



SUPERVISING FOR SUCCESS

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Supporting a Grieving Employee

After a crisis or traumatic life event, it is not uncommon for an individual to experience or express feelings of grief or distress. The reaction can be immediate or delayed, and it is very possible for it to take months, and even years to resolve. Contrary to any policy you may read, the recovery for a grieving person can take more than three working days. A grieving person can go through feelings of shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, and acceptance.

How managers can support a grieving employee:

- Your caring support can set an example for other employees. It can be helpful during the healing process.
- Stay in touch with your employee, who has not yet returned to work. Connection with work may help the employee maintain some sense of their normal daily life.
- Acknowledge the loss. "I am sorry for your loss." "I can't imagine how difficult this is for you." Avoid saying "This is God's will" "I know just how you feel" "You can always get another dog, pet or child" "God never gives us more than we can handle." It is important to listen and take your cue from the grieving employee. Expect to hear repetition of the story.
- Managers need to be aware of the delicate balance between, the employee's need for support, the need to maintain a productive work environment, and the manager's personal grief reaction.
- Educate oneself about the variety of events that can trigger grief. Some of these include the loss of a job, a family member, death of a pet, miscarriage, divorce, critical health concerns, a major disaster or any significant life transition.

When the Employee Returns to Work:

- Ask how you can help. Questions you might consider include:
- Would you like me to share any information with the others? If so, what information or details would you like them to know?
- Do you want to talk about your experience when you return, or would you prefer to concentrate on the work?
- Are you aware of any special needs at this time? Privacy? Initial reduced work hours? Help to catch up on your work?

The answers to the above questions may change on a daily basis in the beginning. Employee emotions are not yet stable. Keep asking the questions and listen to your employee's response.

Regardless of employment status, whether full-time or part-time, all employees can reap the benefits our Employee Assistance program.



1-800-968-8143

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