

## Beyond Benefits

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### Grief in the Workplace

People spend many hours of their lives with coworkers, and a coworker's death can be as devastating as losing a loved one. This is both a personal and professional loss for a business. If the death occurred while at work, surviving workers may feel survivor's guilt, anger and concern for their personal safety. This HelpSheet<sup>SM</sup> offers tips on helping cope with grief in the workplace.

#### Management

It is important for managers to recognize the impact a death has on his or her coworkers. Compassionate managers will find that employees benefit from caring, flexibility and respect for their pain. While every workplace culture differs, there are things a manager can do to assist his or her employee:

- Encourage employees to express their feelings.
- Provide an "open door" policy to all staff who wish to speak about their grief.
- Encourage employees to seek outside support, including using the company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Beyond Benefits.
- Be on the lookout for a coworker who is having a particularly difficult time.
- Arrange a workplace memorial service to honor the departed employee(s).
- If the business permits, offer flex time and working at home options so that the employees have time to grieve.
- Be compassionate to coworkers who may be experiencing a decline in productivity and a difficult time coping.

#### Employees

A coworker's death can be devastating for surviving employees. Everyone grieves differently; some coworkers may want to discuss the issue, while others may want to grieve privately. There are several ways employees can try to cope with their grief:

- Plan a memorial service for the departed coworker.
- Be on the lookout for a coworker who is having a particularly difficult time.
- Be compassionate to fellow coworkers who may be experiencing a decline in productivity and a difficult time coping.
- If there is a new hire who is occupying the job (and possibly the desk) of the departed employee, accept and welcome this person.
- Arrange to go to the funeral and support each other.
- Plan social outings as a group to help morale.

### Beyond Benefits: Here when you need us.

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