 continuing education contact hours. CE hours are available until August 14, 2025. A complete list of board approvals for this webinar program is posted to HFA's website at <https://hospicefoundation.org/Education/Autism-and-Grief-Clergy-Program>.

COURSE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS:

Participants must attend the entire 1.5 hour program. Partial credit is not awarded. Participants must also complete the entire CE process online which includes a required evaluation form and exam. The exam must be completed at 80% or above (*the exam may be re-taken, if necessary*).

EXPERT PANELIST:

Kenneth J. Doka, PhD, MDiv, is Senior Vice President, Grief Programs at HFA and recipient of the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Death Education and Counseling. He serves as editor of HFA's *Living with Grief*[®] book series and its *Journeys* bereavement newsletter. He is a prolific author, editor, and lecturer; past president of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC); and a member and past chair of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement (IWG). In 2018, the IWG presented Doka with the Herman Feifel Award for outstanding achievement in thanatology. He received an award for Outstanding Contributions in the Field of Death Education from ADEC in

1998. Doka is an ordained Lutheran minister and a licensed mental health counselor in the state of New York.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES:

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'People should be allowed to do what they like': Autistic adults' views and experiences of stimming'
Steven K Kapp¹ Robyn Steward² Laura Crane³ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4161-34902> Daisy Elliott¹ Chris Elphick¹ Elizabeth Pellicano³ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7246-80032>,³ Ginny Russell¹

Bertelli, M.O., Del Furia, C., Bonadiman, M. *et al.* The Relationship Between Spiritual Life and Quality of Life in People with Intellectual Disability and/or Low-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders. *J Relig Health* **59**, 1996–2018 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-019-00891-x>

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Ahlers K, Gabrielsen T, Lewis D, Brady A, Litchford A. Supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorder in understanding and coping with complex social emotional issues. *School Psychology International*, (2017), 586-607, 38(6).

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SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITY (ADA):

Reasonable accommodation may be made available, on an individual basis. To request accommodation, please contact HFA via email at educate@hospicefoundation.org or call 800-854-3402, or write to HFA, 1707 L Street NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20036.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Planners (Panelists and Review Committee Members) disclose no conflict of interest relative to this educational activity.

FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR ADDRESSING GRIEVANCES

Please contact Hospice Foundation of America (HFA)

1707 L Street NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20036

educate@hospicefoundation.org

1-800-854-3402 toll-free / (202) 457-5811 phone / (202) 457-5815 fax

