

DEALING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

Help Your Co-Workers Get Through A Difficult Time

WHAT IS GRIEF

Grief affects the way our minds work – how we see the world and ourselves. During times of loss, grief is the filter through which we receive information and make decisions.

Almost all emotions can be part of a grief reaction and many emotions may be experienced with dizzying speed and intensity – fear, anger, relief, despair, peace, guilt, numbness, agitation and a seemingly bottomless sorrow may all be part of our grief. There is no order to your feelings and no time limit on grief.

It hurts when others don't mention our loss – and sometimes it hurts when they do. We need some time alone to get our bearings. We may want to regain our identity by resuming our routine, or even plunge into activities that keep us too busy to feel.

HELPING A CO-WORKER DEAL WITH GRIEF

- Acknowledge your co-worker's loss and grief. Don't wait until the right thing to say comes to you. There is no right thing. The wrong thing to say is nothing.
- Personalize what you say. "I remember how much I loved my brother. I'm so sorry about Ed's death." Shared feelings communicate more than good advice.
- Avoid comparisons. "I know just how you feel because my brother Jim died recently too." What you know is how you felt, but we never really know another's feelings. Everyone's relationship and reactions are unique.
- Offer specific help. Many people are too tired or numb to decide what help they need. Co-workers can make a meal, run errands or help with childcare.
- Listen. Grieving people often need to tell their stories over and over. Listening without judgment or interruption can be the most important gift you can give.
- Allow the person to grieve at his or her own pace. Your ability to not judge the length of time it takes will be a sense of relief to the person grieving and avoid placing pressure on him or her to conform to what other people think is the "right way" to grieve.

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER IN THE WORKPLACE

- Respect privacy. You may be hearing personal and privileged information that should not be repeated. Honor closed doors and quiet moments.
- Watch out for other employees; vivid memories and feelings may surface. Some unspoken grief may become noticeable.
- Include the grieving employees in social plans. Sometimes a lighthearted outing may be a great help to someone who is feeling isolated.
- When tasks need to be re-distributed, thank staff members for their extra effort. They're sharing both the emotional burden and the additional work.
- Support the efforts of others to help the employee. This sad time can be an opportunity to increase staff awareness of mutual support, teamwork and the values that are part of your work together.



WHEN CAN SAND CREEK EAP HELP?

Occasionally someone might need professional help to deal with grief. If your grieving co-worker is exceptionally teary or despondent for more than two weeks, shows signs of drug or alcohol abuse, or has a dramatic change in eating or sleeping habits, he or she may need extra support.

Encourage the affected employee or co-workers to call Sand Creek EAP!
It's confidential, it works, and the services won't cost you anything!