

Grief: A Masked Safety Risk

Presented by: Jennifer L. Landon, M.Ed.
Founder - YGM Consulting



New England Round Table
May 21, 2025



Laying the Foundation

- ❑ Trigger warning and my “why”
- ❑ Audience participation
- ❑ A little about me
- ❑ What do we grieve?
- ❑ Types of grief
- ❑ Grief messes with our brain and body
- ❑ Grief in the workplace
 - ❑ Bereavement leave
 - ❑ When it happens to you
 - ❑ What to say and NOT say
 - ❑ Support suggestions

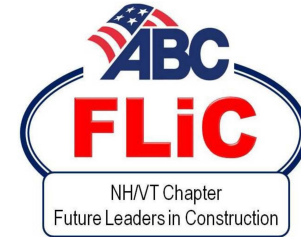


Captain Nicholas P. Losapio
US Marine Corp
March 10, 1991-June 8, 2022

A little about me...



VP Leadership & Total Human Health
Initiatives



Disclaimer: My business, YGM Consulting, is not based on a conceptual, intellectual, or theological perspective. I provide education and support. I do not imply, infer, or attempt to fix, heal, or cure grief; and do not imply or provide professional counseling or therapy. I do not diagnose, nor do I prescribe medications. All statements made during this presentation are of my opinion and are not meant to serve as professional advice. If you are experiencing serious suicidal thoughts that you cannot control, please call or text 988 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or go to <http://988lifeline.org>.

Audience Participation

Raise Hand

Reactions

Chat

Private message

Polls

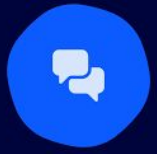
Feel free to interrupt

Grief in the Workplace



What is Grief?





What Do We Grieve?



Secondary Losses

Income	Home	Family dynamics
Traditions	Identity	Friends
Purpose	Future	Intimacy
Anniversaries	Health	Parenting partner
Confidence	Trust	Mental health
Faith/spirituality	Hope	Emotional security
Community	Routine	Relationships
Lifestyle	Social status	Financial security
Sharing	Humor	Possessions
Happiness/joy	Feeling safe	Focus

Types of Grief

Normal

Traumatic

Anticipatory

Collective

Cumulative

Disenfranchised

Secondary

Absent

Distorted

Exaggerated

Complicated

Masked

Inhibited

Chronic

*Prolonged/Chronic

Abbreviated

Grief by Numbers

2.6 million
x5

**Deaths leaving on average
5 grievers per death**

2.5 million

**Grievors due to divorce
NOT including children**

15.6 million

Romantic breakup

1 in 12
(6 million)

