



GRIEF IN THE WORKPLACE

The death of an Important Person is a life-changing event, and it can naturally affect how someone feels and functions day to day. Some employees may need extra rest, flexibility, or space to process their grief. Others may find comfort in the structure and focus that work provides. Neither response is right or wrong. What matters most is recognising that grief is part of being human, and with care and understanding, employees can continue to contribute meaningfully while also taking the time they need for their grief.

WHY WORKPLACE SUPPORT MATTERS

Workplaces can play a key role in supporting bereaved employees. For some, work offers routine, connection, and a sense of purpose. For others, returning too soon can feel overwhelming. Both responses are normal. How a workplace responds can make a significant difference to an employee's wellbeing and their sense of belonging.

COMMON IMPACTS YOU MAY NOTICE

- Forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating
- Increased sick leave or fatigue
- Emotional changes (irritability, sadness, numbness)
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches
- Withdrawal from colleagues or, conversely, immersing in work as a distraction
- Greater vulnerability around anniversaries and significant dates (birthdays, holidays, Mother's/Father's Day)

CARING FOR THE WHOLE TEAM

Supporting one employee through grief can stir up feelings for others too. Managers may feel uncertain or helpless, and colleagues may worry about saying the wrong thing. Encourage open, respectful communication, and remind staff that grief is not something to fix. Simply being present and kind makes a difference.

WAYS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT

- **Acknowledge the death:** A simple "I'm sorry to hear about your [Important Person]" is far more helpful than silence or clichés.
- **Be flexible:** Offer options such as reduced hours, remote work, or a gradual return to regular duties.
- **Clarify entitlements:** Ensure employees understand their compassionate leave and any additional supports offered.
- **Prioritise tasks:** Focus on essentials first.
- **Check in regularly:** Grief changes over time, so keep the conversation open.
- **Respect privacy:** Let employees decide what, and how much, they want to share.
- **Plan for key dates:** Ask if they'd like adjustments or time off around anniversaries.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Relying on clichés such as "time heals all wounds"
- Comparing their grief to your own
- Expecting them to "move on" by a set time
- Ignoring the loss or avoiding mention of their loved one
- Overloading them with tasks or pressure during this vulnerable period

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Remind employees that professional support is available if they need it. This may include your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), community grief services, or Lionheart.