

Goal: This tip sheet is designed to provide information to staff members who are still grieving the loss of a loved one and help prepare them for their return to work.

Context: Work is a place where you spend a considerable amount of time. It is a source of many friendships and a place where you get social support. When someone close to you dies, not only do you have to cope with the loss, but you must also adjust to new routines.

Returning to work after the death of a loved one is an important but often difficult step. Here are some points for you to think about as you prepare for your return to work.

Key Points:

1. *Be easy on yourself.*

Expect and understand that it is “normal” to be more distracted or less productive than you were previously. Look after your physical needs by getting lots of rest, eating well and staying active. Look after your emotional needs by taking time to relax and making time to do things you enjoy.

2. *Take time out to grieve.*

Try to set time aside during the day to remember your loved one. Let your co-workers know you may need more privacy or even a place or time to cry.

3. *Consider how much you would like to share with others.*

Some people prefer to share their grief and sorrow with others; other people prefer more privacy. If you choose to share memories and feelings with co-workers, select those you trust. It is also important to ask co-workers about their ability to listen. Questions like “Is it okay that I’m sharing this with you” or “Please tell me if this is too much” are appropriate.

4. *Be understanding of your co-workers.*

Many co-workers are well-meaning and want to be supportive, but they may feel uncertain or awkward. Let people know what you are comfortable with. Don’t hesitate to say “It’s okay to ask how I am doing” or “I’d rather not discuss this right now” depending on the situation.

5. *Access the services and supports available to you.*

The Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) has specialized grief counselors available. You can call 780.428.7587 either to speak to a psychologist immediately, or to schedule an appointment. Services can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are also a variety of support groups, and specialized community resources available that your counselor could recommend.