Grieving While Working

Grief can make everything feel harder. When you're grieving while working, even ordinary tasks can feel overwhelming. Grief affects our emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being, often making what once felt manageable seem impossible.

Emotional

Your life may have changed drastically, but the world around you might continue as if nothing has happened. People who are grieving frequently experience anger, resentment, fear, sadness, worry, confusion, and guilt.

- Identify and acknowledge your emotions without judgment, even the uncomfortable emotions
- Express emotions through art, writing, physical movement, talking or music to allow them to move through you
- Find a trusted friend or colleague who can listen without fixing; sometimes it can be helpful to say directly "I just need someone to listen"

Cognitive

Grief commonly affects memory and concentration. Yet many grieving individuals are given only a few days of bereavement leave and are expected to resume work at full capacity. Experiencing the cognitive symptoms of grief in a work setting can feel both frustrating and unsettling.

- Consider strategies to support your memory: sticky notes at the door to remember to take your belongings, sticky notes at work to recall important numbers
- Break tasks out into smaller chunks
- Give yourself more time to complete tasks or reports
- Advocate for use of additional leave if appropriate or feasible

Physical

Many people who are grieving report disruptions to their appetite and sleep. Others report gastrointestinal distress, headaches, or unexplained body aches. If you are experiencing a new physical symptom, please talk to a doctor and make sure to tell them you are grieving. Other tips:

- Drink water. Grief is dehydrating, and the body can feel additional discomfort when dehydrated
- Get horizontal and rest rather than forcing sleep. Use music or a sleep app to help tend to the quiet at nighttime. Remember that rest is valuable even when sleep does not come
- Eat small meals that are easy on the stomach to aid in digestion
- Slow and easy stretching can tend to tight muscles. Grief is heavy, and our bodies respond to the emotional weight we are carrying. Stretching can help unburden some of the stress.

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