

Helping someone who is grieving

When someone has experienced a loss, there will be big and small adjustments needed to be made in their lives. These could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change as each new day comes along. Grief is about adapting to change in life, thoughts, hopes, beliefs and the future.

Be a good listener

Grieving people need to talk about their loss and acknowledge that they have been through a difficult experience. You can't fix their grief, but you can be there to hear their story and share their journey.

Be a shoulder to cry on

Allow the person to cry with you. Crying helps the release of emotions and improves the healing process.

Be in touch with them

Visit the person or call them. Let them know you've been thinking of them. Write a letter, send an email, remember their special days like birthdays and anniversaries.

Be a friend

Often just being there is all that is needed to support someone who is grieving. Everyone's journey through grief is different and can last a long or short time. Don't be afraid to speak up if you think your friends needs help.

(Adapted from the writings of Doris Zagdanski)

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Loss & Grief in the Workplace

Coping in the workplace following loss

- death, divorce, separation, retrenchment, deployment

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Loss and Grief in the Workplace

These days we spend more and more time in the workplace. After a loss such as separation, divorce, retrenchment, deployment or the death of a close relative or friend, the time taken off work is often not sufficient for a person to recover sufficiently emotionally. Some people find it very difficult to return to work whereas others find work diverts their mind away from their grief.

Benefits of going back to work after a loss

- Enables the worker to return to a known safe environment surrounded by workmates or colleagues.
- Encourages the worker to resume a regular daily routine again, such as getting up and having meals at certain times.
- Takes the mind away from grief and enables the worker to feel normal for a while.

Successfully completed work may help the grieving person feel more confident and raise their self-esteem.

Difficulties of returning to the workplace

For some people returning to the workplace is an overwhelming burden in addition to their grief and they may need extra time off.

When back at work, some people are

affected by reduced work performance which may be caused by:

- Lack of concentration and memory
- Tiredness from emotion and sleepless nights
- Feelings of depression
- Reduced patience and short temper

Management and workers may not appreciate the difficulties that grief can cause and the worker may worry that they will lose their job from reduced work performance or because of extra time taken from work.

Grieving workers may also worry they have developed a reputation for:

- wasting time
- taking too much sick leave
- being bad tempered, unreliable, unstable
- receiving special treatment

The worker may be tempted to give up a job for fear of failure or to reduce the pressure on them

Coping in the workplace after a loss

- Some people may find it helpful to inform their employer of their loss and ask them to speak to fellow staff which will avoid having to tell their workmates and colleagues individually
- Discussion with the management can help to prepare a plan for return to work, such as how much time to have off, and to negotiate flexible hours if required
- A doctor can provide a medical

certificate for a worker's inability to work.

- Prioritising tasks can ensure the most important jobs get done

Helping the grieving worker

- Immediate acknowledgement of the loss through a note or flowers from management and workers can be very supportive and encouraging for the worker
- A workplace representative at the funeral can demonstrate support
- Continued interest and listening to how the worker is makes them feel valued
- Some flexibility in hours and time off can help the worker cope with the combined stress of work and grief

Patience and understanding that the grief process takes time and that the worker cannot snap out of it will help expectations to be met.

Adapted from Grief Link resources website:
www.grieflink.asn.au