

Coronavirus

Helping a Co-Worker Cope with Loss

Workplace teams are like extended families. When a teammate loses a relative to the coronavirus, postal co-workers grieve right along with friends and family. When the death is the result of COVID-19, it can be particularly traumatic for everyone touched by the loss. This is because we are all facing this global health crisis together.

Some things you can do to help your co-workers include:

- **Be a good listener** – Grieving people need to talk, express pain, fear, guilt and shock.
- **Be a helper** – Assist with things that need to get done at work or at home.
- **Honor someone's memory** – Hold or participate in a fundraiser for a special cause or for the family of the deceased.
- **Don't take unexpected emotions personally** – Your co-worker may become more withdrawn or more irritable for a while. Know that it's not you. It is simply part of the grieving and healing process.

Understanding the stages of grief

People don't heal on a timetable. The grieving process can take weeks, months, even years. Experts describe the stages of grief in various ways, but broadly speaking they include:

- **Shock and denial:** A state of numbness and disbelief that the event has occurred.
- **Anger:** A feeling of anger toward the deceased, doctors, co-workers, family members or others.
- **Guilt:** A feeling of guilt about things not done or said prior to the loss.
- **Depression:** Often characterized by changes in appetite, sleep pattern and weight, a sense of being overwhelmed and/or a feeling of sadness that seems never-ending.
- **Acceptance:** A state of acceptance, or for some, a sense of peace related to life's new reality.
- **Growth:** A state of readiness to move ahead with one's life.

Most people feel several emotions at the same time, perhaps in different degrees. Eventually, each phase is completed, and the person moves forward with their life. The extent, depth and duration of the grieving process also depends on how close a person was to the deceased, the circumstances of the death and their own life situation.

As always, your EAP is here for you and your family. Whether you are staying home or continuing your routine, there are a variety of ways to connect with your EAP including: telephone 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341, online at EAP4YOU.com, through video, live chat or text message. Reach out to learn more about the many ways you can receive support from your Employee Assistance Program.

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