

When a Coworker Passes Away

People who work together often feel like an extended family, and when a colleague dies, everyone is touched by the loss. When the death is unexpected—such as from an accident or violent event—the experience can feel even more overwhelming.

Take Time to Grieve

You and your coworkers will need time and space to process the loss. Consider meaningful ways to acknowledge and honor your colleague:

- **Host a workplace-only gathering.** A luncheon or internal memorial provides an opportunity for coworkers to share memories and recognize the unique role the individual played on your team.
- **Create a memorial board.** Photos, cards, or a meaningful item from the person's workspace can offer a comforting way to remember and reflect.
- **Organize a fundraiser.** Supporting a cause important to your coworker—or assisting their family—can be a powerful way to honor their life.
- **Compile a memory book.** Many families are not aware of their loved one's work life. Sharing stories, photos, or reflections can offer comfort to the family while giving coworkers a private and meaningful outlet for their own grief.

What to Expect

- **Everyone grieves differently.** You or a coworker who was especially close to the person may feel sadness, irritability, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, or a range of other emotions. All of these responses are normal.
- **Creating healthy memories supports healing.** Some people find comfort in talking about the person who died, while others prefer to grieve privately. Respect the different ways people cope.
- **Loss may surface personal questions.** The death of a coworker can trigger reflections about your own life, health, or relationships. You may feel anger, guilt, or confusion—these are common and valid reactions.
- **Transitions can be emotional.** When a new colleague fills the role of someone who has passed away, it's natural to feel resistance or discomfort. These reactions often reflect grief rather than the new employee's abilities or personality.
- **Reach out for support.** If you are struggling to cope or notice changes in your work performance, consider speaking with a professional. Asking for help is an important step in healing.

We're Here to Help

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