

Coping with the loss of a coworker

Given how much time and energy we spend at work, our coworkers are like an extended family. It's not surprising that the loss of a co-worker can sometimes be difficult to manage, particularly if you were close to that person or if the loss was sudden and tragic.

It can be common to experience feelings such as shock, depression, or even anger after the news arrives. If the death occurred in the workplace, or your last interaction with the person was not pleasant, feelings of anxiety or guilt may also arise.

The Emotional Impact

How you cope with a loss can depend on many factors, from your personal beliefs to the presence of other stressors in your life. For some people, thoughts of the deceased and about the loss can be upsetting and disruptive at home and work.

The Physical Impact

A strong emotional response to the loss of a coworker can sometimes also have an impact on your physical health, particularly if normal healthy routines are not maintained. Feelings of sadness can disrupt eating and sleeping patterns. For those with existing health problems such as high blood pressure or other chronic health problems, even a brief deviation from prescribed diet, medication, or exercise regimens can have serious consequences.

What You Can Do


Grief is a natural process that requires time. Trying too hard not to think about your loss has its own consequences. Trying to avoid painful feelings by ignoring them, distracting yourself or numbing them with food, drugs or alcohol rarely help you feel better in the long run and can complicate the grief process.

If feelings of grief, loss or sadness continue for days or weeks, seeking additional support from a qualified professional such as a physician, clergy, or Caterpillar's EAP can help.

We also suggest the following:

- Share your feelings. Your coworkers may be experiencing the same feelings you. Mutual support can help everyone get through the grieving process.
- Maintain daily routines. Normal daily routines provide comfort and stability during times of grief. Don't forget to maintain consistent diet, sleep, exercise, and self care routines where possible during the grieving process.
- If you feel comfortable, consider attending a memorial service.
- Support informal rituals. A group of coworkers may create a memorial or organize a campaign for contributions to an appropriate charity. "Water cooler talk" can be therapeutic.
- Resume normal work routines in a respectful manner. Returning to the work routine can facilitate healing if the everyone makes an effort to uphold the values of the workgroup and the deceased, such as dedication, quality or customer services.
- Consider participating in any onsite grief counseling or EAP services offered. Learning about the process of grief, loss and healthy coping can be helpful in eventually resolving the pain of the loss.

For confidential support, free of charge, contact Caterpillar's **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**:

 **1-866-228-0565**

 **CaterpillarEAP.com**

For global access numbers by country

Source: Adapted from: The American Psychological Association. APA Help Center: <http://www.apahelpcenter.org>

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