**Children experience death of
a parent or sibling by age 18**

Older Adults

Grieve at a higher rate

Grief in the Workplace



Grief is a Masked Safety Risk

90%

Reduction in concentration

85%

Very Poor to Fair Decisions

90%

More likely to get injured

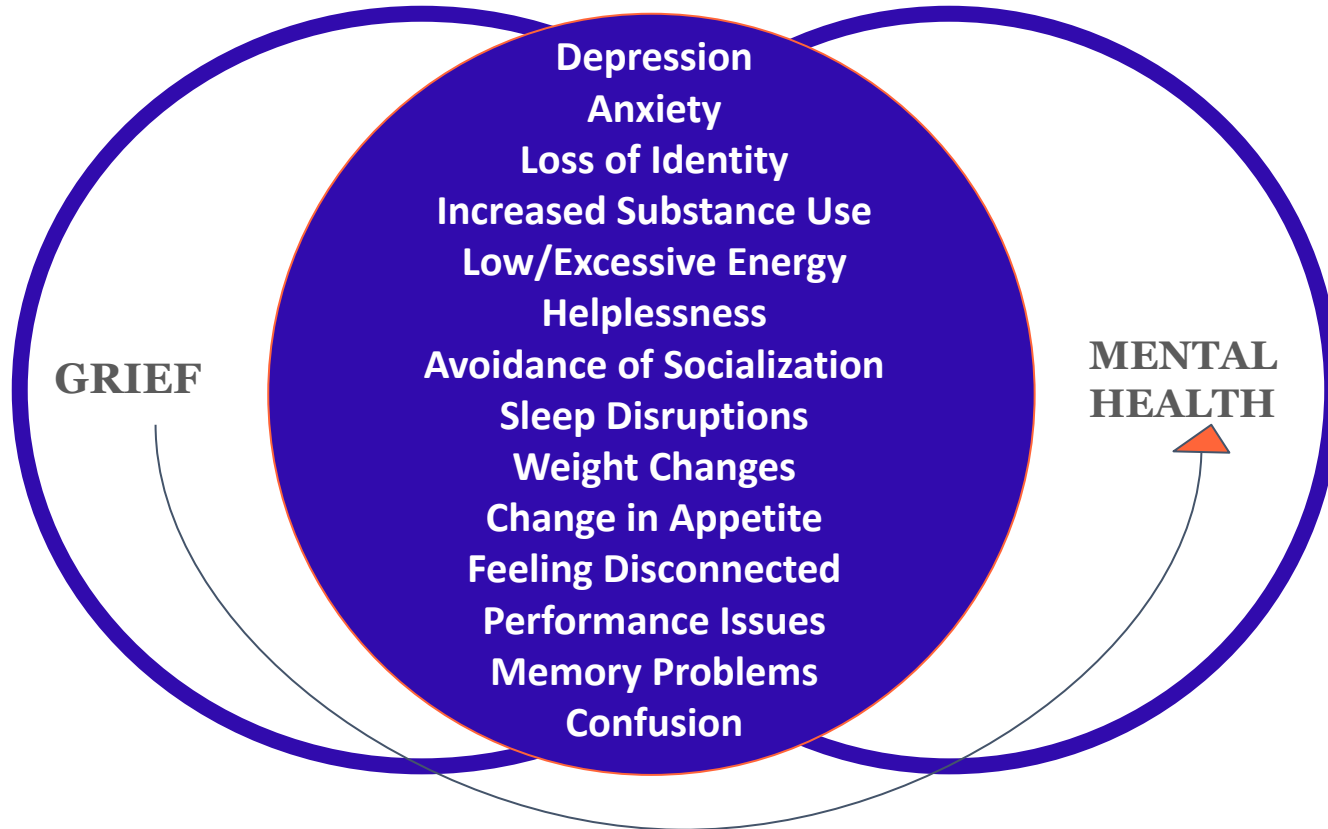
70%

Increase in alcohol or drugs

1 in 4

Employees grieving

Grief & Mental Health

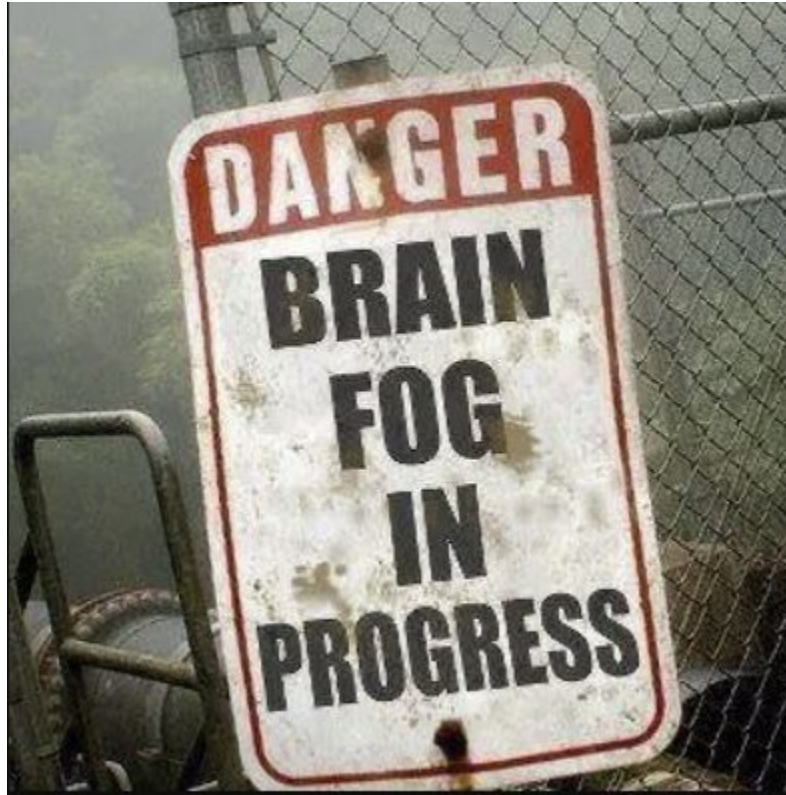


**EVERYONE
YOU MEET IS FIGHTING
A BATTLE
YOU KNOW NOTHING
ABOUT**



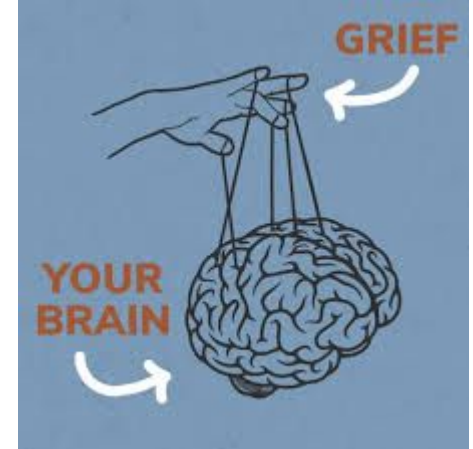
**Show some
compassion.**

Grief Messes with Our Brain & Body



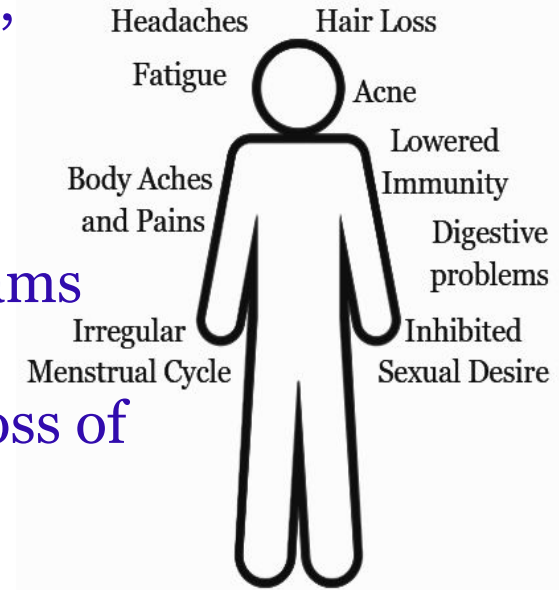
Common Displays of Grief Brain

- Decreased concentration, easily distracted, trouble focusing
- Confusion, decreased thought organization
- Forgetfulness, sluggish cognitive tempo
- Memory impairment, trouble with word recollection
- Decreased ability to multitask
- Trouble with decision-making
- Difficulty learning new skills
- Slowed response time
- Decrease in mental clarity and alertness



Grief Messes with Our Body

- Feelings of heaviness, muscle aches and pains, chest pains, difficulty breathing
- Low energy, exhaustion, weakness, fatigue
- Excessive energy, the need to keep busy
- Sleeping too much or too little, disturbed dreams
- Headaches
- Digestive problems, stomach aches, nausea, loss of appetite, eating too much
- Clumsiness
- Reckless, self-destructive activities (i.e. alcohol, drugs, gambling)
- Nervousness, anxiety



