

Grief at Work

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Introductions

- 👉 **Name**
- 👉 **Location**
- 👉 **What comes to mind when you think of grief?**





Raine Shakti

- 15 years as an Organizational Change Management Practitioner
- Masters in Spirituality, Culture, and Health
- Masters in Thanatology
- Holding Luke when he died

GROUNDWORK

Expectations

Agenda

Learning Objectives

Why this matters



In Memory of
CAPT. JOHN TREVETT
who departed this Life
Nov. 5. 1823. Aged 76.

He was a true Patriot of the Revolution,
and served his Country faithfully, from the
Commencement, to the Close of that War;
was honoured with various Commissions in the
Army; was three times at the Capture of New-
Providence; was in many serious Engagements;
and received several severe wounds in the cause
of Independence; he received as his only reward
the Satisfaction of Reflecting, that by his Efforts,
he had contributed to the Establishment of the blood-
-bought Liberties of his Country.

Also of Elizabeth, his amiable consort
and daughter of the late
Capt. John Holms Gardner, who departed
this life Jan. 22. 1823. Aged 74.

And Capt. Constant Church Trevett,
Also Capt. Eleazer Trevett, &c.
both of whom died in the cause of their Country
on board the British Frigate, near
at the close of the War.

Expectations

What do you
expect to get out
of this workshp

Agenda

Groundwork

How People Grieve

Grief in a Multicultural Society

Grief at work

Exceeding Grief

Helping those who are hurting

**Why this
matters**

**Financial
Costs of
Grief**



**People
Matter**





**I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will
never forget how you made them feel.**

Maya Angelou

20XX

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The Bottom Line

The Financial Cost of Grief



\$125 Billion
per year



Accidents and Mistakes



Presenteeism

HOW PEOPLE GRIEVE

Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning

Grief: More than just tears

Grief is a Spectrum

More than the Stages

Choices and Resilience

Love Always



Key Definitions

- Someone suffers a loss
- Can be a death or other loss

Bereavement



- A person's involuntary response to a loss

Grief



- Active processes, ways, and rituals that people use manage their grief
- Can be individual or collective

Mourning



Discussion



- What comes to mind when you think of grief?
 - How does grief manifest?
 - Is there a timeline for grief?

Dimensions of Grief

Presentation title

Physical

- Digestive problems
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Headaches
- Sore muscles
- Sleep disruption
- Weight loss / gain
- Dry mouth
- Lack of coordination

Emotional

- Sadness
- Shock
- Numbness
- Denial
- Anger
- Guilt
- Loneliness
- Self Reproach

Cognitive

- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Preoccupation
- Dreams of the deceased

Behavioral

- Addiction
- Reckless behavior
- Loss of motivation
- Procrastination
- Loss of interest in appearance
- Avoiding reminders of the deceased
- Overactivity

Social

- Loss of interest in activities
- Disconnection from friends
- Problems functioning within a group or social organization

Spiritual

- Loss of faith connection
- Angry at god
- Searching for a sense of meaning
- Finding one's way back to faith

Spectrum of Grief



- Physical Express of Grief
e.g. Building a memorial

Instrumental Griever



Grievers can be anywhere along the spectrum

- Emotional expression of grief
- e.g. journaling

Intuitive Griever



Grief Theories versus Reality



Theory



Reality

- Theories indicate grief progresses along an orderly predefined route
- Reality is that grief is individual and each griever processes grief individually
- Understanding theory can be helpful in understanding what grievers are going through

Stage Based Theories Example: Kubler Ross-Five Stages of Grief

Overview

- Originally developed to represent the five stages of grief the **dying** go through
- Indicates a linear progression through grief
- Was publicized to indicate that this was how all grievers grieve

Commentary

- Simplistic linear view of grief
- Indicates that there is a “right” way to grieve
- Laypeople and professionals may believe there is something wrong if someone does not grieve according to the phases

