GLOBAL GRIEF NETWORK | LEARNER TOOLS

Conversation Guide: Talking With Your Employer

Conversation Guide | Leave, flexibility, and returning to work



About this page: Telling a manager or human resources (HR) about a loss, and asking for what you need, can feel daunting. Preparing ahead can make it easier.

Find out first

- Check your employee handbook or intranet for bereavement leave, paid time off, and any employee assistance program (EAP).
- Bereavement leave rules differ by employer and by place. If you are unsure, ask HR what applies to you.
- Decide what you are comfortable sharing. You can keep details private and still ask for support.

Words you might use

"I wanted to let you know that my father died on Tuesday. I will need some time off, and I would like to understand my options."

"I would prefer to keep the details private. What I can tell you is that I am grieving and may need some flexibility for a while."

"When I come back, it would help to have _____ (for example, a lighter workload for two weeks, or flexibility for appointments)."

"Could you let the team know, so I do not have to explain to everyone? Please share only _____."

Things you might ask for

- ☐ Bereavement or other leave
- ☐ Flexible start or finish times
- ☐ A temporary change in duties
- ☐ Information about the EAP
- ☐ A phased return or reduced hours
- ☐ Working from home for a period
- ☐ A quiet space for breaks
- ☐ A regular check-in with my manager

My plan

Who I will speak with

Date and how (in person, call, email)

Leave or policy I want to ask about

What I am comfortable sharing

What I will ask for

Notes from the conversation and any agreed dates

In immediate danger: call 911. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text **988** (US). Elsewhere, use your local emergency number and crisis line.

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