

# Emotional wellbeing and work-life balance resources to keep you at your best

SupportLinc offers expert guidance to help you and your family address and resolve everyday issues



## In-the-moment support

Reach a licensed clinician by phone 24/7/365 when you call for assistance.



## Short-term counseling

Access no-cost in-person or virtual (video) counseling sessions to resolve emotional concerns such as stress, anxiety, depression, burnout or substance use.



## Coaching

Get assistance from a Coach to boost your emotional fitness, learn healthy habits, establish new routines, build your resilience and more.



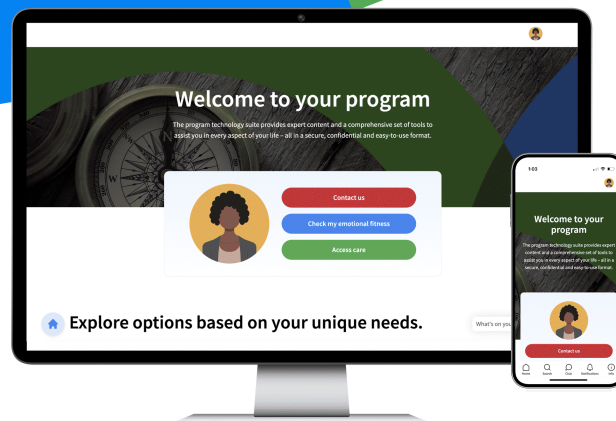
## Work-life benefits

Receive expert consultations for financial and legal issues. Work-life specialists also provide convenience referrals for everyday needs such as child or elder care, pet care, home improvement or auto repair.



## Confidentiality

Strict confidentiality standards ensure no one will know you have accessed the program without your written permission except as required by law.



## Your web portal and mobile app

- Create a personal profile to quickly access support from a licensed clinician
- Receive recommendations and care options based on your unique needs
- Exchange text messages with a Coach
- Attend anonymous group support sessions on a variety of topics
- Strengthen your mental health and wellbeing at your own pace with self-guided digital therapy
- Discover flash courses, self-assessments, financial calculators, career resources, articles, tip sheets and videos



## Start with Mental Health Navigator

Take the guesswork out of your emotional fitness! Visit your web portal or mobile app to complete the short Mental Health Navigator assessment. You'll instantly receive personalized guidance to access care and support.



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# Grief and loss

Grieving a loss, whether it is a loved one, a family member, a friend or a co-worker, is difficult and painful. When we lose someone close to us, we go through a process of grieving and mourning. When the loss is sudden or tragic, that process can be made even more difficult. As we go through the grieving process, it is important to recognize it and know the ways to best help yourself get through it.

## The grief process

The feelings and symptoms of grief can take on many different forms and is unique for each of us. There is no right or wrong way to feel, and there is no specific rule that says you have to finish grieving after a certain time. The important thing is that you take the time you need to go through the various stages of grief, and to be able to acknowledge your feelings along the way.

There are generally five stages of grief that we go through when we have a loss. We don't go through the stages in any particular order, and there is no time limit as to how long a person may experience each stage. The stages are:

- **Denial:** Someone in this stage is in shock and disbelief about the loss. They are unable to acknowledge the loss and may try to ignore it or pretend that nothing has happened. This stage can help protect a person from the immediate intensity of the loss.
- **Bargaining:** In this stage a person may focus on ways they could have prevented the loss, or on what they might have done differently. Sometimes a person will try to make a deal with someone or something in the belief that those actions can be undone. Feelings of guilt are common in this stage.
- **Anger:** At this point, a person begins to realize the lack of control and power they had in preventing the loss. A person in this stage may lash out at friends, family, and their faith system. Sometimes the person will feel anger about being abandoned or left alone. There may be attempts to blame others for not preventing the loss.
- **Depression:** The impact of the loss is felt in this stage, as well as the significance of the loss. People may have crying spells, difficulty eating or sleeping, poor concentration, and lack of energy.
- **Acceptance:** In this stage, people come to an understanding of what the loss means to them and begin to move forward. They have integrated the loss with their life experiences. They have resolved their feelings about the loss, and they have finished grieving.

## Coping with Loss

The grief process may be different for every person. What may work for one person who experienced a loss may not work for you. How you cope with a loss is going to depend on what works for you, and not what other people consider to be the "right" way to grieve. Listed below are some tips to help you through this difficult time:

- **Identify your support system.** While you may sometimes feel alone as you are grieving, you are not. There are other people in your life that you can use for support. They may be family, friends, support groups, people in your faith community, or mental health professionals.
- **Express your feelings.** Do not be afraid to tell people how you feel or to express those feelings. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to feel. If it is difficult to verbalize how you feel, use other methods like journaling or drawing to express yourself. It is important to acknowledge your feelings in order to help you better cope with the loss.
- **Take care of yourself.** When we deal with a stressful situation like a loss, it is easy to forget about taking care of ourselves. It is important that you remember to eat and sleep adequately. It is okay to give yourself a break from the grief. Sometimes we need a diversion from the stress to allow us the opportunity to recharge mentally. Keeping

ourselves healthy makes it easier to deal with the loss. Avoid drinking alcohol or using drugs as they will inhibit or prevent you from moving forward with your grief.

