Grief and loss in the 21st Century
What really happens in the workplace

Rachel Blythe Kodanaz
NIEAPA 2017 Conference
June 6, 2017
303.619.3547
voice
rachel@griefintheworkplace.com
e-mail
www.griefintheworkplace.com

Grief and loss in the 21st Century

The elephant walks into the room….
And everyone walks around it.

Objectives

- Recognize the impact grief has on workplace dynamics and the importance of addressing the associated challenges.
- Identify and review current programs, policies and procedures available to employees and employers in support of grief and loss in the workplace.
- Create a compassionate workplace by identifying resolution, defining roles and implementing solutions addressing grief and loss.
Types of Loss

- Co-worker death
- Family death
- Terminal diagnosis
- Long-term illness
- Financial
- Independence
- Natural disaster
- Flood
- Fire
- Hurricane/Tornado
- Change in health
- Change in family status

Today's Challenges in the Workplace

- Aging society
- Terminally ill
- Family caregivers
- Social media
- Mobile society
- Company policies & procedures
- Friends that are as close as family
- Lack of training on loss & crisis response

Recognizing the need to address loss in the workplace

WE ALL HAVE OR WILL SUFFER A LOSS:
How we tackle the journey will impact the outcome.
Emotional Behaviors

First few weeks
- Numbness
- Shock
- Denial
- Anger
- Disorientation

On-going
- Depression
- Guilt
- Panic
- Finding balance again

Characteristics of a grieving employee

- “Fake-it” well
- Loss of logic
- Lack of confidence
- “Nothing going right”
- Feel distant from their co-workers
- Two steps forward, one step back
- No two people grieve the same

A sad employee is often perceived as a bad employee

Importance of the workplace when suffering from a loss

- Routine
- Distraction
- Provides a sense of accomplishment
- Feeling of being productive
- Interaction with others
- Embrace self control
- Financial necessity
Death of an Employee
Grieving Workgroup

- Decline of productivity
- Unpredictable emotional behaviors
- Co-worker interaction
- Response differs among co-workers
- "Replacement"
- Business as usual
- Office memorial

Supportive Programs

- The Family and Medical Leave Act
- Employee Assistance Program
- Retirement Plan

Employee Challenges

- Productivity decreases
- Emotional stability
- Co-worker relationships
- Behavior
- Career desires
- Life Balance
- Need for Privacy
Employer Challenges

- Business as usual
- Managing company policy
- Walking on eggshells
- Expectations of employee or workgroup
- Loss of productivity
- Grief timeline
- Costs

Co-worker Challenges

- Personal versus professional
- Managing expectations
- Fairness
- Individuals respond differently
- Co-workers play different role based on relationship

Employee Returning to the Workplace

- Prior to their return
  - Recognize the loss
  - Meet with employee
  - Education for co-workers of what to expect
  - Verify checklist of activities
  - Provide lighter load
Creating compassionate workplace

- Review policies and procedures
- Provide support and training for employees
- 3-6-9-12 month pulse
- Avoid placing judgment
- Practice tolerance

Summary

- Recognize and embrace the situation
- Adapt procedures and policies
- Create a compassionate workplace by integrating new programs with existing company policies
- Make it work!

Grief in the Workplace:
A comprehensive guide for being prepared

Management Handbook

- The handbook contains all the information needed to start a program in your company.
- Implementation training, keynote workshops or seminars are available

Available for purchase

www.griefintheworkplace.com
www.amazon.com
Living with Loss, One Day at a Time

Living with Loss, One Day at a Time offers daily encouragement to individuals and families who have lost a loved one or are suffering from any form of loss. The 365 daily lessons and thought-provoking ideas provide hope, optimism, introspection, and self-discovery.

Available for purchase
www.RachelKodanaz.com
www.amazon.com