Example: Kubler-Ross Five Stages of Grief

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

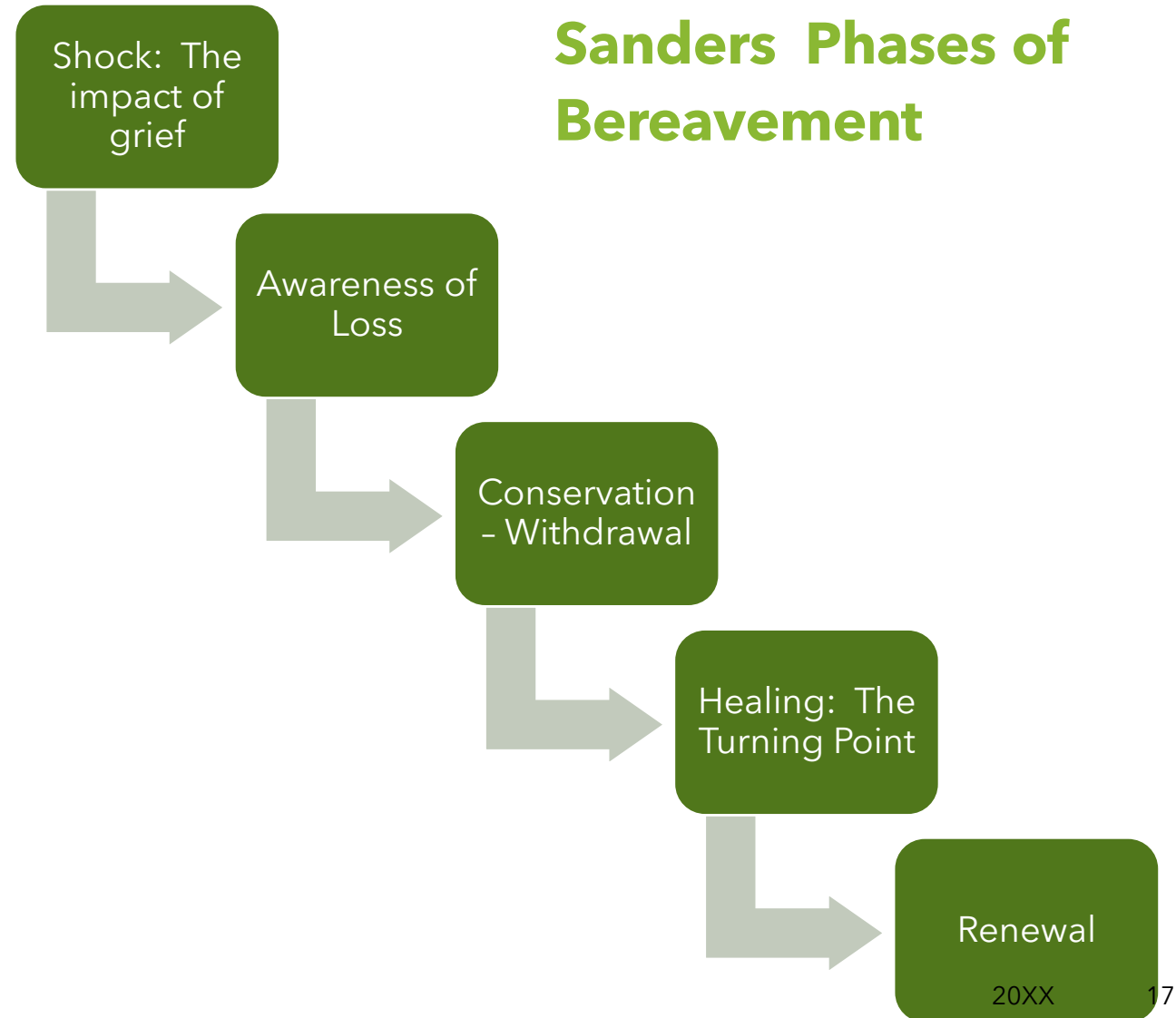
Phase Based Theories Example:

Overview

- Similar to stage-based theories in that they indicate there is a universal pattern as to how humans move through grief
- Sanders' theory was developed after the loss of her teenage son

Commentary

- Posits that griever's have choices
- Research based versus clinically based



Task Based Theories

Overview

- Tasks are not laid out as linear, which suggests they can be accomplished in any order
- Completing tasks can include large and small steps. For instance, accepting reality of loss includes changing from saying "is" to saying "was"

Commentary

- Allows for more fluid processing of grief

Worden's Task Based Theory

Accept the reality of
the loss

Process the pain of the
grief

Adjust to a world
without the deceased

Find a way to
remember the
deceased while
embarking on a new
life without them



Resilience, Choices, and Growth

Resilience



Resilience represents a healthy adjustment after a traumatic event

Resilient people learn and grow from negative events

Coping mechanisms include having a positive outlook on life and letting joy back in after a loss

Self regulation allows people to choose which strategies to apply in any given situation

Choices



Losing a loved one is not a choice, but getting up every morning and choosing to move on is

People can choose to live healthy and productive lives after a loss

Small choices matter: Choosing to eat a healthy meal, choosing to go for a walk, choosing to wash the dishes

- Bereavement when accompanied by introspection can lead people to learn and grow
- This can include becoming more loving, tolerant, forgiving, compassionate, and resilient



Personal Growth

*Grief is just love
with no place to go.*



GRIEF IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Culture Defined
Cultural Examples
Cultural Humility



Discussion



- How does culture impact grief?
- What cultural considerations of grief should employers be aware of?

