

HOW TO COMFORT A GRIEVING COWORKER



Summary: *Grief is always something hard to handle, but when it involves coworkers, knowing how to best express your support of them escapes many people.*

The chance that someone at your office will have to deal with the loss of a loved one is great. Knowing how to best help them may be difficult. Often, people just avoid saying or doing anything to acknowledge what has happened, which only tells the grieving coworker that no one cares. To avoid giving this impression, follow these tips to show sympathy to your coworker.

- Don't try to fix or justify the situation. If the coworker loses a child, don't say "You'll have more," or "Your baby is in a better place." You are saying this with the best intention, but it will be taken as dismissive. If your coworker has a serious illness like cancer, don't say "You'll be fine." You don't know this and have no right to be saying it.
- Be sincere in your apology and support. The simplest way to do this is say, "I'm so sorry. If there is anything you need, please don't hesitate to ask." Don't offer things to help them because only they will know what they need.
- Food goes a long way to show you care. Prepare a dish that can be cooked when they need it and that is in a disposable dish that they **don't have to stress** about returning to you.
- Give them **space to deal with their emotions** at work. They may experience sudden emotions that cause them to be embarrassed. Find a way to give them a moment to themselves by politely excusing yourself from the cubicle or office to do something.
- Processing grief is done differently by everyone, so don't judge them on how they do it. Returning to work the day after the loss may be how they need to deal with it.
- The anniversary of a loss or hardship may come up, so be aware and sensitive to the fact that the person may take the day off of work. Let them know you are thinking of them, especially during the holiday season when the pain of losing loved ones can be harder to bear.

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