



Let's Talk

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Dealing with Grief in the Workplace

When one of your coworkers is coping with the pain of a personal loss, it can be hard to know how to help or what to say.

Someone you work with may be trying to cope with the recent death of a loved one or some other loss, including:

- Loss of a child through a miscarriage
- News of a bad diagnosis for themselves or a loved one
- Loss of a companion pet
- Loss of a relationship (a break-up, separation, or divorce)
- A child moving away from the family home (empty-nest syndrome)

Such grief can be so emotionally draining that your colleague may not be himself or herself for weeks—even months.

While keeping a professional distance and allowing others to have their privacy may be considered typical “office etiquette,” it can also add to the isolation some people are already experiencing during this time of loss.

It's important to be patient with people in such situations. But there are ways you can constructively approach them during their time of sorrow.

Acknowledge Your Coworker's Grief

If you choose, you can acknowledge your coworker's loss in a quiet and considerate way, by taking a moment when the other person is alone and has time to speak. Sometimes all it takes is a sentence or two and a bit of silent recognition.

Connect in a Meaningful Way

Please don't feel like you have to say “the right thing” or try to make things better. It's often better to let the other person talk and share his or her feelings, if they'd like to.

It can be helpful to express simple and meaningful sentiments like:

“My thoughts are with you (and your family) during this difficult time.”

“I'm so sorry for your loss.”

“I hope you're okay. How can I help?”

Or, if you're unable to connect face-to-face, you can deliver a sympathy card to your coworker.

These small gestures can be heartfelt and may bring some comfort.

Give People Time to Recover

Individuals can express their grief in different ways. Some people may be noticeably sad, while others may seem fine outwardly while internalizing their grief. Always give people time and space to deal with their loss as they see best.

Meanwhile, if you ever experience grief that becomes overwhelming, help is available all day, all week, all year. **1-800-222-0364**, TTY: 1-888-262-7848. □



Team Building Tips: Take Your Team from “GOOD” to “EXCELLENT”

Whether you are getting together for a game of soccer or working on a big project, having a good team can make all the difference to your success.

Getting Started

A little groundwork may be necessary before your start building your team. Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- What is your ultimate goal?
- What are the strengths of your team members? (You may want to have a casual interview with them or a brainstorming session to find out.)
- What does success look like? What would going beyond this look like?
- What needs to be accomplished short term to get you to your ultimate goal?
- How can I breakdown the project into its component parts? What’s the best way to communicate this?

Once you’re clear about your goals, the strengths of your team members, and the scope of your project, it’s time to share all that information with your team. Transparency and cooperation can be vital to team success.

Sharing the Vision

Designate a special meeting—instead of at your usual staff meeting—to share your vision of the project and how it will succeed. This way you can focus on the project without other issues diluting your message. Be prepared to be open to new ideas and be flexible about the adjustments that may need to be made when you get your team’s input.

Create a Common Vision. A common and unified vision among team members is indispensable for team building and organizational success. To encourage the creation of a common vision, ask your team members the following questions:

- What do you think is the best way to get to our goal?
- What can you contribute to the success of the project?

Develop Common Goals. From the team’s vision, map out the steps (small term goals) necessary to get you to success and beyond. Ensure that these goals are understood and supported by all team members. It’s essential that everyone understands how their efforts are contributing to the larger objectives of the team.

Ask yourself:

- Do all team members know what role they play in supporting the larger team/organization goals?
- What do we need to do to get all the team members on board and rowing in the same direction?

The success of the team depends largely on shared vision, clear direction, and cooperation, so keep the channels of communication open. □



Techniques to Relieve Anxiety and Stress

Many of us lead busy lives. If your hectic lifestyle has knocked you off-center, **don't stress out**; there are a number of techniques that can bring you back into balance.

Relax Your Mind

Scientific research shows that meditation can lead to deep relaxation. But what many people don't realize is that any activity that helps you to focus on the present at the same time that it relaxes you can be considered meditative. Walking, swimming, painting, and knitting are just a few examples of activities that can help you experience a meditative state of mind.

If you find yourself having unwelcome thoughts, bring your focus back to your chosen meditative activity and relax your mind and thoughts.

If you enjoy how you feel after these activities, you may consider doing actual meditation for 5 to 10 minutes a day. This can help you feel like you are melting your stress away.

Catch Your Breath

Focusing on your breathing can also help bring you to a meditative state. Try this:

- Close your eyes and focus solely on your breathing.

- Be aware of slowly inhaling through your nose.

- Fill your whole body with your breath.

- Slowly exhale as you mentally release feelings of stress and anxiety from the body.

You can extend the time it takes you to make a complete breath—you can start with three seconds to inhale and three seconds to exhale. **Even three minutes of this type of meditative breathing can make a difference.** You may be surprised at how much better you feel afterwards.

Visualize Stress Away

Studies have shown that guided visualization may help to lower both your blood pressure and the levels of stress hormones in your body. Try this:

- Make yourself comfortable, by lying down or sitting up straight (keep legs uncrossed).
- Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths, until you begin to relax both your body and your mind.
- Visualize something that makes you feel calm and at-ease. Visualizations may include a peaceful scene in nature, being bathed in healing white light, or any other scenes that make you feel comfortable and at ease.

Get Physical

Research has shown that taking part in physical activity on a regular basis is not only good for the body it can also help with stress and its detrimental effects.

Use these techniques to minimize stress in your life. You'll find it's a welcome change. □

RELAX

IS YOUR COMPUTER A PAIN?

Sitting in front of a computer screen for eight hours a day does not come naturally to human beings. It's no wonder, then, that many office workers develop a variety of aches, pains, eyestrain, and other health problems as we earn our daily bread.

Fortunately, ergonomists—experts in arranging the workplace so people can do their jobs safely, efficiently, comfortably, and without injury—have studied this problem intensively. Here's what they advise for the computer users of the world.

1. Use a monitor and keyboard which can be adjusted, swiveled, and tilted. A moveable tray can help you place the keyboard so it's in a comfortable position for you.
2. Your screen and keyboard should be straight ahead of you, not off to the side.
3. Your screen should be 20 to 26 inches away from your eyes, and a little below eye level. Placing the monitor in the corner of a desk or cubicle can give you extra depth if needed.
4. Glare can be a big problem, especially if you have windows with bright daylight behind you. You can probably get window shades or an antiglare screen to reduce glare, or you may want to move the monitor so that it's at a 90° angle to windows.
5. Get a chair you can easily adjust for comfort and proper posture.
6. Use a raised document holder, rather than reading documents lying flat on a table.
7. Follow the 20/20/20 rule — every 20 minutes, stand up for 20 seconds and look at least 20 feet away.
8. Laptop computers are probably not a great choice for daily use. ***“Laptops, which have their screen, keyboard, and mouse in the same place, don't fit anybody well, especially not in their laps,”*** says CMDR Tim Jiggins, supervisor of the Ergonomics Program at FOH. Jiggins recommends using a docking station connected to a standard keyboard for a more comfortable posture.

In addition, you can explore the controls on your monitor and computer programs to make the screen easier to read. For example:

- You can adjust the brightness, contrast, and color to make words and images sharper.
- On most Web browsers—like Internet Explorer, Safari, or Firefox—you can enlarge the pages for easier readability.
- In word-processing programs—like Microsoft Word—you can adjust the page enlargement or the font size of documents you're working on.

If vision problems or pain persist after making such adjustments, you should contact your health care provider. □



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