What is Culture?



Traditions, values, and beliefs



That hold people together and make them more understanding and supportive of each other



And help them make sense of the world and Influences thoughts, beliefs, actions, and communications

Aspects of Culture



Socioeconomic



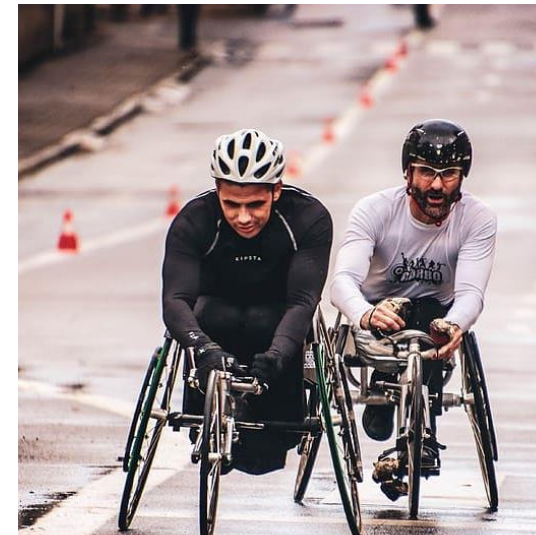
Gender



Sexual Orientation



Racial / Ethnic



Disability



Religion

African American Deathways

Grief / Support

Relies heavily on extended family

Higher risk for complicated grief

Mourning

Believe dead go home to Africa or heaven

Hours long Homegoing celebrations of life



Jewish Deathways



Grief and Support

- Grief is complicated by intergenerational trauma
- Greater risk of complicated grief
- Reaction to recent loss may be out of proportion
- Belief that soul returns to God immediately after death

Mourning

- Body is ritually bathed and dressed
- Burial within 24 hours
- Cremation is not an option
- Someone stay with body at all times
- Family / friends shovel dirt on casket as act of finality
- Shivvah: First seven days neighbors /friends sit with family
- Stones placed on tombstone as act of remembrance

Hindu Deathways



Grief

- Belief in karma and reincarnation

Mourning

- Burial is unacceptable
- Bodies are bathed, dressed, and cremated before the next sunrise
- Oldest son lights crematory fire



Hispanic Deathways

Grief Women are more vocal in their grief
Men are more stoic
Strong support of family and friends

Mourning Large funerals with family and friends
Belief that the relationship between the deceased and family continues
Mexico: Dios De Los Muertes celebrations

Humility

Cultural Competence

- Belief that knowledge alone is adequate
- Understands facts and figures about various cultures

