

Loss of any kind can profoundly affect the workplace. Most often businesses cannot afford to halt the demands of work, making it hard to find the time or space to understand your grief.

**It's important to remember that experiencing the emotions that accompany grief is a key part of healing from loss.** This can look different for everyone, depending on their needs and how they grieve.

## Take Care of Yourself

1. Take your time. Don't judge or measure your reactions by those of others.
2. Allow yourself time to grieve as well as giving yourself breaks from the grieving process.
3. Take the time to identify and understand your feelings. Emotions like shame, relief, anxiety and anger may surprise you.
4. Talking about your grief helps. Saying it out loud can be very powerful. If you don't feel comfortable talking to others about your feelings, consider writing a journal/letter or using other creative means to express yourself (e.g. art, dance)
5. Be kind to yourself. Try to include calming or relaxing activities in your day (e.g. walking, taking a bath, yoga, etc)
6. Remember to breathe. Taking a moment out of your day to take a deep breath. This will relax the body, calm your emotions and help to quiet and focus the mind.
7. Reach out to your support systems, including your friends, family members, doctor, counsellor, place of worship, etc.
8. Take care of yourself. Eat well, stay physically active, allow yourself time to heal. Avoid alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
9. Be prepared for triggers at work that will remind you of your co-worker
10. Learn to be sensitive and flexible with your new needs and lifestyle.



## What Does Grief Look Like?

Feelings and symptoms of grief don't occur on a timeline. They can last weeks, months or even years. The brief period given to attend the funeral usually only touches on the beginning stages of grief. Your grief will change as time goes on and it may take some time before you feel like yourself again.

### Emotions

- Shock/numbness
- Sadness
- Anger/agitation
- Guilt/Shame
- Depression
- Anxiety

### Physical Response

- Panic Attacks
- Restlessness
- Feeling weighted down

### Changes in your day-to-day

- Difficult sleeping
- Sleeping too much
- Disturbing/intense dreams
- Changes in eating habits
- Forgetfulness/Confusion

### Withdrawal

- Disconnection from others
- General Apathy
- Feeling exhausted/agitated by others
- Loss of meaning
- Detachment from religious/social groups

### Remember:

Everyone grieves in their own way. There is no right way to react to grief. You have the right to ask for what you need.

## Take Time to Grieve

You and your co-workers will need time to grieve. Here are some tips that can help the grieving process (these apply to loss through death but can apply to other kinds of grieving too):

### Remember the person:

- Share your favorite memories of the person, tell each other stories
- Place a photo, card, or special item that reminds you of the person in a place of prominence
- Create a memory book or memorial board (a collection of photos, drawings and other pieces of memorabilia)
- Support your co-workers if they are struggling with their grief. Things that you can say include:
  - “This is hard. I’m here for you if you need to talk...”
  - “How are you coping?”
  - “Is there anything you need?”
  - “Can I help with anything?”

### Say Goodbye

- If appropriate, attend the person’s funeral
- Write a letter to the person. Tell them what you miss about them or what was left unsaid
- Hold a moment of silence
- Plant a tree in memoriam

### Create a legacy

- Start a memorial fund
- Plan or attend a fundraiser to support a cause that was important to the person

## Resources

- *Good Grief: A Constructive Approach to the Problem of Loss* – Granger Westberg
- *How to Survive the Loss of a Love* – Colgrove, Bloomfield & McWilliams
- *Grief is a Journey* – Kenneth Doka
- *The Grief Recovery Handbook* – John James
- Hospice Online – [www.hospicenet.org](http://www.hospicenet.org)

## Returning to Work

Returning to work or continuing to work after a loss can be hard. You may experience some of the following when at work. It’s important to remember that this is all part of a normal grieving process:

- **Inability to concentrate:** You may find it hard to focus on tasks for long periods of time.



- **Lack of effectiveness:** It may take longer than usual for you to accomplish tasks.
- **Forgetfulness or absentmindedness:** You may have to rely more on lists and calendar reminders.
- **Feeling easily overwhelmed:** Tasks that felt easy before can sometimes feel difficult.
- **Lack of patience:** You might have a shorter fuse with colleagues or managers.
- **Exhaustion:** You will likely have days where it may be hard to get out of bed or have the energy to complete your day.
- **Disinterest:** It may be hard to find purpose in your work or in your colleagues.

## How fseap can help:

If you have trouble coping with the loss or if you find that your work is suffering, speaking to a professional can be very helpful.

**Remember that fseap can provide you with support, education and resources.**

**Call fseap for support 24/7/365  
1-800-667-0993**