Grief Messes with Our Spirituality



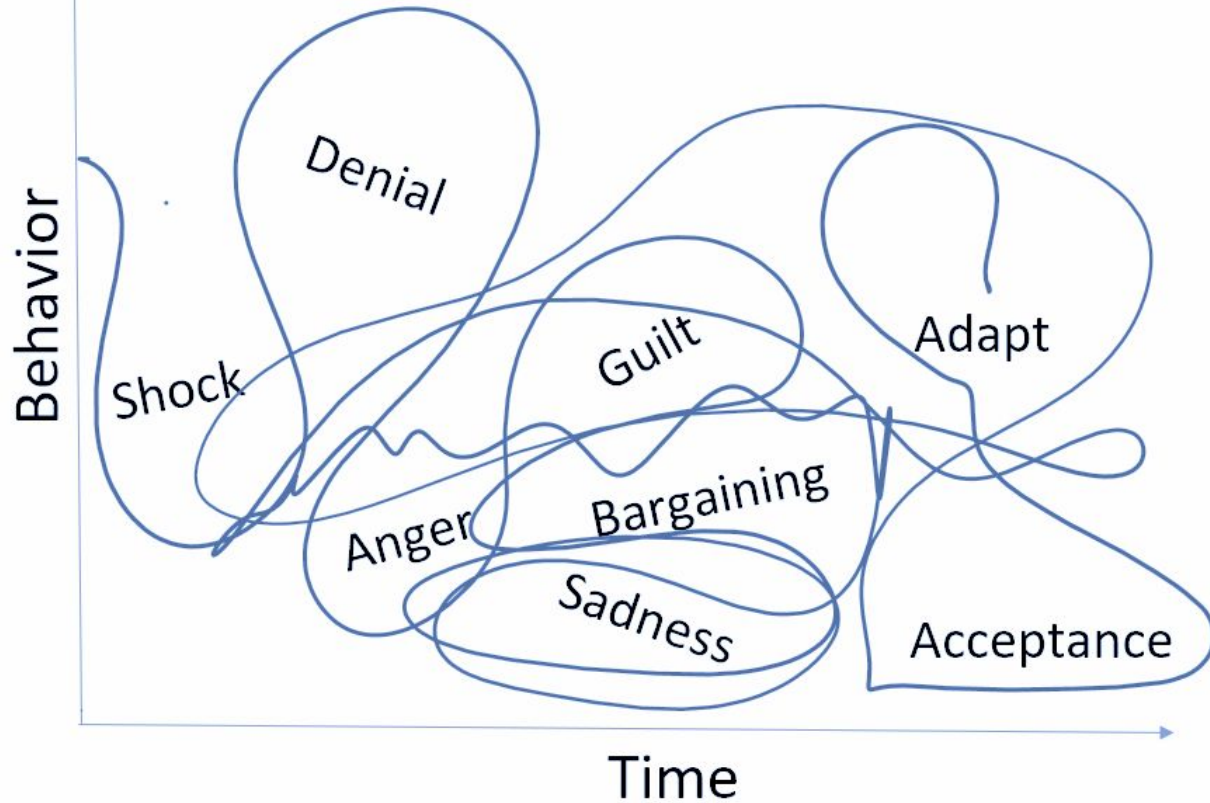
Stages of Grief



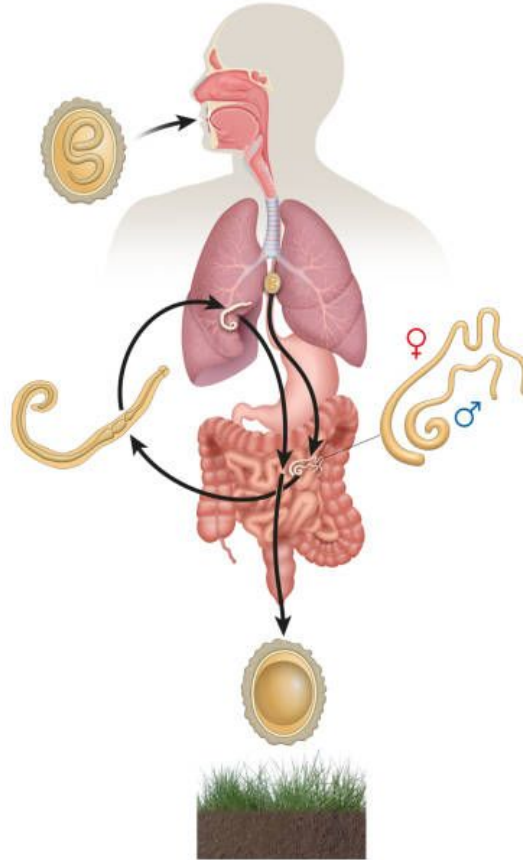
NOTE: Kübler-Ross notes that these stages are not linear.

This model was developed to help understand the grieving process, particularly in the context of facing terminal illness. The five stages of grief are the commonly observed stages experienced by the grieving population.

