

## **When A Colleague Is Grieving...**

### **10 Do's and Don'ts**

**1. Do acknowledge the person and his /her grief.**

Avoiding the person or the grief makes the grieving individual feel isolated and uncomfortable. Say hello, offer comfort by saying you are sorry for his loss or for what he is going through. There are no right words.

**2. Do offer your colleague an opportunity to talk or access your office** if she works in an open area and needs privacy.

**3. Don't say: "I know exactly how you feel."**

How could you know? No two people's grief experiences are the same.

**4. Do ask what she needs** as only she will know what she needs and when. It could be a listening ear or not talking about her grief in order to keep focused on her work. It could also be ideas/support in finding after school care or a flexible schedule to adjust to being a single parent.

**5. Don't share your personal experience** or what you read on Facebook or other social media. It will feel dismissive and as though the grieving person's experience is being minimized. If you know the person well, it may be appropriate to share your experience if your colleague knows you have been through a similar experience and asks your opinion.

**6. Don't expect clear stages of grief and a "Return to Normal".**

Our clients and grieving people in general report that there is no such thing as a "return to normal". It doesn't mean that grieving individuals will not be able to do their work and do it well, however their experience of the world and their priorities may change somewhat. They may have less patience for others' frustrations about minor issues.

**7. Do offer kindness in gestures and in thoughts.**

While there are no distinct 5 stages of grief as Kübler-Ross suggested in the late 1960s, individuals will feel an array of emotions and juggle many thoughts and issues at any given time. A grieving individual, whatever their age, will experience secondary losses when someone they love has a life-limiting illness or dies. These are losses that happen as a direct result of the illness or death. These losses may include, moving house, facing financial issues, ongoing stress, strained relationships and loss of friends.

**8. Don't expect everything to be "Resolved" in 6 months.**

There is no timeline for grief. However, if you have concerns about your colleague, talk to your supervisor or seek professional support.

**9. Grief affects people physically too.**

Not only is grief experienced emotionally, grief is also experienced at a physical level. One may experience fatigue, lack of sleep, loss of appetite, headaches, stress-related strains, etc.

**10. Do consult Hospice Calgary's website** for resources at [hospicecalgary.com](http://hospicecalgary.com)

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