

Grief and Loss

What a person can do to help themselves and others

The loss of someone who is special to you can be a very difficult experience. When we lose someone close to us (personal family & work family) we can experience many emotions, feelings and reactions.

Some of these reactions can include shock, disbelief, denial, sadness, anger, hopelessness, personal pain, fear and at the right time, acceptance. Some of these reactions can become intense, especially if the loss is unexpected or tragic in nature.

These feelings and reactions are to be expected, should be seen as individualized to each person, and not to be viewed as wrong if another person is not feeling or reacting the same way. As individuals, each of us will experience a loss differently from our peers, our family members and those we work with. We as individuals will each mourn and grieve differently too, since we are just that— individuals.

Simply stated, “Normal people, with normal reactions to a traumatic event.”

A sudden loss can be a particular source of increased pain, sadness and the other emotions listed above. We tend to feel guilty or partly responsible for the loss since we feel that we ‘didn’t do enough’ to help, we didn’t tell the person how we felt about them, and we regret not having more time with them.

Some easy steps to help you move through this experience would include:

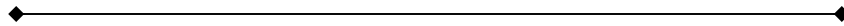
- Recognize the loss and understand that it has occurred.
- Allow for your own feelings and emotions. This is not the time to allow others to dictate how to feel, react or what to say.
- Recall the times you did have with the person and find comfort in the positive experiences you have gained from knowing them.
- Begin to realize and accept that your life will be different without them and the workplace will be different too.
- Find time to yourself to begin the acceptance of the loss, realize that you feel sad, angry or are in disbelief that they are now gone.
- Also realize that you will have to re-adjust to the loss and that this takes TIME! We will all process and proceed through the loss at our own pace and others may ‘bounce back’ sooner or may take longer. Individual reactions!

Sources: The Last Dance, 5th Edition, DeSpelder & Strickland, People in Crisis, 4th edition, Lee Ann Hoff

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- Speak with those who are with you at work, home and friends who may know what you are going through. Tell them how they can help and what you need to do for yourself.
- Peer support at a time like this can be invaluable!
- Put yourself first by eating sensibly, getting adequate rest, reduce caffeine, sugars and fats, increase the amounts of water you drink and get some moderate exercise to help relieve some of the stresses you may be experiencing.
- Try journalizing your thoughts to help you organize them and better understand them. With grief and stress, our thought processes can become diffuse and we can find ourselves overwhelmed with fleeting thoughts.
- If in a few weeks you notice that things are just not coming back to the normal, everyday experiences, this is when you may need additional professional help with a specialized grief counselor or psychologist.
- **Asking for this level of help does not in any way mean that you are crazy, weak or that there is something wrong. It means that you cared about the person who died, and that you may need some help in moving on.**



In summary, the death of someone close to us is a very sad and painful encounter. Realizing that our close friend, loved one or spouse is no longer with us can be frightening and traumatic.

However, using the basic advice presented in this handout can assist you through this difficult time. It is completely normal to miss that special person and think about them often. As the days ahead turn into weeks and months, you will be able to work through this sense of loss and grief.

Please remember three important things:

1. Allow for your own individual reactions and emotions during a time of loss.
2. If you find yourself not getting back to your normal routines a few weeks afterwards, then please ask for additional help from a trained mental health professional. In the long run, you'll be better for it.
3. Take care of yourself and ask those around you how you can help them, to help yourself.

Be good to yourself!

Sources: The Last Dance, 5th Edition, DeSpelder & Strickland, People in Crisis, 4th edition, Lee Ann Hoff