

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT GRIEF at WORK

Please join in helping dispel the following common (and harmful) misconceptions about grief at work.

1. Grief and mourning are not the same thing.

Grief is what the griever feels on the inside. Mourning is the expression of those thoughts and feelings. Everyone grieves when someone loved dies, but if we are to heal we must also mourn.

2. We only grieve and mourn the specific loss.

When someone dies, we not only mourn the loss of the physical presence of that person, but we also mourn other losses caused by the death, such as loss of security, loss of meaning in our lives, loss of part of who we are, etc.

3. Grief is an emotional response.

Grief affects our whole beings. Therefore, grief is not only an emotional response. It also affects us physically, cognitively, socially and spiritually.

4. Grief and mourning progress in predictable, orderly stages.

Grief is not predictable nor is it orderly. Grief occurs in wave-like, non-sequential fashion.

5. Grief work should be done at home, in private.

It is impossible to turn emotions on and off and relate them to home. We must find ways to support grief in the workplace.

6. When grief and mourning are finally reconciled, they never come up again.

Grief never truly ends. We will always miss the people who have died and we will experience “grief-bursts” now and then for the rest of our lives.

7. Only direct family members of the person who died grieve.

When someone we care about dies, we grieve and we need to mourn, whether the person was a family member or not. The more deeply attached we were to the person who died, the more deep our grief will likely be.

8. Nobody – coworkers and employees included – can help you with your grief.

The support of compassionate friends, coworkers, and employers can and does make a significant difference.

*Adapted from “Healing Grief at Work” by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD.
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The UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center offers confidential support services for UAB employees and members of their immediate households. To schedule an appointment with a counselor, visit us online at uab.edu/eacc and select “New Client Forms.”

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