

Supporting employees coping with significant loss

Although everyone experiences the grieving process differently, there are some commonalities to be aware of. People can feel guilt, shame, and shock over the loss, they can be distracted mentally as they process their loss and also become easier to anger. Physical wellbeing can be affected through over- or under-eating, varying sleep patterns, as well as lack of motivation to exercise or engage in social supports.

A significant personal loss is going to affect an employee's work. The way the workplace approaches this loss can either help support the employee or add stress to an already stressful situation.

You might find implementing these strategies can help your employees regroup and return to work with renewed focus as they navigate their grieving process.

Honoring an employee who has passed:

When a coworker or business associate dies, the effect on surviving staff members can be debilitating. Often employees spend significant amounts of time with their work colleagues and become more like family than coworkers. A sudden or even expected loss of a team member can create significant sadness and unrest for employees.

Managers can offer support by openly acknowledging the death in a structured and meaningful manner as an outlet for genuine emotion. Honoring the employee and acknowledging the loss and change of normalcy can help bring closure.

It could also be helpful to hear suggestions from staff members on what would be meaningful for them as they process their loss.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING AN EMPLOYEE DEALING WITH SIGNIFICANT LOSS

- **Show empathy:** "I'm glad you are back, and we are here for you."
- **Acknowledge that grief is ongoing:** "How are you doing today?"
- **Show up with a specific offer:** "I'm in the lobby if you want to talk."
- **Take your cues from the griever:** "I'd love to hear more about your loved one whenever that might be convenient for you. I want to respect your privacy."

IDEAS FOR HONORING AN EMPLOYEE



1. Memorial at work
2. Plant a tree
3. Create a memory board
4. Hang a plaque or photo
5. Volunteer as a team in honor of the deceased employee