Person Focused

- Willing to listen to people
- Works to see other people's point of view

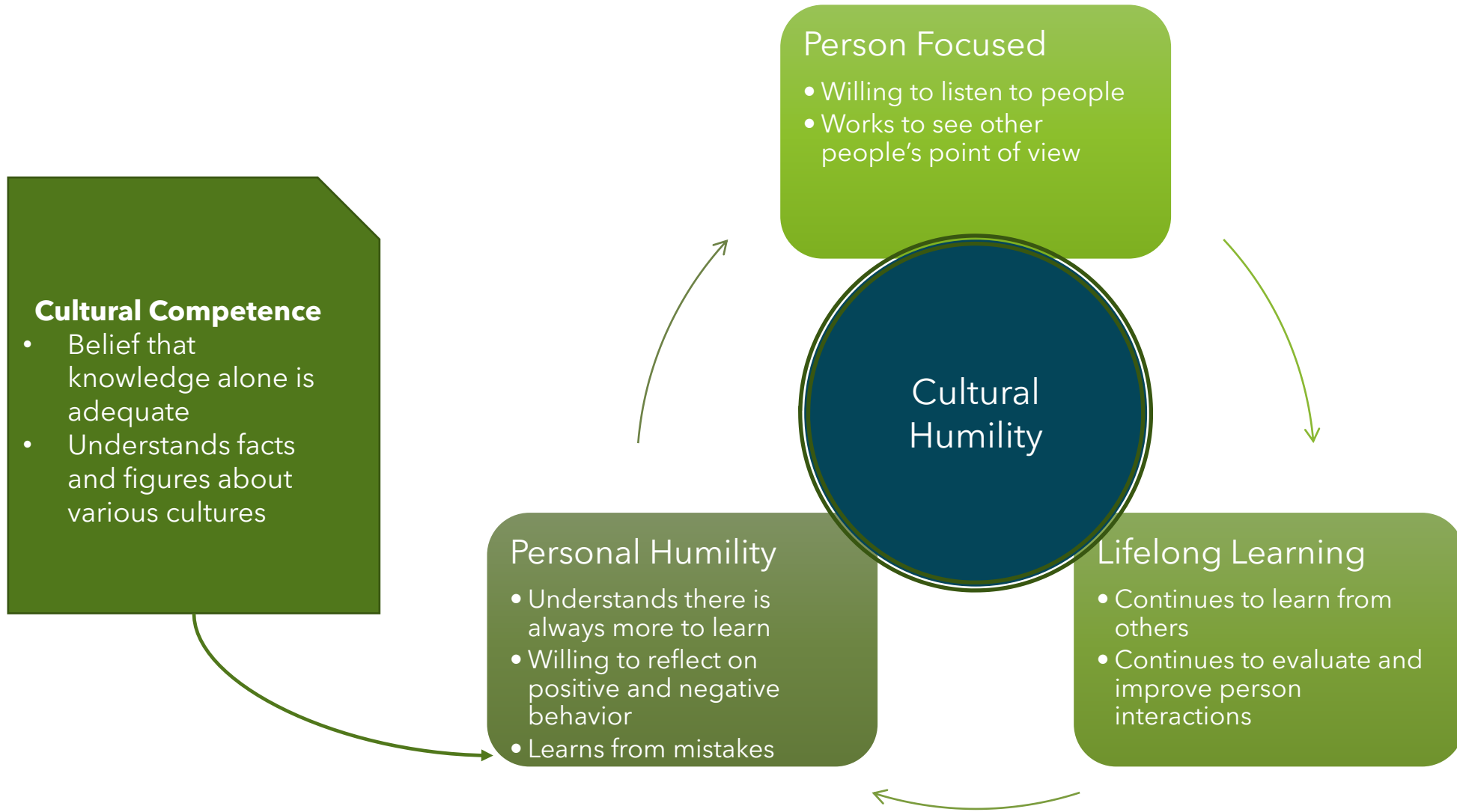
Cultural Humility

Personal Humility

- Understands there is always more to learn
- Willing to reflect on positive and negative behavior
- Learns from mistakes

Lifelong Learning

- Continues to learn from others
- Continues to evaluate and improve person interactions



Self Reflection



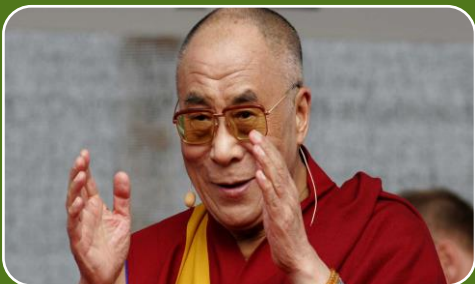
Be flexible and humble enough to...

- Admit that classroom learning is not a substitute for real world experience
- Admit that each person is a unique individual who may not fit the norm (i.e. stereotype) of their culture)
- Seek out new sources of information



Be self aware enough to...

- Understand and work to overcome any power differentials
- Admit when they have stereotyped a person or not provided culturally appropriate care
- To recognize their own biases based on their life experiences
- To work to overcome these biases by learning new ways of behaving



Be compassionate enough to...

- Forgive themselves for any real or perceived failures
- Work to meet persons where they are
- To treat persons with compassion even when they are difficult

GRIEF AND LOSS AT WORK

Loss at Work
Emotions at Work
Loss at work



Discussion



- What makes grief at work so hard?

