

When a co-worker dies

Coping with grief in the workplace

Whether it's someone we knew only a little or someone who had become a friend, the death of a co-worker can cause big emotions. Some may experience shock or grief. Others may feel anger, guilt or even fear regarding their own mortality. Others may experience no reaction at all. These responses are all natural and they will likely ease over time.

If your feelings interfere with your ability to function at work or at home, reach out for help. **Here4TN** can provide in-the-moment support and, if you'd like, connect you with in-person or virtual counseling.

If you've experienced the loss of a co-worker, the following information may help you better understand and cope with your grief.

Common reactions to grief

A co-worker's death may produce a wide range of symptoms that may feel unusual to you. Remember that these are normal reactions, and while they are different for each person, they may affect:



How you think

- Poor concentration
- Shorter attention span
- Slowed problem-solving
- Memory problems
- Difficulty making decisions



How you feel physically

- Headaches
- Chest or stomach pain
- Muscle tremors
- Difficulty breathing
- Elevated blood pressure



How you feel emotionally

- Depression
- Grief
- Guilt
- Anxiety or fear
- Feeling lost or overwhelmed



How you behave

- Excessive silence
- Changes in sleep and eating habits
- Lower work performance
- Social withdrawal

How to help yourself

- Acknowledge the death and your reactions to it. Give yourself permission to feel bad without labeling yourself. Take time to grieve.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals, even if they don't seem appealing.
- Talk to someone who will listen and allow you to experience your feelings.
- Don't try to "numb the pain" with drugs or alcohol.
- Realize that recurring thoughts and feelings associated with the death are normal. They'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Remember, it's OK to ask for help if you're having trouble coping. Contact your **Here4TN** Emotional Wellbeing Solutions or a support group.



How to help your team members

Remember that, just like you, your co-workers are affected by the death. People experience grief differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Connecting with your co-workers can be a great way to share support, but remember that everyone reacts to a death differently. Be aware that grief often makes people lash out with anger or other emotions. Don't take these emotional outbursts personally. Suggest available help, such as **Here4TN** or a support group. It may take longer for some people than others, but with time and acceptance, the pain will lessen.

Here4TN offers you and your family confidential assistance to help you deal with a wide range of personal, health and work-related issues. This free service helps you manage stress, overcome anxiety or depression, and cope with grief or loss. **Here4TN** specialists are available anytime, every day.

Talk with a specialist who cares, 24/7:

855-Here4TN (855-437-3486)

or visit **Here4TN.com**.

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