



Providing Support in Times of Grief: A Guide for Managers

Managers often wonder how to provide support to staff members who are grieving, particularly when the loss directly impacts the workplace. Individual needs may vary depending upon a number of factors, such as the person's support system, coping skills, past losses, and how close the individual was to the person who died. Common emotional and behavioral reactions include:

- Shock or numbness
- Second guessing or feeling responsible
- A sense of helplessness
- Agitation, angry outbursts, or rage
- Difficulty concentrating
- Change in work performance
- Withdrawal from others
- Crying

How to provide support:

- **Be available.** Reach out and ask how people are doing, either in person or virtually. This is the time to “manage by walking around” and check in with those who work remotely. Listen to and validate feelings. People will wonder, “Does the organization care?” Your availability and concern will provide the answer.
- **Expect a wide range of responses.** Recognize that most emotional responses are normal and that individual reactions could vary. Keep in mind that some team members

may have weathered difficult situations that are outside your own experience.

- **Communicate.** Head off speculation and anxiety by distributing factual information on a frequent basis. Consider working with HR and other managers to develop a coordinated communication strategy. If some or all of your team is working remotely, set up a virtual lunch or meet-up.
- **Be sensitive.** If the person who has died is a member of your team, be sensitive about the timing of clearing out their workspace. Your team may find it helpful to keep the space as a memorial for a week or two.
- **Remind your team about LifeMatters.** LifeMatters is available to your team and their family members 24/7/365. Provide the phone number or send out an informational piece.
- **Take time for you.** Set aside time to acknowledge your own feelings, practice self-care, and attend services or memorials. Role model healthy self-care strategies.

Grieving is a process, and there is nothing you can do to make it “all better.” Listening and showing you care will help your team get through this difficult time. Remember, the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service is available to provide resources and suggestions. Call 24/7/365.

1-800-634-6433

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