Loss at Work

Loss at work comes in several forms:

- Loss of a coworker, which leads to shared grief from all who knew him/her
- Personal grief over the loss of a loved one
- The loss of a coworkers loved one, which can lead to people who are unsure how to support their coworker
- Trauma at work which can include witnessing the death of a coworker or a violent event such as a workplace shooting



Expression of Grief at Work

Emotional Makeup

- Emotional makeup is influenced by nature and nurture
- The culture a person grows up in also influences emotional makeup
- Influences how a person expresses and experiences emotions

Role

- People in some roles are expected to only display positive emotions

Organizational Culture

- Each organization has cultural norms that influence how people behave at work
- Organizational culture influences whether emotions are readily expressed or suppressed



How Grief at Work Manifests

- Grief at work manifests in a number of different ways:
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Presenteeism
 - Being withdrawn

- There may also be people who internalize their grief and do not express it at work

EXCEEDING GRIEF

Disenfranchised Grief
Anticipatory Grief
Complicated Grief
Related Afflictions



Disenfranchised Grief



Occurs when some one suffers a loss that they feel they can't publicly grieve:

- Loss of a pet
- Miscarriage
- Death of an ex
- Non death loss



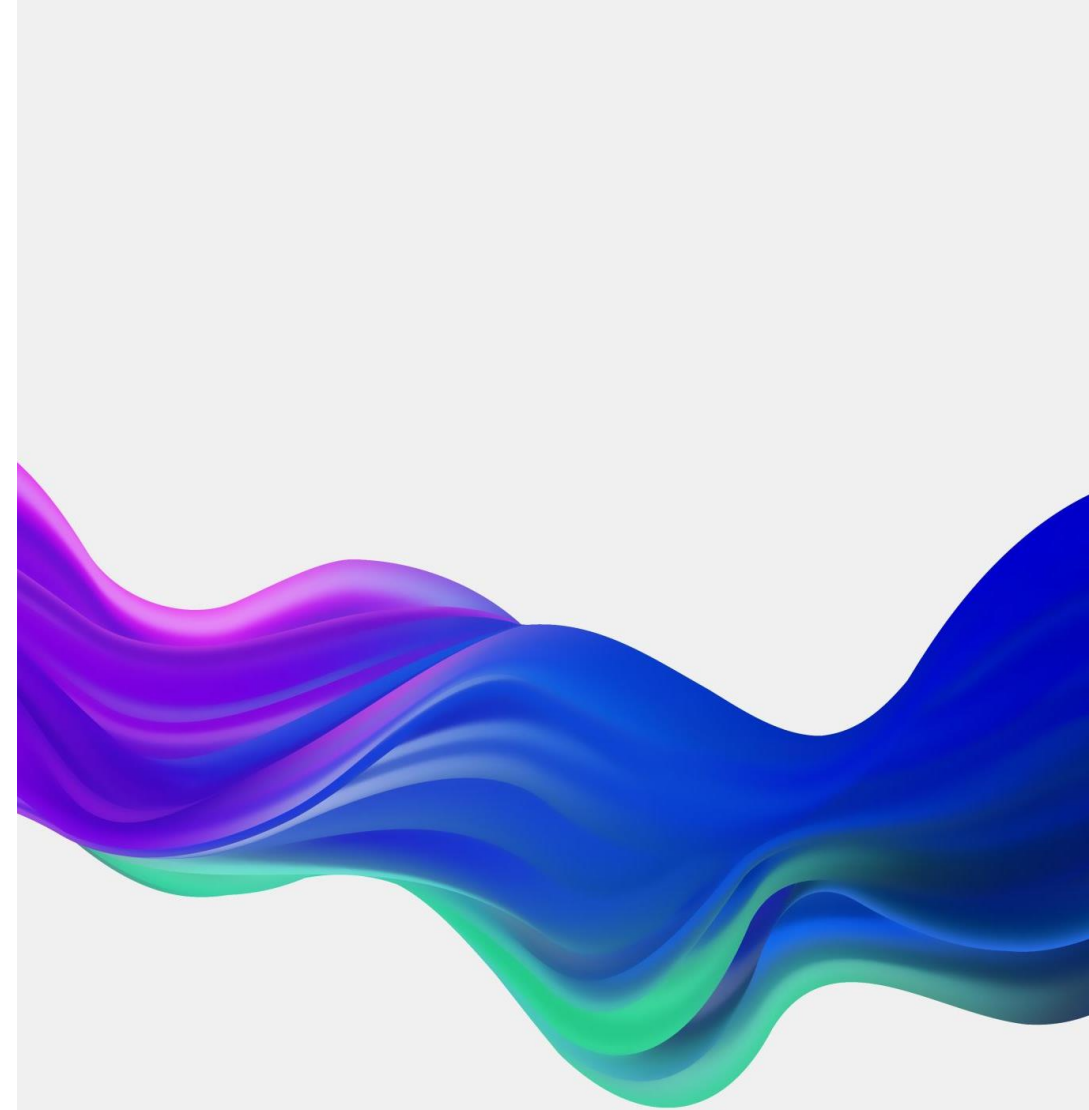
Anticipatory Grief

- Grief that occurs before an actual loss such as grieving someone who has dementia or grieving a parent who is terminally ill

