WHAT IF YOU ARE GRIEVING?

If you are the one who is grieving:

• Give your colleague time.
• Do not say: ‘Let me know if you need anything. I am here for you’. Instead, make a plan to see them and ask how they are right now. Do not let them do it all on their own. Make sure they are heading in the right direction.
• Show that you are there for them. For example, say: ‘If ever you feel the need to talk about it, give me a call’. Or you can suggest something specific, such as ‘shall I bring you a cup of coffee?’
• To show your support, you can make them feel safe in their grief. Do not say: ‘Give me a call!’

If someone you know is grieving:

• You are probably under a lot of pressure yourself, and so is the grieving person. Allow them to dictate how things go. Sometimes they may want to talk, and sometimes they may prefer not to. It is important to respect their privacy.
• Calling regularly to see how the person is is a good way to show your support. Sometimes they may not want to talk, but they can feel their support.
• Often, the grieving person is not sure what to say. Don’t be afraid to open old wounds or spoil a happy moment. Remain supportive and sympathetic. Do not say: ‘Are you feeling better now?’
• If you feel unsure about what to say, you can also say: ‘I heard that X passed away, that must have been difficult. How’s everything going do you think?’. It shows that you are thinking about them.
• Ask what the grieving person needs, and provide in a supportive role. They will most likely need more concrete things, such as taking over a task, or a cup of coffee, or help with a deadline. Show that you can see their sorrow, and acknowledge that it will not go away soon. Try not to give advice or talk about it. Avoid the avoidance. Do not say: ‘It will be better in some time’. You can just say: ‘I am here for you’.

GRIEF IN THE WORKPLACE

Do not be afraid to ask for help.

Ask your colleagues if you have grief.

• Steer clear of clichés.
• Do not say: ‘If there’s anything you need, just let me know.’
• Do not say: ‘Do you like it when your colleagues ask how you are?’
• Do not say: ‘What do you think of me not being here?’

There is absolutely nothing wrong with taking a little walk. It is best to suggest something specific, like ‘do you feel like going for a walk?’

WHAT IF SOMEBODY ELSE IS GRIEVING?

• Provide them with the opportunity to talk about their feelings.
• Do not be afraid to ask how you can best support them.
• Support them in their grief means giving them the freedom to be who they are. Sometimes they may need privacy, and other times to open a conversation.
• Displaying your engagement is just as important as uttering sympathy more than inaction. If you don’t know what to say, then just say that you don’t know what to say.

GRIEF INITIATIVES ON GRIEF AND LOSS

VUB initiatives on grief and loss can be found at this website: Compassionate University | Etterbeek campus, a spot where you can always take time out for yourself.

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WOULD YOU LIKE SOME EXTRA SUPPORT?

Contact P&O at VUB about it, get in touch at [I would like to speak to someone] Ik wil met iemand spreken (sharepoint.com). P&O can also refer you to BRUCC Well-being, the team of psychologists that opens a conversation.

GIVE YOUR COLLEAGUE TIME

• Give your colleague time. Do not say: ‘Give me a call!’
• Do not say: ‘If there’s anything you need, just let me know.’
• Do not say: ‘If you want to talk about it, sometimes not, and what should you consider if you are the one who is grieving? To help you on your way, we would like to introduce you to the suicide line (1813, or www.zelfmoord1813.be) where you can ask any questions you may have.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY?

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