

# Tips for Supervisors and Managers of Workers Grieving a Major Loss

These tips are intended for managers and supervisors. The goal is to safeguard the wellbeing of workers who are in the process of grieving a major loss during or at their return from a short leave of absence. It is possible to minimize the negative impact to their health, reduce absenteeism and presenteeism, and facilitate a successful return to normal functioning over time with timely and strategic support from yourself.

*As a leader you have an important role to play.*

As a first step, distribute and read **'Tips for Colleagues and Friends of Individuals who are Grieving a Loss'**. The content of that document follows:

## TIPS FOR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS OF AN INDIVIDUAL GRIEVING A MAJOR LOSS

Your colleague may be a family member or close relative of someone who has passed away and is grieving this loss. While loss is normal and grief is a normal reaction when faced with significant loss, substantial health problems may surface over time. We can help prevent such negative impacts through support.

### DO'S:

Recognize that for some the loss may be very significant and the grieving process may be quite difficult (especially if the death is sudden or the result of a criminal act), while for others it may have less impact. For each of us, grief will be expressed in our own way.

Ask how you can be helpful to them at this difficult time.

Offer your sympathies to them: "Please accept my sincere condolences".

Listen to them as they process their thoughts and feelings. Give them time to find the right words. Talking can help to relieve pain and facilitate the process of grieving and eventual healing.

Plan as a group to send some representatives to attend a funeral service if possible and safe.

Send a card, flowers or a contribution to some charitable organization as suggested by the family on behalf of the organization or the team.

Prepare food and have it delivered to the home of the grieving worker.

### DONT'S:

Don't share clichés such as: "Time heals", "It is God's wish", "It will pass."

Don't avoid talking about it with the person or avoid the person.

Don't change the subject when the person is crying or very sad.

## As a manager or supervisor you can be most helpful by doing the following:

Reach out to the grieving employee as soon as possible and to offer your help and support in this difficult time, expressing your condolences.

Once the employee has had the chance to talk about what has happened, ask what might they be open to have you share with the team.

Respect their wishes with regards to what they would like to have known about the incident. By informing the team of what you know and can share, you are preventing unnecessary worry and rumours among the team. Support the team by discussing what they would like to offer or do as a group to support the grieving colleague.

If the worker is away on bereavement leave make sure that at their return the person is not working alone in isolation. Check in regularly for the first week or so. Modify your expectations of output for the short-term. Many prefer to return to work in order to regain certain equilibrium.

As you check in with the grieving worker in the first week, keep in mind some return faster than they should and may need to take some time off again.

**Remind the Employee that confidential support is available through the EAP 24/7:**

**1-800-268-7708 or  
1-800-567-5803 (for the hearing impaired)**