

Child Loss and the Work Place

Lateness, poor performance and sickness are matters which occur in the workplace and can be addressed by established procedures.

But what would you do if this behaviour was a reaction to the death of a child?

Childloss in western society has mostly been a taboo subject outside child loss and related organisations. Employees will talk about becoming pregnant or the achievements of their older children. If this child dies, then the conversation ends, and certain behaviours may be presented in the workplace.

Some of the reactions to the death of a child (or another loved one) include:

- Those mentioned above
- PHYSICAL. Headaches, feeling tired, achy muscles and nausea
- EMOTIONAL. Depressions, anger, sadness, and occasional outburst
- MENTALLY. Forgetfulness, lack of concentration, confusion and poor memory
- BEHAVIOURALLY. Changes in sleep patterns, lack of appetite, isolation, unusual reactions (i.e. breaking down whilst listening to a certain song as this may remind them of the loved one who has died).

These reactions are not deliberate, planned and often not avoidable.

What can the employer do?

If you do not have an established policy and procedure for supporting your employees after the death of a child, or other loved one, then consider establishing them and letting your work force know that you have one.

A compassionate and supportive approach shows that an employer values their employees'- The right support at the right time can significantly and positively impact on a bereaved parent and can lessen the impact their loss has in the work place.

ACAS have recognised that managing bereavement in the work place is a matter which needs attention and have put together a good practice guide.

<http://m.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/7/a/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace-a-good-practice-guide.pdf>

Professional bereavement counselling is not easy to access and there is often a waiting list or a cost, which often excludes people from accessing it. There are many charities and non-profit organisations locally and nationally across the UK which can provide easy access support after the death of a child, which can help fill the gap until bereavement counselling can be accessed.

Choosing a support organisation is not always as straight forward as it may seem. Some may specialise in certain areas of loss, i.e. miscarriage and some are more generic. Some have charitable status; which indicates that some checks have been made on those running the organisation.

Sadly, there are some support organisations who do not operate in a professional manner and are not suitable prepared to effectively support grieving parents and this can be damaging and have a knock-on effect in the workplace. It is important to do some homework to ensure any recommendations you make can be beneficial to your workforce.

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Daddys with Angels (<https://www.daddyswithangels.org/>) is a registered charity (1173978) which provides free online support, advice and friendship to families following the loss of a child of ANY gestation or age and by ANY cause or reason. DWA operates as a peer support network which is overseen by trained and experienced volunteers, who have ALL experienced the loss of a child.

Access to support from DWA is available within 24 hours and is FREE.

Daddys with Angels were voted best UK Support Organisation in The Butterfly Awards in 2014 and 2016 and some of our volunteers have been finalists, or winners of other awards for their work and commitment to the child loss community.

Daddys with Angels is my safe haven. I am among those who have endured a terrible loss, just like me. I can come and go as I please, say how I am feeling and have 100% support 24/7.

Thank you DWA, to me that's priceless!
(DWA member)

Our information flyers (free to download or posted free) are available from our website under the resources tab.

