

# HOW TO HELP Grieving Employees



## Reach out to the grieving person.

- A simple *I care* or *I'm sorry* can be very helpful.
- Reach out with a touch, a squeeze of the hand or a hug.
- Encourage the person to talk and cry.
- Be patient. Grief does not have rules or a timetable.
- Practice kind acts—a note, visit, plant, book or food.
- Avoid platitudes like:
  - I know how you feel.
  - It was God's will.
  - God never gives us more than we can bear.
  - You can have more children.
  - You should be over it by now.
  - Don't feel... (guilty, angry, etc.).

Here are some simple suggestions to help a person who has suffered a loss. These actions will provide comfort and reassurance that you care.

- **Listen.** Listen without judgment and be available to listen frequently. Avoid giving advice. Accept whatever the person is feeling—anger, guilt or relief.
- **Ask how you can help.** Be specific in your offer. Offer to do grocery shopping, run errands or help with child care.
- **Remember weekends, holidays and anniversaries.** Acknowledge the challenge of the grieving person at these times. Do not allow the person to be isolated. Share your home, yourself or anything that may be of comfort.
- **Suggest activities that you can do together.** Invite the person to exercise with you or go to a movie. Be persistent, but try not to press them before they're ready.
- **Help the grieving person find new activities or friends.** Encourage the person to try new activities when the time is right.
- **Avoid burnout.** Even small efforts mean a lot. Rather than burn yourself out as a supporter, stay in contact in ways that work for you and will enable you to stay involved for several months rather than several days.
- **Pay attention to warning signs.** Signs that the person is in distress may include weight loss, substance abuse, depression, prolonged sleep disorders, physical problems, talk of suicide and lack of personal hygiene. Suggest and encourage the person to seek professional help. Offer to go with them. For coworkers or family members, *Intermountain Employee Assistance* is available by calling 442-3509 or 1-800-832-7733.