Complicated Grief: Prolonged Grief Disorder

One year has passed since the person's loss and they are experiencing at least three of these symptoms for at least a month:

- Feeling as part of one's self has died
- Sense of disbelief about the death
- Avoidance of reminders that the person has died
- Intense anger, sorrow, bitterness, or other emotional pain
- Emotional numbness
- Intense loneliness
- Difficulty with reintegration with life



Complicated Grief: Other Manifestations



Complicated grief can also manifest as:

- Absent grief
- Distorted grief, which can manifest as extreme anger
- Delayed grief or avoiding dealing with grief
- Inhibited grief, where someone internalizes grief

Related Syndromes

Major Depressive Disorder

- Feeling empty and sad
- Loss of interest in activities that one once enjoyed
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Slowing of physical activity thinking, and / or speech
- Agitation, restlessness, or irritability
- Decreased energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Trouble concentrating
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Can occur in people who have witnessed a trauma such as seeing a loved one die
- Symptoms include:
 - Intrusive thoughts such as flashbacks or involuntary memories
 - Avoiding reminders of the event
 - Alterations in thoughts or moods
 - Being more irritable than usual
 - Distorted thoughts
 - Behaving in destructive ways

Complex PTSD

- Develops after chronic long term anxiety
- Symptoms include:
 - Anxiety
 - Avoiding situations and things related to the traumatic event
 - Flashbacks
 - Heighted emotional responses

HELPING THOSE WHO ARE HURTING

As a Company
As a Manager
As a Coworker



Discussion



- How, as leaders, can we make it easier for grieving employees?

Supporting Grieving Employees



Organizations

- Formal policies and procedures
- Supportive culture



Managers

- Understanding grief
- Compassion
- Communication with employee and coworkers



Coworkers

- Kindness
- Following their lead



Supporting Grief

As an Organization

Bereavement Leave Legal Requirements



- No federal requirement to provide bereavement leave
- Five states: California, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon, and Washington require employers offer bereavement leave
- Requirements vary by state
- Most generous states Illinois and Oregon require states with a set number of employees to provide two weeks unpaid time off
- Four of the states require paid tie off
- Maryland requires employers to allow employees to take paid time off when a family member dies

Bereavement Leave: Standard Practices

Survey Says

- Most companies offer between three to five days for immediate family members
- Some companies offer time off, typically less, for more distant family members
- Three to five days is not enough to deal with the emotional, legal, and financial complications of death

Most Generous

- Facebook began offering up to 20 days of paid leave for immediate family members and 10 days for the death of extended family members after COO Sharon Salzberg lost her husband

