

Leading Through Grief
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- When grief happens to you (Guidelines per Leading Through Personal Tragedy, Jean Alexander, Congregations, Vol 1, 2011, p 19-21.)
 - Remember, your work colleagues do not have a right to know every detail about your personal life.
 - Tell the truth but not all the gory details. Secrecy is not a helpful thing in families and work can function as a family system.
 - As much as possible, share only what is yours to share.
 - Be as clear as you can about what you need and what you don't. (Others might cope very differently.)
 - Communicate if possible in writing.
 - Update your team as necessary.

- When grief happens at work
 - Not all grief is related to bereavement.
 - Most returning employees are likely upset, distracted, and show other signs of grief; and particularly after only taking 3.8 days in total off work on average.
 - Many employees are likely to return to work in shock and disbelief over the death. Most would therefore experience continuing or periodic intense mourning following the death and for some time afterward, as people can take up to 2 years to recover. Some would also be emotionally distraught and physically tired for some time because of being an informal caregiver up to and perhaps also during the final dying process.
 - Creating space to acknowledge the realities of grief can reduce isolation and harm.
 - Two years is widely considered the timeframe for grief recovery. However, some people experience extremely intense grief, with this grief often prolonged if not permanent in effect.
 - A Study to Understand the Impact of Bereavement Grief on the Workplace, Donna M. Wilson, Sehrish Punjani, Qingkang Song, and Gail Low, OMEGA—Journal of Death and Dying, 2021, Vol. 83(2) 187–197

- What can we do institutionally?
 - Watch for signs of grief, and be prepared to respond.
 - Invest in grief-informed training and research for the education staff.
 - Appoint a grief advocate to be in charge of fielding questions and organizing support, such as meals and condolences, for a colleague who may be grieving.
 - Flexible policies that permit grieving bereaved employees to integrate their loss and reconstruct the meaning of their experience with dignity may also prevent negative behaviors from manifesting in either bereaved employees or their work colleagues.
 - Develop flexible leave policies that are intersectional and grief-informed (align with the realities of grief).
 - Have a grief action plan checklist to cover recurring teacher duties like orchestrating hall duty, submitting lesson plans, or volunteering for after school events, so a person who is grieving does not have to worry about these tasks. After losing a close loved one, a person living with grief acquires several new responsibilities at home, such as planning a funeral, managing end-of-life paperwork, and/or tending to physical needs.
 - Be critically aware of the current grief local and global climate (e.g., increases in violence against disadvantaged or minority groups; unevenly distributed pandemic-related grief among communities of color). Without racial justice, schools cannot be humanizing spaces for grieving individuals.
 - Recognize that for Black colleagues, the pain of grieving is magnified because Black people are continually grieving. White educators, in particular, need to work to understand how white supremacy inflicts continual pain on Black colleagues through police brutality and the unequitable impacts of the coronavirus pandemic referenced earlier.
 - Listen to a person who is grieving. Resist corrective impulses, such as “fixing” their grief. Even when well-intentioned, this response dismisses the person’s experiences with grief.
 - Loss And Grief In The Workplace: The Challenge Of Leadership, Mary Tehan, Neil Thompson, Omega, Vol. 66(3) 265-280, 2012-2013
 - Creating Space for Grief: Cultivating an Intersectional Grief-Informed Systemic Pathway for Teacher Leaders, Sakeena Everett, Mandie Bevels Dunn, English Leadership Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 4 April 2021

- Thoughts from the field
 - Preplanning is very helpful. You won't be in a frame of mind to figure it out when it's happening.
 - Establish an emergency response team, and have response kits and resources ready.
 - Use external and internal resources.
 - Hospitals
 - Other districts
 - Other buildings
 - It was very difficult when there was a suicide and we didn't have a plan together. We made mistakes and didn't have the right expertise.
 - Have drop in centers.
 - No appointments
 - Counselor
 - Psych/SW
 - Adult coloring books
 - Really public grieving process (big grief cards, etc.) can promote idealization of suicide or death, especially for fragile students on the edge.
 - Plan how to share news—control the message.
 - Good communications support/expertise is vital.
 - Be accurate, and have permission to share info.
 - Don't internalize it.
 - Have administrative backup.
 - Have therapy for those providing therapy.
 - Keep an eye out for one another.
 - You don't know when something will happen with students or staff.
 - Accident
 - Staff member announcing stage 4 cancer
 - EAP
 - Routines can be comforting.

- Some resources
 - Dougy.org
 - good-grief.org
 - nctsn.org