



## **Coping with the loss of a co-worker**

People who work together are connected by being part of the same organisation — and many colleagues become friends. When a co-worker passes away, it's normal for people in the workplace to be affected — whether or not they were close to the person. Some may experience shock or grief.



These emotional reactions are natural. They may be felt immediately or can appear hours, days, weeks or months later. It's equally normal to experience no reaction at all. Usually these feelings will ease over time. Sometimes the loss can feel so painful that it interferes with someone's ability to work or function at home.



There are a variety of resources available to yourself and loved ones at

Our Critical Support Centre offers emotional support resources and information when you need it most. Find a variety of topic areas including mental health, traumatic events, natural disasters, grief and loss, supporting adolescents in crisis and more.



## Common reactions to grief?

The loss of a co-worker 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
- Social withdrawal
- Changes in sleep and eating habits
- Lower work performance



## How to help yourself

- Acknowledge the death and your reactions to it. Give yourself permission to feel badly without labeling yourself. Take time to grieve. Attend the funeral or memorial service.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Stick with everyday routines. Familiar habits can be very comforting. 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. If you don't feel like talking, just being with a companion can help ease your grief.
- Don't try to "numb the pain" with drugs or alcohol.
- Realise 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 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or a support group.



## How to help your colleagues

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.

Spend time with co-workers. Share feelings and check on how they're doing. Allow other people to talk about their feelings. Listen and respect their point of view, even if you don't share it.

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 your EAP or a support group. It may take longer for some people than others, but with time and acceptance the pain will lessen.

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



### Real people. Real life. Real solutions.

To access specific benefits information visit [Livewell.optum.com](https://livewell.optum.com) and log in with your company access code:



### Call for Support at

Your Optum benefit offers support from specially trained, mental health specialists to help anyone who is overwhelmed, depressed or searching for answers.



### Critical support when you need it

Visit [optumeap.com/criticalsupportcenter](https://optumeap.com/criticalsupportcenter) for additional critical support resources and information.



\*If you're pregnant, physically inactive or have a health condition like arthritis, diabetes or heart disease, check with your GP before starting an exercise programme or increasing your activity level. They can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe for you.

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