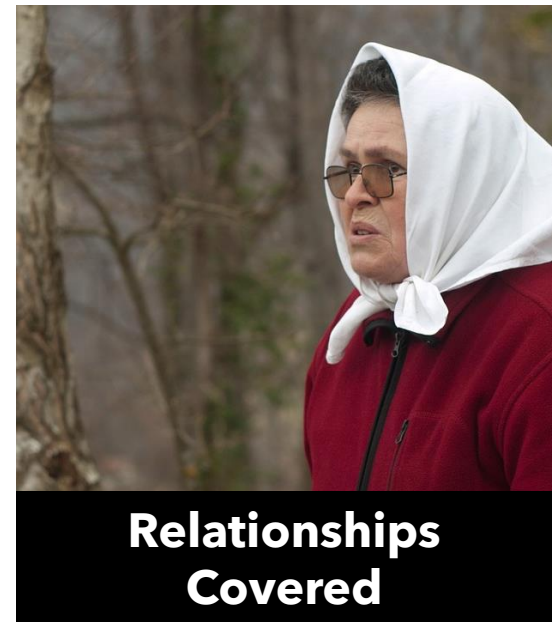
Bereavement Leave: Factors to Consider



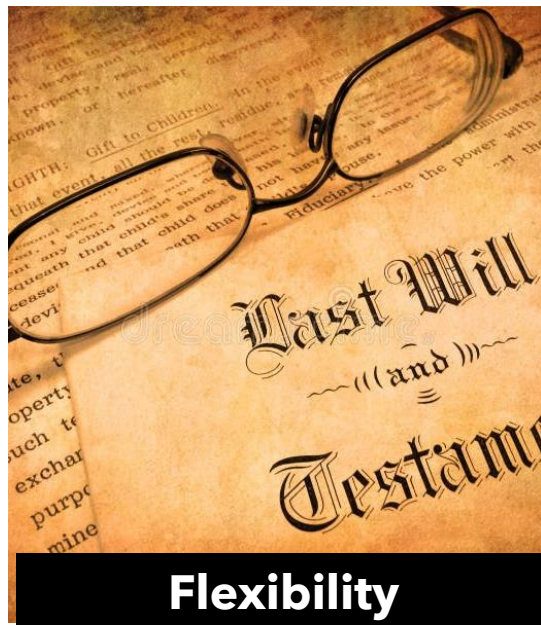
How Much Time



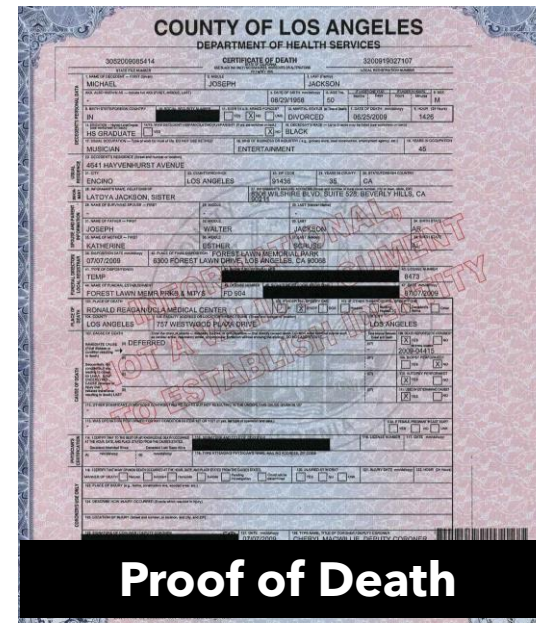
Separate Category



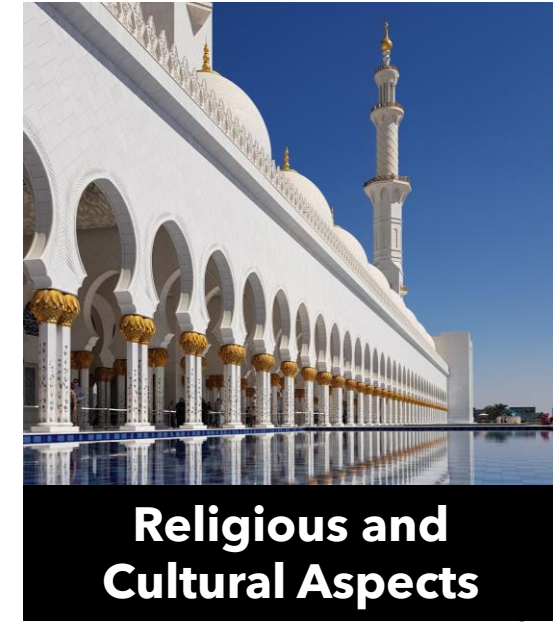
**Relationships
Covered**



Flexibility



Proof of Death



**Religious and
Cultural Aspects**

Utilizing the EAP



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Employee Assistance Programs can be used to support grieving employees by:

- Direct support of their needs such as finding counselors, legal experts, etc.
- Training managers on grief-related topics
- Setting up a Business Resource Group for grieving employees

Building a Culture That Supports Grief



Model kindness and understanding

Provide managers and employees information on supporting grieving employees

Support employees who are grieving



Supporting Grief

As Managers

Understanding

Work

- Learn about grief at work
- Understand corporate policies related to bereavement
- Learn about what resources are available for your employees

Grieving Employees

- Be understanding when employees perform at less than 100
- Understand that they may or may not want to talk about their lost loved one
- Be aware of when their grief may be complicated

Compassion

- Show compassion for your grieving employee by:
 - Being as flexible as possible with work hours and assignments
 - Note the death day of a grieving employees loved one and ask if they would like the day off
 - Listen if your grieving employee wants to talk about their loved one



With Your Grieving Employee

- Help employees understand their benefits
- Ask them when they are coming back
- Ask what they want shared about the situation
- Ask what accommodations are needed
- Ask if they want to talk about what happened with coworkers
- Ask if they want coworkers to come to the funeral
- Listen and respect their answers

Communicate

With Their Coworkers

- Share, as appropriate, about the situation
- Provide guidance on how the employee wants to be treated when they return
- Counsel your employees about what to say;/not say
- Be mindful of communications between employees and step in as appropriate
- If the deceased died by suicide caution employees to be sensitive

Supporting Grief

As Coworkers



Kindness

- Sincerely express your sympathy
- Do not offer platitudes such as “they’re in a better place” or “God wanted an angel”
- Listen
- Understand that you may be picking up extra work
- Be kind when they are distracted or if their work is not up to the usual standards





Follow their Lead

- Some people want to talk about their lost loved one and others do not, follow their lead
- If they have pictures displayed, ask questions but don't press
- Check in on them, but follow their lead in terms of how much you engage as some people will just want to get back to work as if nothing has happened and others will not

SUMMARY AND RESOURCES

Summary
Q&A
Resources



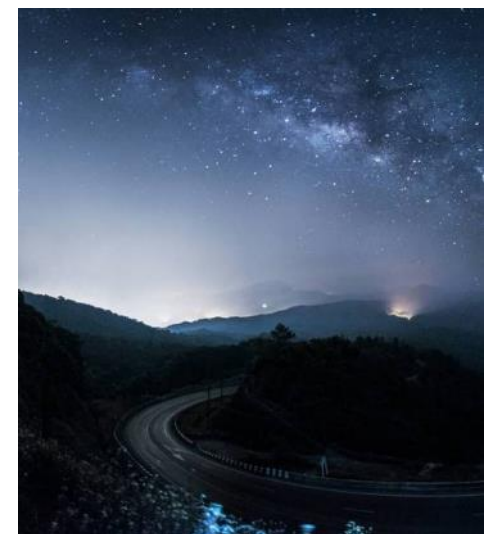
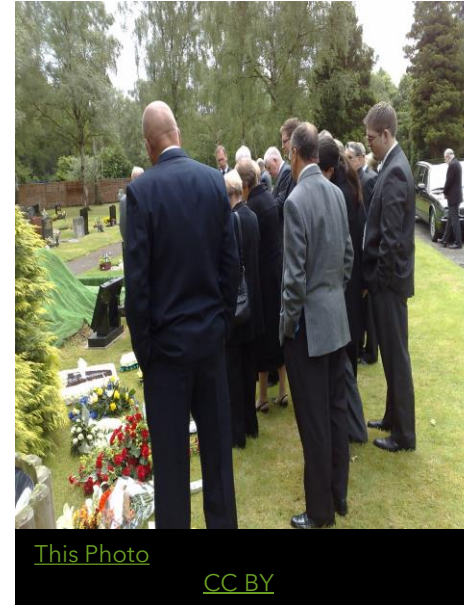
Discussion



- What did you learn today?
- What can you take back to your organization?

Summary

- Grief is deeply personal and not everyone grieves the same way
- Different cultures grieve differently
- Grief at work is influenced by corporate culture, the person's role, and their emotional makeup
- Grief at work is costly in both human and financial terms
- Organizations can support employees in both formal and informal ways



Organizational Resources

- [Who's Required to Provide Bereavement Leave?](#)
- [Comfort for the Day: Workplace Grief Tools and Training](#)
- [Community Grief Support: Grief in the Workplace](#)
- [Companions on a Journey: Workplace Support](#)
- [What Is Bereavement Leave?](#)
- [Grieving at Work: Weekly Workshops](#)
- [The Average HR Policy for Time Off for Deaths in Family.](#)
- [Grief at Work: Developing a Bereavement Policy](#)
- [Fostering-Grief-Ready-Workplaces-Schools-Starter-Kit](#)
- [What Is Bereavement Leave?](#)

Resources for Individuals

[Best Grief Podcasts for 2023](#)

Leading through Loss: How to Navigate Grief at Work by M. Fowkes

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande

[Grief.com](#)

Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief by David M. Kessler

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David M. Kessler

[Life after Death.](#)

Loss, Grief, and Trauma in the Workplace by Neil Thompson

Healing Grief at Work: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Workplace Is Touched by Loss by Alan Wolfelt



Thank you