

When Someone At Work Dies

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Most of us go to work expecting 'business as usual' and expect our day to be planned and ordered as usual. The last thing we expect is for a co-worker to die.

When this happens we will all respond slightly differently, it is not unusual to experience feelings of:

- Shock
- Disbelief
- Anger
- Guilt
- Numbness
- Loneliness
- Worry
- Sadness
- Failure
- Wanting to blame someone or something

As a result of these feelings we may have difficulty both at home and at work. We can find ourselves:

- Withdrawing from others
- Feeling tearful
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Not knowing what to say or how to put feelings into words
- Being irritable and snappy with others
- Thinking about the situation all the time
- Going over and over previous conversations you had with your colleague
- Wishing you had noticed more and done things differently
- Being reminded of similar experiences in the past

Some of us may also struggle with sleeping, eating and basic physical functions. We can find ourselves:

- Unable to sleep
- Having nightmares
- Waking up early
- Not wanting to eat anything or comfort eating
- Wanting to rest, but unable to remain calm
- Drinking more alcohol and/or smoking more cigarettes

All of these uncomfortable reactions are in fact natural reactions to a sudden, unexpected and tragic event. It is our body's way of responding to an immediate distress. For most of us, these reactions will diminish over time, however, there are some things we can do to help ourselves at this time:

- Talk to other colleagues and professionals about your reactions and feelings
- Seek support from family and friends if appropriate
- Maintain your usual daily routine as far as possible
- Eat well and take some exercise
- Avoid making major decisions about your work and life
- Visit your GP if you are experiencing strong physical or emotional reactions

If you do find yourself continuing to feel upset and distressed, and you notice that your reactions are getting worse over time, it is important to request further help.

You also have the EAP helpline available to you. It is a confidential 24 hour helpline which is staffed by counsellors and you can call any time and talk about your thoughts, feelings, reactions and concerns.

Please use as much support as you need at this time, even if you have never talked about yourself before to a professional. This has been a particularly difficult time for some of you and we want you to feel able to request whatever help and support you need.