

How could you support the coworker's family and honor his or her life? Consider planting a tree, hosting a fundraiser, establishing a college fund for any children involved, or giving back to the community.

- ✓ **Use resources** – Many workplaces have employee assistance programs to offer grief counseling, either with an individual or a group. If not, they might connect you and other coworkers to various support groups and resources within your community.

#### KEEP IN MIND

After a significant loss in the workplace, it's important to take care of yourself. Be mindful to get the proper amount of sleep, exercise, avoid substances such as caffeine and alcohol, seek out the support you need, and practice stress-reducing activities. Often times helping another through his or her own grief can help you with yours.

***What steps will you take today to help yourself and others cope with workplace grief and loss?***



Coworkers Facing Grief Together  
Mental Health

# Coworkers Facing Grief Together

Workplace related  
grief and loss calls for  
**WORKPLACE-  
CENTERED  
SUPPORT.**

*Imagine how supportive and helpful it might be to share and process workplace grief and loss with your co-workers.*

Grief is a natural part of life, whether it's expected or sudden. It's normal to experience grief in both our workplace and personal lives. Everyone will deal with the loss of a coworker differently depending on the closeness of your relationship. Though grief is universal, the response of each individual will be unique.

#### WHAT IS WORKPLACE GRIEF?

Grief is our reaction to a loss of any kind. Everyone responds differently, and there is no timetable for grief. There are several types of loss within the workplace. Death, retirement, unemployment, personal injury, and transitioning to a different position or location are all examples of a workplace loss. When facing the death of a coworker, additional variables can influence our reaction. The age of the deceased, how long they worked there, whether it was sudden, and the nature of their workplace relationships affects how we react to their loss.

#### STRUGGLING WITH GRIEF

Grief influences our bodies, emotions, and workplaces.

- **Physical** - changes in appetite and

sleep, headaches, stomach pain, lack of concentration, fatigue, restlessness, and drug or alcohol use.

- **Emotional** - fear, anxiety, lack of trust, irritability, depression, guilt, and lowered confidence.
- **Spiritual** - questions about faith, beliefs, God, and one's sense of spiritual grounding.
- **Social** - withdrawal, avoidance of areas and locations associated with loss may occur.
- **Vocational** - low morale, anger (usually directed at employer), lowered interest or motivation, or a desire to quit the job.

#### ACTION STEPS

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression consider the following:

- ✓ **Respect the relationships** - Perhaps you were closer to the deceased coworker than others, or vice versa. Everyone's relationship will be different. While it's kind to ask a grieving coworker how they're doing, refrain from trying to "fix" them in their difficult time. It is never helpful to tell someone to "get over it" or "snap out of it."
- ✓ **Talk about it** - Openly communicate how the loss is affecting you, even if your management is not formally addressing it. Don't be nervous to share with coworkers how you're feeling. Listen to their experience as well, as it can be mutually beneficial.
- ✓ **Give back** - Ask your employer about ways to formally and informally grieve together.