

Grief in the Workplace - A Helpful Guide to Expressing Sympathy

What to Say, What to Do:

When someone in the workplace has experienced the loss of a loved one, reaching out and letting them know how much you care can be a tremendous comfort.

When it comes to expressions of sympathy, differences in religious beliefs and customs can make it difficult to know the appropriate gesture to make or an appropriate expression.



Grief in the Workplace:

Death in the workplace can be a difficult challenge to deal with on both a personal and professional level. As a group your office may choose to send a floral arrangement or basket to the home. You may choose to attend the services together or individually. If you are attending the services, offer your condolences to your coworker but do not bring up issues surrounding work. Offer your support and understanding over their loss. Once a coworker returns to work, you may wish to extend your support and sympathy but remember to respect their privacy if they don't wish to discuss their loss. If it appears over a period of time that your coworker seems depressed, you may wish to contact your supervisor for more guidance

Acceptable Gestures of Sympathy:

There are many ways to express your sympathy— sending flowers, attending the services, sending a fruit or gourmet basket, writing a condolence note or card, making a contribution or creating a scholarship in the name of the deceased. Whatever gesture you choose to make, be certain you have the following key information before contacting a local florist or sending a remembrance:

- Correct name and spelling of the deceased (required for mass cards and for sending flowers to the funeral home).
- Address of the funeral home Address of the family if you are sending flowers to their home.
- Funeral services and times (if you are attending the service).
- Requests by the family (such as charitable donations)

For Coworkers Sending to the Funeral Service:

Coworkers will generally send a gesture of sympathy as a group, company or department. Appropriate arrangements for the service would be a standing spray, standing basket or fireside basket.

For Coworkers Sending a Sympathy Gift to the Home:

If you are unable to attend the services, it is generally appropriate to send a gesture of sympathy to the surviving family's home. Depending on your relationship, a note or card would be appropriate to extend your sympathy. If you work closely together, sending a floral basket arrangement, dish garden or blooming plant is an appropriate gesture. Additional ideas are fruit baskets, food baskets and gourmet baskets.