

How You can Help

Your coworker is experiencing grief. You can help by listening, and understanding that you cannot resolve the grief, but you can be “present.”

Ask if you can help—maybe you can chair a meeting, prepare a report, or answer the phones on a temporary basis to help your coworker during this difficult period. Make the offer and then follow through.

Include your coworker in your work. Your coworker may want to be alone, but at least make the offer—your coworker will be appreciative that you made the attempt.

Occasionally ask about the deceased person. You may not be thinking of the deceased person but the grieving person has not forgotten their loved one.

Notify your supervisor if your coworker appears to be getting worse, such as talking about suicide, or appears not to be getting any better. Symptoms to be aware of are:

- ◆ increased absenteeism, coming to work late, or leaving early;
- ◆ abuse of alcohol and/or drugs;

- ◆ not eating, or overeating;
- ◆ changes in personal habits such as hygiene, hair, or clothing;
- ◆ indications that your coworker is not sleeping well;
- ◆ being distracted, or making repeated mistakes;
- ◆ major personality change such as the person becomes aggressive or unusually passive, or the person is always angry.

Resources

Your local hospice office is a great resource for bereavement issues. Hospice works with individuals and families before and after a death and is experienced in helping with grief issues. Hospice also offers support groups that are open to anyone in the community who has lost a loved one. Hospice of Knox County's phone number is (740) 397-5188.

There are also counselors available throughout the county for dealing with grief. Refer to your local phone book.

If your company has an EAP (Employee Assistance Program), you can obtain information from that office for your coworker.



*Your Hometown, Non-Profit Hospice,
Friends You Can Count On,
Professionals You Can Trust*

WHEN A COWORKER SUFFERS A LOSS

*Hospice of Knox County
17700 Coshocton Road
Mount Vernon, OH 43050
740-397-5188
www.hospiceofknox.org*

The Grieving Process

Feelings and symptoms of grief can take several weeks, months, and even years to show up and develop. No one heals on a schedule; but, with the passage of time, emotions do lessen.

Everyone grieves in their own way; the feelings and symptoms of grief may include shock, denial, anger, guilt, anxiety, sleep disorders, exhaustion, overwhelming sadness, and difficulty concentrating. Time given to attend to funeral planning and the funeral itself only touch the beginning stages of grief.

In general, a person feels several of these emotions at the same time, but in varying degrees. The depth and duration of the grieving process depends on the relationship of the people to the deceased, circumstances surrounding the death, and their own situation.

Two of the end results of grief may include growth—being ready to move ahead with one's life, or finding a new balance in one's life.

The Grieving Person

The person who experiences a loss may appear to be sad, withdrawn, depressed, short-tempered, absent-minded, or tired.

- ◆ Grief cannot always be controlled. It is important to understand that the grieving person's reactions are not directed at you.
- ◆ Your coworker may want to talk about the person who died. Healthy memories are an important part of healing.
- ◆ You want to be sympathetic, but if your coworker is keeping you from your work by talking about their loss, you may need to suggest that you talk at break, during lunch, or after work.
- ◆ Expect that the grieving person may not seem like his or herself for several months. There is no timetable for grief.
- ◆ Even though your coworker has experienced the loss, death can evoke strong emotions in you. These are normal feelings—a death raises questions and fears about our own lives and the lives of those we love.

What to Say

When a person suffers a loss, saying nothing at all hurts more than saying the wrong thing. Appropriate things to say include:

- ◆ I'm so sorry.
- ◆ I heard about your loss—I don't know what to say.
- ◆ I am sorry to hear about your loss.
- ◆ Sometimes sharing a memory of the deceased person can be helpful.

Things to avoid saying:

- ◆ I know just how you feel!
- ◆ At least you have another child, or at least you can have more children.
- ◆ It was God's will.
- ◆ You'll get over it.
- ◆ You're not over it yet?
- ◆ God never gives us more than we can bear!
- ◆ It's really for the best.
- ◆ At least she/he's not suffering anymore.