Stages of Grief



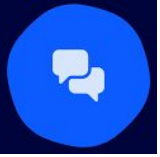
Ignored/Unresolved Grief



Grief Triggers

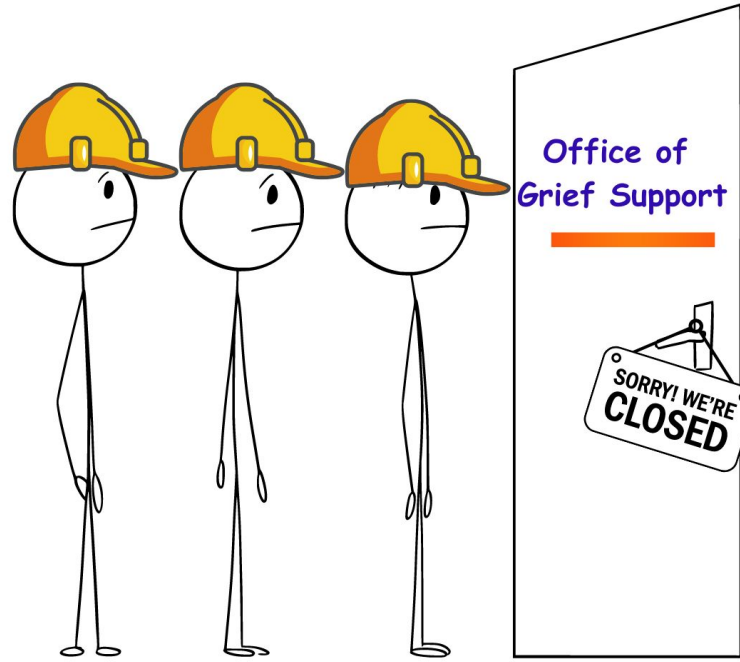






Birth &
Bereavement

Is Your Organization Grief Sensitive?



Grief Support & Its Impact at Work

92%

More likely to stay with an
empathetic employer

50%

Consider leaving their jobs
when employers don't
provide support after
someone they love dies

84%

CEOs believe financial
performance is tied to empathy
in the workplace

320%

Grieving employees who feel
unsupported emotionally are
more likely to have high
presenteeism

When It Happens To You

- You may need to self-advocate
 - Let others know what you need/how you need it
- Take breaks - grief brain is real
- Masking is exhausting
 - Know that it's okay to not be okay
 - Give yourself some grace
- Name it to tame it and feel it to heal it
- Remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint

What NOT to say

- I know how you feel.
- Everything happens for a reason.
- It will get easier.
- Time heals all wounds.
- I can't believe how well you're holding up.
- You need to stay strong for (your children, family, staff...)
- It's not like you lost a person. You can always get another...(pet, job)
- It's been over (a year). You should start (dating again) (get another pet)
- .

OR: It's *only* been (a year). I can't believe you're (dating already)

- Try to stay busy so you can keep your mind off it.
- It could be worse. I know this person....

What NOT to say

Steer clear of statements around religion:

- This is God's will.
- God has a plan.
- They are in God's hands.
- They are in a better place.
- God needed another angel.
- God never gives us more than we can handle.
- They are now an angel watching over you.
- They served their purpose.

What NOT to say

NEVER start your statement of condolence with “at least”

~~At least...~~

...you're young and you can have more kids

...is/he's no longer suffering

...you can get another furbaby

...you can remarry

...you can get another job

...s/he was doing something s/he loved

...your child will be home again over the holidays

...s/he lived a long life

What You Might Say Instead

- I can't imagine how difficult this is. I'm sorry you're having to go through this.
- I am so sorry for your loss.
- I wish I had the right words. Just know I care.
- You are in my thoughts (and prayers).
- My favorite memory of (your person) is...
- This sucks. All your emotions are valid.
- I'm hear to listen.
- You don't have to say anything. I can just sit with you.

Do Not...

- ...offer unsolicited advice, i.e. “You should try to get out more. Socializing will be good for you.”
- ... cross the street to avoid talking to them.
- ... comment on their appearance (good or bad) or how well they are holding up.
- **Judge**. Be sensitive to how the loss occurred. Be mindful of what you say to others.
 - S/he was a drug addict/gang member. What do you expect?
 - Suicide is selfish...a coward's way out...only hurts those left behind

Instead of...

“I am always just a phone call away”

I’m going to call and text to let you know I’m thinking of you. I don’t expect a response.

