

How To Support a Co-worker in a Difficult Time

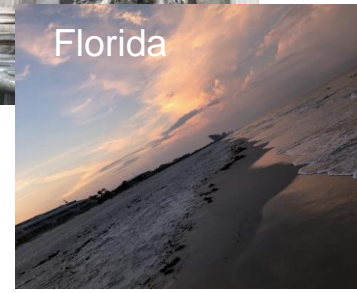
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A little About Me

- Born and raised in Bulgaria (Eastern Europe)
- Dad - Process Operator in a PVC plant in Libya; Mom – Lab Tech and now a hairstylist; Sister lives Austria
- At 21 moved to the US with a student exchange program and started English classes
- Tampa, FL is my original US home
- Chemical Engineer – University of South Florida
- *Huge Football Fan - Go BUCS*
- Married an Aggie (Jeff Svetlik HP2) and multiplied my family by a factor of two
- We love to: Travel, hangout with friends, make new friends, serve our church, attend ALL kids sports, watch football, AND food & wine



Where do we start ?

Before we can support a coworker through a difficult time in their life, we must first KNOW that they are going through a difficult time in their life.



Where do we start ?

Few ways to know that our co-worker is going through a difficult time:

- *They have actually shared with you or on social media about their...*

illness / marital issues / children behavior problems

financial issues / loss of loved one / **lack of rest** / other

*Keep in mind, they could be affected deeply by something that wouldn't be considered "a big deal" to you

- *Their behavior is different*

*not their usual smiling self / they aren't greeting you or others

*they are quieter and may appear distracted / missing meetings

*coming late to work trend



Evaluate Your Approach ?

How well do you know this person, and what would feel like a natural approach?

Show Them Kindness

- “How was your weekend?”
- Go out of your way to acknowledge them
- Forward them and others “something” that may interest them

Acknowledge and Show Compassion

- “I am so sorry for your loss”
- “I heard of what happened, I am here for you if you need anything”
- *Share in the Chat how would you “show compassion” ?*

Having a Conversation

- This will be difficult for some but if there is a good working relationship, it is appropriate to take the time and *talk about it*



What do we do now?

1. Do Not Judge - what does “judging” look like ?

You justify why they shouldn't feel this way and why it shouldn't affect their performance/mood/appearance.

You discuss their situation with others... this is only ok if you attempt to stop someone else from speculating.

2. Be a good listener

- When listening to someone in need, it's critical to actually listen. That means listening to hear, not listening to respond.
- It is not that sharing your thoughts isn't helpful; it's just that it's so easy to dominate the conversation without even realizing it

3. Resist the urge to say “I understand” or share your version of a similar-seeming experience

- Let them decide if the experiences are similar enough to bond over and to frame it as “this is something we can talk about later”



What do we do now?

4. When in doubt, ask

It is OK to not know what to say or do in response to a coworker's terrible situation.

“How can I best support you right now?”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“How are you feeling about it?”

5. A genuine “I am so sorry”, is always the best approach

Make sure the “I am sorry” is heartfelt. It is not robotic or asked in between your daily metrics updates.

A person in a tough place needs support, not just words.

6. Do Not Share details about your co-worker's situation with others

If they trusted you with in depth information, ask yourself if the roles were reversed would you like something about your personal life to be part of the rumor mill at work



Use Your Chat ...

Have you had to approach a co-worker who appeared to be going through “something”?

Was it easy or hard to do so?



Let's Talk About Stress

What is stress?

Normal human reaction that happens to everyone. The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it via physical and mental responses

What happens to the body during stress?

The body's autonomic nervous system controls your heart rate, breathing, vision changes.

Acute vs Chronic Stress

Little stresses we experience on daily basis vs. severe stress over a longer period



Let's Talk About Stress

When a person has long-term (chronic) stress, continued activation of the stress response causes wear and tear on the body. Physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms develop.

Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Chest pain or feeling like your heart is racing
- Exhaustion or trouble sleeping
- Headaches, dizziness or shaking
- High blood pressure
- Stomach or digestive problems
- Weak immune system

Emotional and Mental Symptoms

- Anxiety or irritability
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Sadness



Use Your Chat ...

Would you share some of the stress contributors
in your life?



Let's Do Our Part



THANK
YOU

