

Manager fact sheet:

Supporting an employee after grief, loss or bereavement



Grief can affect people in different ways and may influence concentration, energy, attendance and emotional wellbeing at work. Some employees may need time away from work, while others may prefer to maintain routine. Managers can provide meaningful support by acknowledging the loss, offering flexibility where appropriate and maintaining respectful communication without making assumptions.

How your team, might feel

An employee experiencing grief, loss or bereavement may be affected emotionally, physically and cognitively. The impact may change over time and may not always be visible.

You may notice:

- changes in concentration, memory or decision-making
- reduced energy, motivation or confidence
- increased emotional sensitivity, tearfulness or withdrawal
- changes in attendance, punctuality or work patterns
- periods where the employee appears to be coping, followed by times where they seem more affected.

There is no single “right” way to grieve. Avoid making assumptions about how an employee should be feeling, what support they need or when they should be “back to normal”.

How managers can respond

Managers are not expected to have all the answers or provide counselling. The [Manager Assistance Program](#) (MAP) through PeopleSense by Altius provides confidential guidance from a qualified psychologist. MAP can help managers prepare for sensitive conversations, understand how grief may affect work, consider practical support options and maintain appropriate boundaries while supporting both the employee and the team.



Reaching out early makes a real difference.
Contact [PeopleSense](#) to book a confidential appointment with a qualified psychologist.

How to respond

1. Acknowledge the loss respectfully

If you are aware that an employee has experienced a loss, acknowledge it in a simple, sincere and respectful way. You do not need to say the perfect thing. A brief expression of care and support is often enough. MAP can help you prepare for this conversation, particularly if you are unsure what to say or how to approach the employee sensitively.

2. Communicate clearly and compassionately

Provide clear information about available leave, workplace expectations and any agreed adjustments. Follow up in writing where appropriate, especially if changes have been agreed. MAP can help you plan how to communicate with care while still providing the structure and information the employee may need.

3. Maintain respectful boundaries

Give the employee space to share what they feel comfortable sharing, but do not pressure them to discuss personal details. Your role is to provide workplace support, not counselling. MAP can help you understand how to respond if an employee becomes distressed, how to keep the conversation supportive and when to encourage professional support.

4. Maintain respectful boundaries

Grief does not follow a fixed timeline. An employee may need support immediately after a loss, but they may also be affected weeks or months later. Significant dates, anniversaries or family events may also be difficult. MAP can help you plan appropriate follow-up conversations and maintain ongoing support without overstepping.

5. Support the wider team if needed

In some cases, a loss may also affect colleagues, workloads or team dynamics. Managers may need to communicate changes carefully while respecting the employee's privacy. MAP can help you consider what to say to the team, how to manage workload impacts and how to maintain a respectful and supportive environment.

6. Encourage professional support

Where appropriate, remind the employee that confidential EAP support is available through PeopleSense by Altius. This can be helpful whether the employee wants support with grief itself, managing work during a difficult time or navigating the practical and emotional impact of loss. MAP can help you raise this option sensitively and at the right time.

MAP can support you with the wellbeing and people management aspects of the situation. For leave entitlements, policy interpretation, extended absences or formal workplace arrangements, you should also seek guidance from HR, your people team or another appropriate internal contact.

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