



HELPING A CO-WORKER WHO IS GRIEVING

What you can do to help:

1. Listening to the co-worker

- The co-worker will need consistent support, someone willing to talk and listen, and to allow them to reminisce about important memories of their loved one.

2. Accepting the co-worker's feelings, concerns and actions

- Convey to the co-worker that whatever they are feeling or wherever they are at in the grieving process is okay.

3. Displaying patience

- Have patience with any displays of moodiness, expressions of anger, pain, disbelief or guilt. It is not personally directed towards you.
- Be sensitive to the fact that people grieve differently and that no schedule exists for healing.

4. Providing practical help

- The following is a list of suggestions of some practical help to give someone who is grieving. It is okay to ask the co-worker what he/she needs.
 - Send a card or flowers
 - Prepare and deliver a meal
 - Offer to give them a ride
 - Offer to run an errand
 - Invite them to lunch or for coffee
 - Recognize anniversary dates and other significant dates
 - Baby-sit for a day
 - Volunteer to make phone calls
 - Just listen

What *not* to do when a co-worker is grieving:

1. Do not withdraw from the co-worker

- Do not ignore the co-worker or pretend the loss did not occur. You can acknowledge their loss by a simple “I’m sorry.”

2. Do not evaluate, judge or legitimize the loss

- Allow the co-worker to attach their own meaning to their loss. The following statements are generally *not* helpful to a grieving co-worker:
 - “Everything will be alright”
 - “I know how you feel”
 - “It’s God’s will”
 - “They are in a better place now”
 - “Everything happens for a reason”
 - “Look at all you have to be thankful for”
 - “At least he/she did not suffer”
 - ”He/She had a good life”
 - “You have to be strong”
 - “Don’t think about it”
 - “You have to get on with your life”

3. Do not compare losses or expect sympathy for yourself

- Do not tell the co-worker how you are affected by the loss and expect them to help you through your own grief; and do not compare your losses with theirs.

4. Do not patronize the co-worker

- Do not imply the co-worker is incapable of handling the situation.
- Do not treat the co-worker like they are helpless.

(Excerpted from Beyond Grief, by Carol Staudacher
New Harbinger Publications, 1987)