

Grief in the Workplace

People spend many hours of their lives with coworkers, and a coworker's death can be as devastating as losing a loved one. This is both a personal and professional loss for a business. If the death occurred while at work, surviving workers may feel survivor's guilt, anger and concern for their personal safety. This HelpSheetSM offers tips on helping cope with grief in the workplace.

Management

It is important for managers to recognize the impact a death has on his or her coworkers. Compassionate managers will find that employees benefit from caring, flexibility and respect for their pain. While every workplace culture differs, there are things a manager can do to assist his or her employee:

- Encourage employees to express their feelings.
- Provide an "open door" policy to all staff who wish to speak about their grief.
- Encourage employees to seek outside support, including using the company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Be on the lookout for a coworker who is having a particularly difficult time.
- Arrange a workplace memorial service to honor the departed employee(s).
- If the business permits, offer flex time and working at home options so that the employees have time to grieve.
- Be compassionate to coworkers who may be experiencing a decline in productivity and a difficult time coping.

Employees

A coworker's death can be devastating for surviving employees. Everyone grieves differently; some coworkers may want to discuss the issue, while others may want to grieve privately. There are several ways employees can try to cope with their grief:

- Plan a memorial service for the departed coworker.
- Be on the lookout for a coworker who is having a particularly difficult time.
- Be compassionate to fellow coworkers who may be experiencing a decline in productivity and a difficult time coping.
- If there is a new hire who is occupying the job (and possibly the desk) of the departed employee, accept and welcome this person.
- Arrange to go to the funeral and support each other.
- Plan social outings as a group to help morale.

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