

How to Help

It can be hard to know how to support someone who has recently experienced the death of a loved one or another significant loss, and you may wonder how you can help.

Listen more than you talk and offer words such as:

- *I am sorry for your loss*
- *I am sorry you are hurting*
- *It's okay to cry*
- *It's okay to talk about _____*
- *Take time to collect your thoughts*

Avoid phrases like:

- *It was God's will*
- *You can remarry/ have another child/ at least you still have one child*
- *Don't cry/ be angry/ be afraid*
- *I know how you feel* (even if you know the person very well or have experienced something similar)

Make a specific offer of help:

- With permission, make a meal that can be easily frozen and include heating instructions
- Ask permission to help by picking up mail, walking the dog, or mowing the lawn. After an intense loss, it will likely be difficult for the grieving person to focus on everyday tasks.
- Offer what you can reliably provide and be sure not to make the person feel incapable or disallow them from returning to their routine when ready.

Tips to help move through grief

- Be gentle with yourself
- Seek help
- Give yourself time
- Stay involved with your family and friends

For more information,
contact your EAP.



City of Madison EAP Office

2300 South Park Street, Suite 111

Madison WI 53713

Phone: (608) 266-6561

[www.cityofmadison.com/
employee-assistance-program](http://www.cityofmadison.com/employee-assistance-program)

FEI Behavioral Health

1-800-236-7905

*The City's external EAP
provider is available 24/7*

City of Madison Employee Assistance Program

Grief and Loss



Grief and Loss

When we think of grief and loss, we typically think of the death of someone close to us, but grief can surface in response to many types of physical, relational, and symbolic losses. No two people grieve in exactly the same way, and feelings toward loss can vary from person to person. Example of loss may include:

- Death or loss of someone we love or who was significant in our life
- Our own serious illness or that of someone close to us
- A miscarriage or failed adoption
- Death of a beloved pet
- Loss of a job or financial security
- Workplace transition or retirement
- Loss of a dream that could have been

Experiences of Grief

Reactions to loss can differ widely from person to person, and can be impacted by our past experiences, culture, social upbringing, and many other factors. According to Agrace Hospice, some of the ways grief can be experienced includes:

- Tightness in throat
- Loss of appetite
- Sudden and unexpected crying or feelings of anger
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling as though the loss did not occur
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling the need to talk about the loss and share memories
- Identity or role confusion
- Changes in mood

Understanding Grief

Many people wonder if they are grieving in the “correct” or “normal” way. Many of us are familiar with the Stages of Grief, a model which is made up of five experiences that many grieving individuals have:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Though these stages are often thought to be linear, in reality they are not. People go in and out of the various stages of grief, and not smoothly through each and every stage. Even those who feel they have moved on or set their grief aside for a period of time can find themselves back in the stages at multiple times throughout their life, such as during anniversary dates or triggering events.

The important thing is for an individual to grieve when needed. The way to move past the grief is to go through it, not around it. Once the person feels their loss and pain, and doesn't avoid it, they can begin to heal and incorporate the loss into their life, and continue to move forward.



When to Seek Help

Help and support is available at all stages of the grief process, and most people are able to move through their grief without professional assistance. However, if you or someone you know experiences any of the following symptoms for an extended period of time, and if they interfere with your daily functioning, it may be time to seek out the help of your doctor, a professional counselor, or your EAP:

- Difficulty accepting the death or loss
- Numbness or detachment
- Trouble carrying out daily routines
- Significant trouble sleeping
- Extreme focus/preoccupation with the loss
- Withdrawal from social activities

Handling Grief in the Workplace

Since so much of our time is spent at work, it is important to address the topic of grief in the workplace, as it can be a source of great support for employees. Ways to show support include:

- Ask how the grieving person is doing and how the organization can support them
- If possible, allow for some flexibility in the person's work routine
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Consider if the employee's loss is impacting any of their co-workers and address it

If a current or retired employee dies, consider designating a liaison to ask the family if they will be holding a funeral or other event and if employees can attend, or consider arranging an opportunity at work for employees to honor the person who has died, pay tribute, or express their grief, such as contacting EAP to arrange an on-site grief session.