

BEREAVEMENT
IN THE WORKPLACE
MODULE 5

What can managers do?

As a manager, there are a number of things to consider when dealing with bereavement in the workplace.

- **Support colleagues** who may be concerned about what to say and do. You can help ease their concerns if you have spoken with the bereaved and are aware of their wishes.
- **Knowing the right thing to say may seem difficult.** Suggested appropriate words might be, "I'm sorry to hear about your loss;" "You are (or have been) in my thoughts;" "How are you doing?;" or "I don't know what to say, but if I can be of help to you, I'm here."
- **Offer time to listen** to the bereaved person and colleagues.
- Due to fatigue or lack of concentration for example, an employee may have **difficulty making decisions or reacting quickly to work situations**, both mentally and physically. An understanding of this can help them to regain their self-confidence.
- **Show appreciation** of the extra load that a colleague/colleagues may be carrying.
- **Understand** that the bereaved person may be receiving counselling and may require time away from work for these appointments. A flexible approach is helpful.



- **Give consideration** to those who work with people who are physically or mentally ill. They can feel that the problems of others weigh heavily on them, accentuating their grief and perhaps making them less effective in their work for a while.
- **Recognise** some employees may return to work too quickly to avoid dealing with their grief. In the long term, this approach can be counter-productive as it can lead to complicated grief reactions.
- Seasonal celebrations such as **Christmas, birthday and anniversaries** can be particularly difficult times for the bereaved. If the employee is happy to discuss it, and they would find it helpful, suggest they plan some time off around those **'pressure' points**.
- If you have an **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** this may serve as a valuable resource to help deal with issues of grief and loss. Individuals may be able to access one-to-one counselling to meet their particular needs. The EAP might be a useful resource for individual consultation for managers who may be concerned about extreme reactions of bereaved persons.
- **Different cultural groups** have different ways of marking a death. For example, some mourn in a way that celebrates the life of the deceased, others make a great and visible show of their grief.



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