

When Tragedy Strikes

Dealing With Personal Grief in the Workplace

When you've suffered a loss, such as the death of a loved one, divorce or any other painful or permanent change in your life, you may wonder how you can carry on in such pain. How can you get through the work day and get your job done? It helps to remember that grieving is a process. In time, grief heals. This healing often happens in five stages:

1. *Denial*. Because it's hard to accept the pain of a loss, you may try to deny that a loss has even taken place and may feel numb. Denial may last a few moments or indefinitely.

2. *Anger*. When you can no longer deny that a loss has taken place, you may become very angry. The anger may be turned toward the world, yourself or even the person whose loss you are grieving.

3. *Bargaining*. You may relive the event, somehow feeling that you must make up for the loss or that if you had done something differently it wouldn't have happened. There may be a sense of guilt.

4. *Depression*. A feeling of hopelessness may set in as you realize that the loss is final and nothing you can do will change it. You may begin to "let go" of the person or event causing the grief.

5. *Acceptance*. In this final stage of grieving, you accept the loss and move on with your life.

Each stage of grief seems to be necessary to complete healing. How long each stage lasts depends on the nature of the loss and your reaction to it, but the odds are that sooner or later you will reach acceptance.

Sharing Your Grief

Talk about your feelings to those you trust. Write or talk about your loss and pain and about the good times you shared with the person whose loss you mourn. Allow yourself to cry or be angry. Try not to place blame on yourself or others for what happened. Above all, allow yourself time to heal.

When a Coworker Is Grieving

If you work with someone who has suffered a loss, the best thing you can do is be available to listen. Talking about the loss can help him or her move through the grieving process.

When To Ask for Help

Sometimes people get stuck in one stage of grief and can't seem to get past it. Seek counseling to help you move toward acceptance of your loss if:

- you find no change in your outlook for many weeks;
- you cannot seem to share your grief with friends;
- others cannot understand your sorrow; or
- you're not sure you should be feeling so much grief.

Though it may seem hard to talk to someone else about your grief right now, most people are relieved when they do.



© 1993 PARLAY INTERNATIONAL 1500.038

**Contact Your Employee Assistance Program
Outcomes, Inc. (505)243-7145 or 1-800-677-2947**