

Career Tips

Bereavement in the Workplace

Death impacts us all and everyone has their own way of handling the loss of a loved one. It can be extremely difficult to maintain composure during and after this painful experience, but it can also be difficult for your co-workers to know how to comfort or how they can express their sympathy.

Some suggestions to help through these stressful times:

- Cards and donations: Send a sympathy card as soon as possible. Make sure you include a brief note saying what the deceased meant to you. Also identify yourself on the card and include a legible return address in case the family wants to send thank you notes. Even if time has passed and you are just hearing that one of your co-workers lost a loved one, you should still send a note. If more than four to six months have passed, a “thinking of you” card is more appropriate than a sympathy card.
- Flowers, food and gifts: Fresh flowers are beautiful but they need attention and die within seven days and many people relate that to the death of their loved one. Money donated to the family’s charitable organization, a church, or college and trust fund is truly appreciated. Ask the funeral director for details. Go for foods that can be frozen. Trays and trays of cold cuts can get overwhelming.
- If you are the person that has lost a loved one, consult your funeral home director for assistance. To set up a trust or charitable fund can be created by calling your bank or the actual charity or organization. Also ask the organization for immediate notification of the person/company and their donation. Thank you cards can also be obtained from the funeral home. Add a brief one or two line handwritten note and sign your name and family name.
- As you return to work after a death, people will ask how you are doing. Know your tolerance level and how far you can go without becoming emotional.

Everyone has their own way of grieving and recovering. Always provide the grieving family with as much kindness, sympathy and fond memories as possible.

Colleen A. Rickenbacher, CMP, CSEP, CPC
Etiquette and Protocol Consultant/Speaker/Trainer/Author
colleen@crspeaks.com
www.colleenrickenbacher.com