

Coping with the Loss of a Co-Worker

The loss of a co-worker can be challenging and difficult; and just as with the loss of your own family member, you may feel a range of emotions. Experiencing strong emotions in a professional setting (though normal) can be especially uncomfortable.

You may feel:

- **Shock, denial, disbelief** – It is possible to feel stunned and unable to accept the situation.
- **Anger** – Feelings of powerlessness over the situation, being unable to change the outcome for the deceased, possibly feeling angry at having to have that intense emotion.
- **Depression** – Feelings of sadness, loss of interest in usual activities, difficulty concentrating at work, tearfulness or social isolation may occur.
- **Bargaining** – After the death of a close co-worker, we may find ourselves thinking about our own mortality. We may look at ourselves and ask how we could avoid a similar outcome. We may wish we could have done something to help the co-worker have a different outcome.
- **Acceptance** – The final stage occurs naturally after working through the feelings evoked during the prior stages of the loss. A sense of peace and resolution characterizes this stage, a sense of being able to go on and enjoy life.

Whether you experience any or all of the above, remember that such feelings are expected. Also, try not to compare yourself with what others are feeling—everyone will react in your own way.

Most importantly, don't keep your feelings bottled up or think that it's best to "go it alone." If emotional support is offered, accept it. If you need it, ask for it. It's okay to need comforting, so don't be afraid to ask. Loved ones, friends and co-workers want you to tell them you're ready to talk or that you need something. Go ahead and say what you're feeling. Above all, don't hesitate to seek the help of a professional to help you cope.

Your EAP is here for you.

We're available to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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