

PREPARED FOR

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

Supporting Employees Through Grief and Loss

Compassionate People Management During Life Crises

Presented by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

UDYAM-MP-10-0120839



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Programme Overview

This programme equips managers and HR professionals with the understanding and skills to support employees experiencing grief and loss. Recognizing that loss can impact performance for extended periods, this training provides evidence-based strategies to foster a compassionate and productive work environment.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Understand the multifaceted nature of grief and its common manifestations in the workplace, enabling you to recognize signs of distress and offer appropriate support.
- ✓ Learn effective communication techniques for discussing loss with employees, knowing what to say and what to avoid to build trust and provide comfort.
- ✓ Explore practical approaches to implementing flexible work arrangements during bereavement, ensuring employees feel supported while maintaining operational needs.
- ✓ Develop strategies for facilitating a smooth and sensitive return to work after a period of loss, helping employees reintegrate effectively and feel valued.
- ✓ Gain insights into identifying when grief may be prolonged or particularly challenging, and understand how to guide employees towards further assistance.
- ✓ Appreciate the nuances of Indian cultural perspectives on bereavement and how these may influence an employee's experience and needs at work.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This programme is designed for all people managers, HR professionals, and senior leaders who wish to enhance their ability to support their teams through times of loss and grief.

Programme Content

1. Understanding Grief in the Workplace

Grief is a natural response to significant loss, and it profoundly impacts individuals at work, affecting concentration, motivation, and productivity. This section delves into the psychological impact of loss, explaining how it can manifest in various ways, such as changes in behaviour, emotional fluctuations, and cognitive difficulties. Understanding these common reactions helps managers approach employees with empathy and informed awareness, creating a safer space for them to navigate their personal challenges while still contributing to the team. We will explore evidence-based insights into how individuals process loss and how these internal experiences translate into observable workplace dynamics.

 **Activity: Small group discussion: Sharing anonymized observations of grief-related workplace challenges.**

2. Effective Communication: What to Say and What Not to Say

Navigating conversations around loss requires sensitivity and skill. This segment provides practical guidance on how to communicate with empathy and respect during difficult times. We will cover phrases that offer genuine support and validation, alongside common expressions that can inadvertently cause further distress or minimize an employee's feelings. Learning to listen actively and respond thoughtfully is crucial for building trust and demonstrating care. This knowledge empowers managers to provide meaningful support without overstepping boundaries, fostering a supportive relationship that acknowledges the employee's personal journey.

 **Activity: Role-playing exercise: Practicing empathetic communication scenarios.**

3. Flexible Work Arrangements During Bereavement

Supporting employees through loss often involves adapting work routines to accommodate their needs. This section explores the benefits and practicalities of implementing flexible work options, such as adjusted hours, remote work, or modified workloads, during periods of bereavement. We will discuss how these accommodations can alleviate immediate pressures, allowing employees the space to manage personal responsibilities and emotional well-being without compromising their connection to work. Understanding how to balance operational requirements with compassionate support is key to retaining valuable team members during challenging times.

 **Activity: Group brainstorming: Developing flexible work policies for bereavement.**

4. Facilitating a Sensitive Return to Work

The transition back to the workplace after a period of absence due to grief can be challenging for employees. This session focuses on creating a structured and supportive reintegration process. We will discuss strategies for gradually reintroducing employees to their roles, providing clear expectations, and offering ongoing check-ins to monitor their well-being and address any emerging concerns. A thoughtfully managed return-to-work plan helps employees regain confidence, feel valued, and successfully resume their contributions to the team.

 **Activity: Case study analysis: Designing a return-to-work plan for a hypothetical employee.**

5. Recognizing and Responding to Prolonged Grief

While grief is a natural process, for some individuals it can become prolonged and significantly impair daily functioning. This section provides an overview of how to identify signs that an employee might be experiencing more complex or enduring distress. We will discuss the importance of recognizing when professional support may be beneficial and how managers can sensitively guide employees towards appropriate resources within the organization or external services. Early recognition and compassionate intervention are vital for supporting long-term well-being.

 **Activity: Discussion: Identifying organizational resources for employees experiencing prolonged distress.**

6. Cultural Considerations in Indian Bereavement

Understanding the cultural context of grief is essential for providing culturally sensitive support in India. This section explores common Indian customs and traditions surrounding bereavement, such as mourning periods, family support systems, and religious observances. Recognizing how these practices influence an employee's experience allows managers to offer support that is respectful of their cultural background and personal beliefs. This awareness helps in tailoring workplace accommodations and communication to be more effective and considerate.

 **Activity: Q&A session: Addressing specific cultural nuances in workplace support.**

Action Plan

Concrete steps for implementation.

Action	Owner	Timeline	Notes
Develop and disseminate a clear policy on supporting employees experiencing grief and loss.	HR	Week 1	Ensure the policy includes guidelines on flexible work arrangements and communication protocols.
Schedule introductory training sessions for all people managers on the core principles of supporting grieving employees.	HR/Training Department	Month 1	Focus on empathetic communication and recognizing signs of distress.
Create a resource guide for managers and employees listing internal and external support services available.	HR	Week 2	Include contact details for counselling services, EAP (if applicable), and relevant community support groups.
Integrate a module on grief and loss support into the onboarding process for new managers.	HR/Onboarding Team	Month 1	Ensure new leaders are equipped from the outset to handle these sensitive situations.
Establish a system for regular, informal check-ins with employees who have recently experienced loss.	Manager	Month 2	These check-ins should be supportive and non-intrusive, focusing on well-being and work adjustments.
Review and update the company's leave policies to ensure they adequately address bereavement.	Leadership/HR	Quarter 1	Consider extending paid bereavement leave where appropriate and culturally sensitive.

About Manas



Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Founder & Consulting Psychologist | Applied, Organizational & Behavioural Psychologist | PhD | 18+ Years

Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma brings 18+ years of applied psychology to corporate wellness. She has worked with SBI, educational institutions, and corporate teams across India. Her evidence-based approach combines CBT, mindfulness, and culturally contextualised psychology for measurable outcomes. She is the creator of the Performance FOMO Index™ and the High-Functioning Distress Framework™.

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A MSME-registered organisation dedicated to evidence-based mental wellness.

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Disclaimer: This document has been prepared by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma – Founder & Consulting Psychologist (Applied, Organizational & Behavioural Psychologist, PhD, 18+ years), Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling (UDYAM-MP-10-0120839). Content is for programme overview and educational purposes only. Nothing herein constitutes legal advice regarding POSH Act compliance – organisations should consult qualified legal counsel for specific legal guidance. For clinical or psychological support, please reach out to the Manas Team for personalised guidance, or consult a qualified Psychiatrist or licensed mental health professional. © 2026 Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling. All rights reserved. Confidential – prepared specifically for the named organisation. For queries: manu@manas365.com | +91 99818 13224