“Let me know what you need”

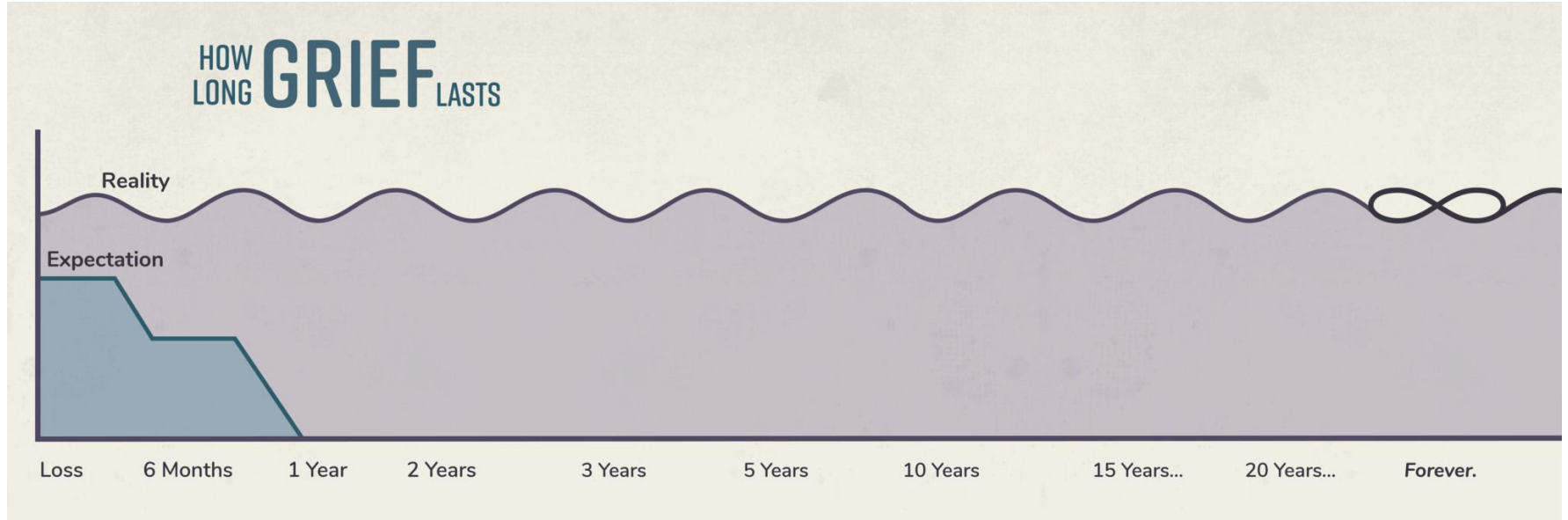
We all need help at times like this, I would like to...

- ✓ Take the kids to school, activities
- ✓ Clean up after guests leave
- ✓ Pick up groceries, dry cleaning
- ✓ Accompany you to difficult appointments
- ✓ Watch your kids, parents, pets
- ✓ Organize people to collect funds for burial costs, plowing, yardwork...
- ✓ Pre-pay and have a couple of pizzas delivered

Support Suggestions: Meeting Them Where They're At

- Avoid comparing your experiences with theirs
- Put your own awkwardness or discomfort aside
- Don't judge or shame the emotion
- Don't search for silver linings
- Check in often. Check in on days leading up to, the day of and after "firsts"
- Be as supportive on day 365 and day 565 as you were on day 1
- Understand that there is no time limit for grief
- Don't abandon them

Grief's Timeline



We tend to think grief shrinks over time.



In reality, we tend to grow around it.



Get Your End-of-Life Documents in Order - NOW

[illegible]

Articles & Videos

[Action Steps to Institute a Strategic Framework that Addresses Mental Health & Wellbeing](#)

[Dealing with Grief in the Workplace](#)

[Grief at Work: How Companies Can Show They Care](#)

[Grief at Work: How to Deal with a Grieving Employee – Career Advice](#)

[Mental Health in the Construction Industry | Construction Dive](#)

[Mental Health & Wellbeing in the Construction Workplace - Articles - CFMA](#)

[The Invisible Crisis in Construction: Contractors Respond to the Challenge - Articles - CFMA](#)

[Workplace Mental Health - Mental Health and Well-being in Construction](#)

Requested resources for loss of a coworker

Serious Illness, Death & Grieving in the Workplace

Grief in the Workplace

A Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace

With Gratitude - Thank You!

Jennifer L. Landon, M.Ed.

Educator & Speaker

Grief Education | Mental Health Awareness | Suicide Prevention | Recovery Friendly Workplace Advocacy

YGM Consulting

ygmconsulting@outlook.com

603-657-4069

www.ygmconsulting.org

(Your Grief Matters)



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