

Providing Support After a Loss

When a team member experiences a personal loss, it is likely to impact their behavior at work. Losing a close friend, immediate family member, or beloved pet may be particularly difficult for a grieving person to bear. How the person responds to a loss may vary depending upon a number of factors, including their support system, coping skills, and past losses.

After a loss, common emotional and behavioral reactions include:

- ▶ Shock or numbness
- ▶ Second guessing or feeling responsible
- ▶ Crying, agitation, or angry outbursts
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Change in work performance
- ▶ Withdrawal from others

Often, you may be one of the first people who is informed about the loss, especially if the person will need to take time off from work. When faced with this situation, keep these tips in mind:

- ▶ **Be empathetic.** Ask how the grieving person is doing. Listen to what they have to say and validate their feelings, especially if you have gone through a similar experience. Being supportive and expressing concern will let the person know that they matter because of who they are and not just the work they do.

- ▶ **Be sensitive to reactions.** Most emotional and physical responses are normal, and some may be intense. Keep in mind that the person's loss may be outside your own experience and that it is not your place to judge what is or isn't healthy.
- ▶ **Be respectful when notifying your team.** Ask the person's preferences before releasing any information about a major loss. Keep announcements to a simple statement that informs staff that the person has lost a loved one, outlines any schedule adjustments, and expresses the team's support. While the grieving person may choose to share details about their loss with colleagues, it is not appropriate for you to do so.
- ▶ **Respect the impact on your team.** Sometimes, other members of your team may be affected directly because they are personal friends with the colleague or also know the person who has died. Make every effort to honor requests for time off to attend a funeral or memorial event.
- ▶ **Remind your team about LifeMatters.** News of a colleague's loss may have an impact on those with similar experiences. LifeMatters is available to help them cope with their responses.
- ▶ **Take time for you.** Set aside time to acknowledge your own feelings and practice self-care. Role model healthy coping strategies.

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service is available 24/7/365 to help your team cope with a loss. Please call.

Call the **LifeMatters®** by Empathia Management Consultation Service toll-free anytime.
1-800-367-7474

Assistance with Life, Work, Family, and Wellbeing • 24/7/365
Call collect to **262-574-2509** if outside of North America
Visit **LifeMatters®** online at **mylifematters.com**

Language assistance services in your preferred spoken and written languages are available at no cost by calling 866-713-1979.

