

When it's time to go back to work

Life must go on, even after the death of a loved one. But going back to work may seem like heading for even more grief. Seeing co-workers for the first time can be hard, and it may seem overwhelming just to concentrate and do your job.

Returning to work can be easier if you're prepared. The American Hospice Foundation offers these tips:

Pave the way. Communication is important, but go only as far as you feel comfortable. Before you return to work, share information with one key person. Let that person inform others about your loss and how you are doing.

It can also help to take these steps before you go back to work:

- Meet your co-workers for lunch. This can give you a chance to get past the first encounters and "I'm so sorry" comments.
- Consider working only half days for a week or so.

Ease into it. When you return to work, try easing the pressure by asking someone you trust to review your work for a while. If your job involves hazardous work, you might ask for a temporary change in duties.

Work is part of life, and getting back into your routine is a big part of healing.



Handling grief

We know that everyone dies, including people we love. But even if you feel prepared, losing a loved one can still be devastating.

Grief is a powerful emotion, and it can seem overwhelming. But remember that your physical and emotional reactions are stepping stones on your way to recovering from your loss.

According to the American Hospice Foundation, these techniques can help you get through the grieving process:

Take care of your health. Eat nourishing meals, even if you have to eat four or five smaller ones a day. Try to get enough sleep—a regular bedtime routine can help. And try to get some exercise most days.

Don't avoid your emotions. Share your feelings with friends or family members. Go ahead and cry if you need to.

Welcome support. Let friends and family know what your emotional or physical needs are, and let them help you. You could also try a support group or see a counselor or spiritual advisor.

Give yourself a break. Take some time alone if you need to, or find a new hobby.

Getting better Normal grieving can last for months or even years. For some people the process is particularly long and difficult, which can lead to difficulty sleeping or inability to cope with normal activities. If these symptoms are particularly severe, it could be a sign of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Seeing a mental health professional can help.

Learning how to live in the world without your loved one is a difficult process. When you do start to feel better, don't give in to guilt. Instead, look forward. You're on your way toward healing.



The New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator's Grief Services Program offers free, professional grief counseling for people who have experienced the sudden, unexpected death of a family member due to homicide or an accident. The program's phone number is 505-925-9501.