

Best Practices in Grief & Bereavement Policies & Procedures

- * *What would it take for nursing homes to create a different relationship with grief?*
- * *Could working in your home help heal by offering a community of care when employees need it most?*
- * *What does a healing workplace look like?*

Workplaces where the well-being of employees is prioritized by top management, backed by clear policies, and not left to ad hoc decisions by a few thoughtful managers, recognize the unique path that grief charts in every individual. These workplaces go beyond the ‘one size fits all’ solutions like ‘mental health’ and ‘mindfulness’ apps by striving to create significant structural reforms where employees can be vulnerable without always having to worry about the bottom line.

“A workplace attentive to grief will help reinforce healthy boundaries and make sure people get the time and space they need to heal. At the other end, a workplace where grief isn’t legitimized will add to the grievers’ trauma.” ~Tanmoy Goswami

Data suggests that the cost of implementing even a few changes is less than that price tag and will ultimately reduce the loss of productivity and valued employees. The more we can normalize discussions of loss and the resulting grief within the working environment, the healthier the company can become.

Cost of Grief and Bereavement on the Workforce

There has only been one large-scale grief workplace study done in 2002:

- Annual cost for all types of grief for all sectors was [\\$75 billion](#)* (\$127 billion in 2023 dollars)
 - Death of a loved one: 37.6 billion (63.7 b)
 - Divorce/marital woes: 11 billion (18.6 b)
 - Family crisis: 9 billion (15.2 b)
 - Death of an acquaintance: 7 billion (11.8 b)
 - Money trouble at home: 4.6 billion (7.8 b)
 - Pet loss: 2.4 billion (4 b)

“Employers don’t like to think about death,” Sharma says. “They simply don’t care about people in grief. They just want you to dust yourself off and get on with it.”

<https://www.welcometothejungle.com/en/articles/dealing-with-grief-and-loss-at-work>

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), up to [4.5% of the American workforce](#) could be grieving the loss of a loved one. For the \$20-trillion U.S. economy, this means that up to \$942 billion of productivity and business growth has been directly affected by grief.

*Source: *The Grief Recovery Institute, 2002*

Turnover

The “[great resignation](#)” in 2021 saw the quit rate at a 20-year high. Many people who worked on the frontlines of COVID-19 chose to leave the field due to the [PTSD](#) they received from that environment.

- The healthcare sector [lost 20%](#) of its workforce
 - 28% reported quitting due to burnout.

Impacts Of Grief on Employees

- Absenteeism
- Occupational injury/Worker’s Comp
- Employee turnover
- Diminished productivity
- Poor decision making
- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Poor interactions with co-workers
- Reduced morale and motivation
- Mood swings and behavioral changes

Repeated exposure to death put employees at risk for:

- [Bereavement overload](#), also known as cumulative grief, is the way you feel after Related to [compassion fatigue](#); the feeling that you have no more empathy left to give
- Untreated, bereavement overload can lead to [Pathological/complicated grief](#)
- Burnout
- PTSD
- Grief impacts physical and mental health, [even increasing someone’s chance of dying](#).
- [Increased alcohol use/binge drinking/use of other substances](#).

Generous bereavement policies increase employee loyalty, but these policies are not commonly shown to be taken advantage of.

Broaden policies to include:

- Close people, not just family
- Partners not just spouses
- Foster/adopted children not just birth
- [Pregnancy loss](#)
- Absenteeism

Offer Bereavement Days:

- Allow more than three days
- Allow for part time staff
- Allow use of time within the first year/not immediate consecutive days
- Allow unpaid time to be used after paid bereavement time
- Allow donations of paid time off between staff
- Allow scheduling flexibility
- Don't require proof

Normalize Self-Care:

- Encourage walking
- Spending time in nature/outside
- Healthy eating
- Adequate sleep, time with family/friends
- Doing creative things like art/crafts
- Listening to and/or making music, grief journaling, etc.

Provide Mental Health Support:

- Employee Assistance Plan (EAP)
- Employee Resource Group (ERG)
- Outside specialized support (example: <https://www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org/lorys-place/lory's-place>)
- Chaplain
- Counseling by a licensed mental health provider
- Anonymous support line
- Have a Crisis Support Team (for the death of a teammate, suicide of a teammate or resident, workplace violence, fire, etc.)
- Hold memorials when staff and residents pass

Provide Training:

- Workshops, trainings, staff development surrounding grief and bereavement
- Supervisor training on how to recognize and support grief and bereavement

Include the Residents:

- Bereavement plans
- Counseling and Support Groups
- Spending extra time with them
- Holding memorials
- Keeping advanced directives up to date and accessible to staff

Avoid Assumptions:

- Work is a good distraction
- You shouldn't talk about grief
- They will feel better after this year
- It wasn't a major loss

Support from supervisors can not only build trust but also assists employees in their recovery from grief. Supervisors can offer support by:

- Communicating regularly
- Acknowledging the loss
- Offering specific help
- Appointing one person to facilitate help
- Having an "open door" policy
- Offering simple gestures, such as phone calls, texts, flowers, attending the service, etc.

92% of workers said they were more likely to stay with an empathetic employer.

(Business Solver's 2021 'State of Workplace Empathy' annual study)

Additional Resources:

Educational Videos

[YouTube: The Grief Channel](#)

[Psych Hub: Helping with Grief & Loss](#)

[Understanding Grief and Loss and Associated Anger and Depression](#)

[Grief and Loss Interventions for Individual and Group Counseling](#)

[Grief in the Workplace eLearning courses launch](#)

[Grief at Work webinar. Supporting colleagues and staff who are grieving. June 30 2020](#)

[How to Manage Grief in the Workplace - TIPS FOR MANAGERS, TEAM LEADS AND EMPLOYEES](#)

[Dealing with GRIEF: Processing Grief as a Team](#)

[Dealing with GRIEF: Cumulative Grief](#)

[Nursing Fundamentals Grief and Loss Unit 15 F18](#)

[Workplace Grief & Loss for Healthcare Professionals](#)

[The Science & Process of Healing from Grief | Huberman Lab Podcast #74](#)

[The Physical Symptoms of Grief](#)

Training Resources

[whatsyourgrief: Continuing Education Workshops](#)

[The Grief Center: Professional Training](#)

[Imgaine University: Grief Education and Workshops](#)

[Irish Hospice Foundation: Grief in the Workplace](#)

[Our House Grief Support Center: Training and Resources](#)

[Linkedin Learning: Manager's Guide to Supporting a Grieving Employee](#)

[SageHR: Five Meaningful Ways That HR Can Support Grief in the Workplace](#)

[HopeforBereaved: HOW TO HELP WHEN GRIEF IS IN THE WORKPLACE](#)

[dougorg: Grief Education & Training](#)

[centerforloss: Trainings](#)

[jeffspace: Corporate Grief Support](#)

[Association for Death Education & Counseling](#)

[Omega Journal of Death & Dying](#)

Resources from MDHHS (Michigan.gov)

[Michigan Resources for Grieving Families](#)

[Webinars and Videos on Coping with Grief and Loss](#)

Podcasts and Music

[21 of the Best Grief Podcasts](#)

[Podcasts for Grief and Loss](#)

[North Star Grief Support Playlists](#)

Chaplain Training Resources

<https://befrienderministry.org>

<https://www.icpt.edu>

<https://cismcertifications.org>

What people think grief is like:

START-----END

What it is really like:

