Grappling with Grief

A Construction Suicide Prevention Partnership Toolbox Talk

www.suicide-stops-here.org

What is Grief?

Grief is the experience of coping with loss. It occurs when we lose someone or something important to us, and it is a deeply personal experience that can affect how we interact with the world and with ourselves. We all experience grief at some point in our lives.

Five Stages of Grief

Grief may feel chaotic and overwhelming, but understanding the five stages, outlined below, of grief can help build your self-awareness and healthy coping strategies during the grieving process. There is no linear order or standard length of each stage; it varies for everyone.

Denial	Anger	Bargaining	Depression	Acceptance
You may refuse to believe the loss is real, acting as a buffer against shock.	Anger is a completely natural emotion, and very natural after someone dies.	Bargaining is where the brain tries to cling to hope and the idea that death could be reversed.	Depression is a companion to the heaviness of grief and the inability to be present	Acceptance doesn't mean you're past the grief, but you've accepted it and have come to understand what it means in your life now.

Symptoms of Grief

- Mood swings
- Sadness
- Fatigue, insomnia, or changes in appetite
- Anger
- Guilt
- Relief
- Apathy or emotional numbness
- Withdrawing from family, coworkers, or avoiding social interactions
- Decline in focus, productivity, or decision-making

Remember grief is complex and so are the symptoms.

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Addressing Grief on the Jobsite

- **Listen Privately:** Find a private, quiet space to talk.
- **Use "I" statements:** *"I've noticed you seem overwhelmed lately. I'm here if you want to talk."*
- **Share Resources:** about Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), counseling services, or local grief/addiction resources.
- **Safety Matters:** Unattended Grief is a Safety Hazard. Construction is dangerous work; taking steps to connect with support is a safety practice that can save lives.

Rebuilding Resilience

Grief is Tough

In the construction industry, the tough-guy culture is prevalent; it can be difficult to go through the grieving process with that mentality. Expect to feel upsetting emotions and be willing to give yourself a break.

Grief has no Blue Print

There is no order or "right way" to grieve. Grief is an individual experience, and while there are stages of grief, we experience them in loops, not straight lines.

Focus on Your Health

Grief impacts our mental, physical, and spiritual health. Staying active, avoiding alcohol and drugs, eating right, and focusing on sleep will help with feelings of stress associated with loss.

Express Yourself

By simply saying, "I feel angry" or " I feel sad," you are crystallizing the emotions rather than leaving them as abstract and unsaid feelings.

Be honest with your supervisor about how you are feeling

While jumping back into your work routine is the goal, it is also important to give yourself time to process the grief. For your safety and the safety of your crew, be honest with your supervisor about how you are feeling. **Operating dangerous machinery when you are not fully present poses a serious safety risk.**

Find support

There are supportive resources to help with grief. Sharing your loss, not isolating, with others can make the burden of grief easier to carry. Reaching out to friends and loved ones can provide comfort. Support groups can also be helpful when coping with grief. **Scan the QR Code for a list of resources.**

You can find more resources at www.suicide-stops-here.org

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