



HELPING HANDS



Grief

(ChatGPT Compiled)

Supporting Each Other While We are Grieving: How Workplaces Can Help During a Time of Loss



Grief is one of life's most profound and universal experiences. Whether it follows the death of a loved one, the loss of a close friend, a miscarriage, or another significant life event, grief affects every aspect of a person's well-being. While everyone experiences grief differently, one challenge many people share is returning to work while carrying the emotional weight of their loss. For many people, returning to work represents a step toward normalcy. It can provide structure, routine, and a welcome distraction from overwhelming emotions. At the same time, the workplace can feel exhausting, unfamiliar, and emotionally difficult. Concentration may suffer, patience may be limited, and tasks that once seemed simple can suddenly become overwhelming.

Understanding Grief

There is no "right" way to grieve. Some people openly express their emotions, while others keep their feelings private. Some may return to work quickly, eager for routine, while others need additional time away. Even after returning, grief doesn't disappear according to a schedule.

People who are grieving may experience:

- Difficulty concentrating or remembering details
- Fatigue and low energy
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Increased anxiety or irritability
- Emotional ups and downs
- Feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, or loneliness



It's also important to recognize that grief is rarely linear. A person may seem to be doing well one day and struggle the next. Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or unexpected reminders can bring powerful emotions months or even years after the loss.

Returning to Work

The first days back at work can be especially challenging. Many grieving employees worry about how their co-workers will respond. They may fear becoming emotional, answering difficult questions, or feeling pressured to "move on." Productivity may temporarily decline. Grief consumes mental and emotional energy, making it harder to focus, solve problems, or make decisions.

How Co-Workers Can Help

Many people want to support a grieving colleague but worry about saying the wrong thing. As a result, they sometimes avoid the person altogether. Unfortunately, silence can unintentionally increase feelings of isolation. Simple expressions of sympathy are often enough. Consider saying:

- "I'm so sorry for your loss."
- "I've been thinking about you."
- "I'm glad you're back, but please don't feel any pressure."

These statements acknowledge the loss without placing expectations on the grieving person. Listening is often more valuable than offering advice. If a co-worker wants to talk about their loved one, allow them to share without trying to solve their pain or change the subject. Sometimes the greatest gift is simply being present.

Practical Ways to Offer Support



Support doesn't always require words. Practical assistance often makes a meaningful difference.

- Offer to help with projects during the first few weeks back.
- Volunteer to cover meetings or deadlines if appropriate.
- Invite your grieving co-worker to lunch without pressuring them to attend.
- Continue checking in after the first few days, when support from others often begins to fade.
- Respect privacy if your co-worker prefers not to discuss their loss.

Remember That Grief Lasts Longer Than Most People Expect

One of the biggest challenges grieving co-workers' faces is that support often fades after a few weeks, even though grief continues. Anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and special family occasions can reopen emotional wounds.

Taking Care of Yourself While Grieving.

Helpful strategies include:

- Maintaining regular sleep and eating habits.
- Taking short breaks during emotionally difficult days.
- Accepting help from friends, family, and colleagues.
- Being patient with reduced concentration or energy.
- Talking with a counselor or using EAP services if grief becomes overwhelming.
- Remembering that healing does not mean forgetting.



**IAM Peer
Employee
Assistance Program**

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peers do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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Grief Resources

These two organizations are among the most respected and widely used grief support resources in the United States:

The Dougy Center – One of the nation's leading grief organizations, offering free resources, support groups, and guidance for children, teens, young adults, and their families following the death of a loved one.

Hospice Foundation of America – Offers expert grief education, webinars, publications, caregiver resources, and referrals to local bereavement services. Many hospice programs also provide free grief counseling to community members, even if hospice care was not used.