



10 TIPS FOR SUPPORTING GRIEF IN THE WORKPLACE

Talking about death and dying and supporting those who are grieving within the workplace do not come naturally to most Americans. As a result, we need to have many more conversations to address the risk factors, impact, and productivity issues that surround grief within the workplace. Being prepared is crucial to establishing best practices and a healthier working environment and community.

1. CREATE A SAFE CULTURE

Context matters. We tell our stories and live our lives in communities and offices. How we move forward after profound or complex loss depends on the context and support system available to us. Those who are well supported are able to move forward more healthily and easily. An organization that has clear values and compassionately cares for its members will be more productive and more successful because it is safe and understanding.

2. LISTEN ALL THE WAY

Listening does not mean placating or checking your watch after a few minutes. Listening is a real act of service, a real gesture of support. Taking the time to listen and to hear someone tell their story, share how they are finding their way forward or how grief is impacting them, giving space to share and laugh, and throw up their arms in despair is all key to successfully listening. It's not about telling your story or sharing your opinion. It's about creating the space and time to be present.

3. DON'T ASSUME

While it is easier to make assumptions than taking the time to ask, asking is the only way to know and understand what is really going on.

4. YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIX IT

Nothing is broken. Grief is a natural and normal response to change. Your job isn't to make it better, but to care and support those going through it.

5. TRY TO UNDERSTAND

Grieving people want to feel understood and know that you "get it" and you can be patient with them as they find their way forward. Imagine a corn maze. If you jump in the middle and try to push someone forward you will likely get lost too. Instead, stay put and encourage exploration, while being an understanding cheerleader from the sidelines. You don't know how it feels, but be willing to learn and understand.



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6. BE WILLING NOT TO KNOW

More often than not, there are no answers. Clichés and euphemisms are seldom helpful. Instead, be willing to be uncertain. Grief and life altering changes all affect people differently. No two people are the same.

7. THERE IS NO TIMELINE

Grief is cyclical and un-predictable. It is not some-thing contained by time so it requires your patience and willingness to bend the rules and rework expectations.

8. MODIFY YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Grief will challenge and limit what someone is capable of doing. Adapt to the grief and the grief will adapt its way back.

9. EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Grief is unpredictable. People who are grieving often don't feel like themselves or see the way they are falling behind or unable to succeed as they have in the past. If you are prepared, you'll be able to expect the unexpected.

10. BE PREPARED

Preparedness is essential for effectiveness. Having consistent policies and procedures makes a difference when the unexpected happens. By being prepared, you and your team will be properly trained and feel empowered to provide the support that is needed when someone has experienced change or grief. It is not about knowing the right things to say, but having the infrastructure to provide the right support for your context.