

## CONVERSATIONS AS USUAL

*"... it's comforting to know that while you are suffering immensely, normality exists around you".*

*"It's nice to know people care but constantly being asked if you are ok gets frustrating because "no" I am not ok but I'm trying to be".*

*"Don't ask too many questions".*

*"Hearing about colleagues lives also helped me to realise a lot of happy things were still happening out there..."*

## OFFER

*"There was also access to an EAP counsellor if I needed that"*

Thank you to all who generously shared their stories for this brochure so others may benefit from their experiences.

## FUTURE PLANNING

Create a plan now for how you can support an employee in the event of a bereavement.

- How will you consult with your employee about what to tell colleagues and about how they want to be supported?
- How could you offer the most bereavement leave possible?
- In what ways could you offer flexibility on your employees return?
- Who would the 'go to' person be for your returning employee? How do you determine who this may be?
- Do you have resources about grief readily accessible to staff to help them be as supportive as possible to their colleague?
- Do you have access to counselling for staff?
- Does your workplace nurture a culture of caring?
- What could you put in place to manage absence from work at short notice?



## ONLINE RESOURCES

- [www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au/guidelines\\_for\\_employers.htm](http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au/guidelines_for_employers.htm) (for the printable resource: "How to be a compassionate employer")
- [www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz)
- [www.griefsupport.org.nz](http://www.griefsupport.org.nz)



Grief Support Services  
PO Box 3186 Tauranga 3142  
Phone 07 578 4480  
[support@griefsupport.org.nz](mailto:support@griefsupport.org.nz)

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# Bereavement in the Workplace

Ideas for employers supporting  
employees returning to work  
after a loss





## Your support matters

As an employer, you are in a position to make a difference for your employee as they find a way of living with their loss and adapting to a changed life. Your employee will need your, and their colleagues, support and understanding. Be prepared that this could be for longer than you imagine. No two people will respond the same way to losing a loved one.

Grief is not necessarily predictable.

The following suggestions are based on employees experience of what they found helpful and supportive.

### ACKNOWLEDGE

Make contact with your employee following their loved one's death. Offer your support and assure them that they do not need to be thinking about work at this time.

*"... asked if I would like a visit. He and another female staff member came to my house. I found it helpful returning to work later on as it eased awkwardness when seeing them again".*

### ASK

*"My manager phoned me and asked how I would like it handled. We agreed that she would email the whole organisation and tell them the situation, that I appreciated their concerns, and that I would appreciate not talking about it on my return. This was a huge help".*

*"My boss let those know that needed to know....and HR then let me decide what and when to tell anyone else on my return. I found this good as it allowed me to take a form of control about what happened next as it was my decision".*

### CHECK IN AND LISTEN

*"If he had been more gracious and just acknowledged my grief there would have been space where I could have felt calmer and would probably been more able to concentrate".*

*"Bereavement changes a person. It is constant and doesn't go away. Small things can trigger feeling down; patience is the key, understand some days are better than others".*

### SHOW YOU CARE

*"... the empathy she showed towards me and my situation was incredibly helpful".*

*"He was supportive, he actually asked if I wanted books, pamphlets and other material he and his family had. I did feel he was aware of the impact on us all".*

*"I had a close colleague who would hug me every morning and ask "is it a good day or bad day?" If I broke down he would take me away from the others and let me cry. All the staff knew, if I was crying, just let me and once I could control my tears, I could carry on with my work".*



### FLEXIBILITY

*"He was clear about what he needed regarding my return to work but he also listened to what I needed and let me determine when I was ready to come back".*

*"My boss let me decide about my hours on returning to work and I now know that while giving me a free reign she was also watching over me and would divert anything that may have caused unnecessary angst or stress".*

*"If I needed time out, 5 minutes or half an hour, it was good to know I could take it".*