- **Do what works for you.** Everybody has their own way of coping. For some people going to wakes and funerals, when the loss is a death, is important to them since it gives them a feeling of closure. For others going to those events is too difficult, and they find other ways for closure such as creating a memorial or engaging in an act to honor the lost person, such as planting flowers or donating to a favorite charity in their name. Whatever will help you deal with the loss in a healthy, productive way is acceptable.
- **Plan for the future.** When we lose someone close to us, there will come times, like anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and other special events, that will evoke intense feelings and emotions. This is normal and should be expected. Planning ahead on how you will handle those times can make those special days less difficult.

Coping with a loss is difficult as we struggle with our feelings while trying to say "goodbye". Going through the grieving process is not something that must be done alone. If you find yourself having difficulty coping with loss, you may wish to speak with a professional counselor for additional support and assistance.

# Coping with the loss of a coworker

People who work together are like extended families, and when a person dies, friends and coworkers grieve. When the death is unexpected, it can be particularly traumatic.

## The grieving process

Feelings and symptoms of grief can take weeks, months, and even years to manifest and evolve. People do not heal on a timetable, but over time the emotions do ease. The brief time given to attend the funeral only touches the beginning stages of grief. Experts describe the feelings, symptoms and outcomes of grief in various ways.

Broadly speaking, the feelings and symptoms of grief may include: shock, denial, anger, guilt, anxiety, sleep disorders, exhaustion, overwhelming sadness, and concentration difficulties.

Most of the time a person feels several of these emotions at the same time, though perhaps in different degrees. Eventually, each phase is completed and the person moves ahead. The extent, depth, and duration of the process will also depend on how close people were to the deceased, the circumstances of the death and their own situation. Some outcomes of grief may include finding a new balance (which does not necessarily mean that things will be the same) and growth (readiness to move ahead with one's life).

## Take time to grieve

You and your coworkers will need time to grieve. Below are some suggested activities:

- Create a memorial board. A photo, card, or special item the person kept on his/her desk can be a way to remember.
- Hold or participate in a fundraiser for a special cause or for the family of the deceased.
- Create a book of memories to give to the family. Many people are not aware of the work life of people they love. These will be unique memories for the family and a way for you to privately express feelings and memories.
- Conduct a workplace-only event. A luncheon or office-only memorial is a chance for coworkers to acknowledge their unique relationship with the deceased.
- Attend the funeral or memorial service.

People experience grief differently. You or a coworker who was particularly close to a person who died may feel depressed, absentminded, short-tempered, or exhausted. These are all normal feelings. Creating healthy memories is part of healing. Some people find talking about the deceased helps them manage their grief. Others keep to themselves. Respect the fact that others may feel the loss more or less strongly than you, or cope differently. A death also generates questions and fears about our own mortality. If a coworker dies, you may feel guilty or angry at the person, at life, or at the medical profession. It may cause you to question your own life. These are normal emotions.

Be aware of how you react to a deceased coworker's replacement. Your anger or disappointment at his/her performance, personality or work style may be less a function of the individual than your grief about the person they are replacing.

### **Seek assistance**

Consider speaking with a professional counselor if you have trouble coping with the loss of your coworker or if you find that your work is suffering. A decrease in your performance could be a signal that this loss is affecting you more profoundly than you thought.

# Tips for managers

Following a major change, a loss, or a sudden, unexpected or traumatic workplace event, employees will often look for guidance and support from leadership. Sometimes, managers are unsure how to respond. While each situation is unique, there are some general guidelines that managers can follow to ensure that they are able to address some of the most important needs of employees immediately following a traumatic event.

## Tips for Managers

- Take practical steps to reduce the source of the stress.
- Communicate frequently with your employees. •Encourage teamwork and cooperation.
- Set clear work standards.
- Considering modifying rules and procedures that are counterproductive, especially following a traumatic event.
- Take steps to prevent accidents and illness.
- Prevent overwork and exhaustion.
- Make it clear that this may be a difficult time, and that is okay to share feelings of stress, worry, or frustration.
- Acknowledge the benefits of counseling during stressful times and encourage employees to contact the EAP for support.
- Provide opportunities for employees to talk about their stressful experiences.
- Remember that the EAP is a resource for employees and managers.
- Don't underestimate the impact of stress on you as an individual - take care of yourself.

For additional information regarding assisting employees following a traumatic event, contact your Employee Assistance Program.