Grief and Loss in the Workplace During COVID-19

*Best Practices & Strategies*

Cindy Joyce & Susan Retik
Introductions

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Beyond the 11th, Co-Founder and CEO
We are all experiencing loss and are grieving

Although universal, we each have our own set of obstacles and ways in which we deal with the crisis

Take care of yourself first

Be a kind and compassionate leader

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Business as UNusual
What’s Happening...

- HEALTH
- GLOBAL CRISIS
- SOCIAL DISTANCING
- SCHOOL CLOSURES
- HIGH LEVELS OF FEAR AND ANXIETY
- BUSINESS DISRUPTION
- REMOTE WORK
- LOSS AND GRIEF

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LOSS

The state of being deprived of someone or something of value.

Routine

Social interaction

Normalcy

Freedom
In Addition to COVID-19

Loss that may be affecting employees...

• Loss of a loved one
• Divorce/breakup with a significant other
• Change in health (for self or family member)
• Loss of income/job of spouse
• Caring for aging parent(s)
• Miscarriage
• Loss of a beloved pet
### Feelings of Grief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sorrow</th>
<th>Misery</th>
<th>Sadness</th>
<th>Anguish</th>
<th>Pain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distress</td>
<td>Agony</td>
<td>Torment</td>
<td>Affliction</td>
<td>Suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartache</td>
<td>Brokenhearted</td>
<td>Woe</td>
<td>Desolation</td>
<td>Despondency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dejection</td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>Mortification</td>
<td>Angst</td>
<td>Emptiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Stages of Grief

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Grief is **NOT** One Size Fits All...
Important to put your own mask on first!

- What worries you? What are you ruminating over? What are the bright spots?
- Which emotions are you feeling? – NAME them!
- What are you noticing in your body?
- What do you want and need? Both small and big things...

Ask Yourself – How am I Doing?
SELF Care is Vital

Quiet Reflection  Meditation  Journaling

Exercise  Good nutrition  Time in Nature

Connecting with others  Purpose
Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Team

RELATIONSHIPS   COMMUNICATE   PRIORITIZE   ROUTINE   EMPATHY

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What Can You Do as a Leader?

• **Acknowledge**: People are **NOT** working at home. They are at home dealing with a crisis while trying to get work done!

• Start with the relationship – **relationship before task**

• Communicate! Leaders need to be VISIBLE and in touch

• Make it personal - 1 on 1 meetings are critical

• Establish routines

• Prioritize – Get clear on what’s important

• Focus on outcomes, not activities

• Implement autonomy and trust (give agency)...

• Be flexible

• Manage expectations - **Don’t be tone deaf!**
Think Before You Speak...
What NOT to Say

• If anyone can handle this, you can
• At least...
• Time heals
• Maybe it is for the best
• It was God’s will
• Being at work is what you need right now
• It’s all part of a bigger plan
• I know exactly how you feel
• Don’t feel that way... (sad, guilty)
Try THIS instead...

- What has this experience been like for you?
- How is working from home going for you?
- I am so sorry for what you’re going through
- Please know I am thinking of you
- How are you doing today?
- I appreciate all that you share with me
- It seems like a lot of people in your family turn to you for help, who do you go to when you need support?
One size fits all approach does NOT work. Never assume you know what someone needs – ASK.

Be FLEXIBLE – with everything including expectations…

Small gestures warrant loyalty for a lifetime.

Ask yourself – What would you like your employees to say about how you handled COVID as an organization or as a leader when we are on the other side of this…
“At the end of the day people won’t remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.”

— Maya Angelou
What questions do you have?