

Grief and Crisis Management: Building a Grief-Ready Workforce *Coaching Session*

Presented by

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EdD

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CMHIS provides support for organizations and systems on how to implement the most effective mental health care in their communities.

Resource Library

We are excited to announce the launch of our Resource Library. This curated collection features practical, pragmatic, and accessible resources tied to our eight core topics to support the preparation, implementation, and sustainment of effective mental health practices and programs. We will continue to populate the Resource Library over the next few weeks, so please check back for updates.

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Published: 2025
 This infographic provides an overview of factors influencing implementation, their key components, and why they matter when implementing a new effective mental health practice. The...




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Preparing

Implementing

Sustaining

3 Pacific West Hub for Mental Health Implementation Support

The work of CMHIS and the Hubs



Events & Activities

Targeted/intensive events focused on real-world practice change.



Consultation & Coaching

Hands-on, tailored problem-solving to help your team navigate roadblocks.



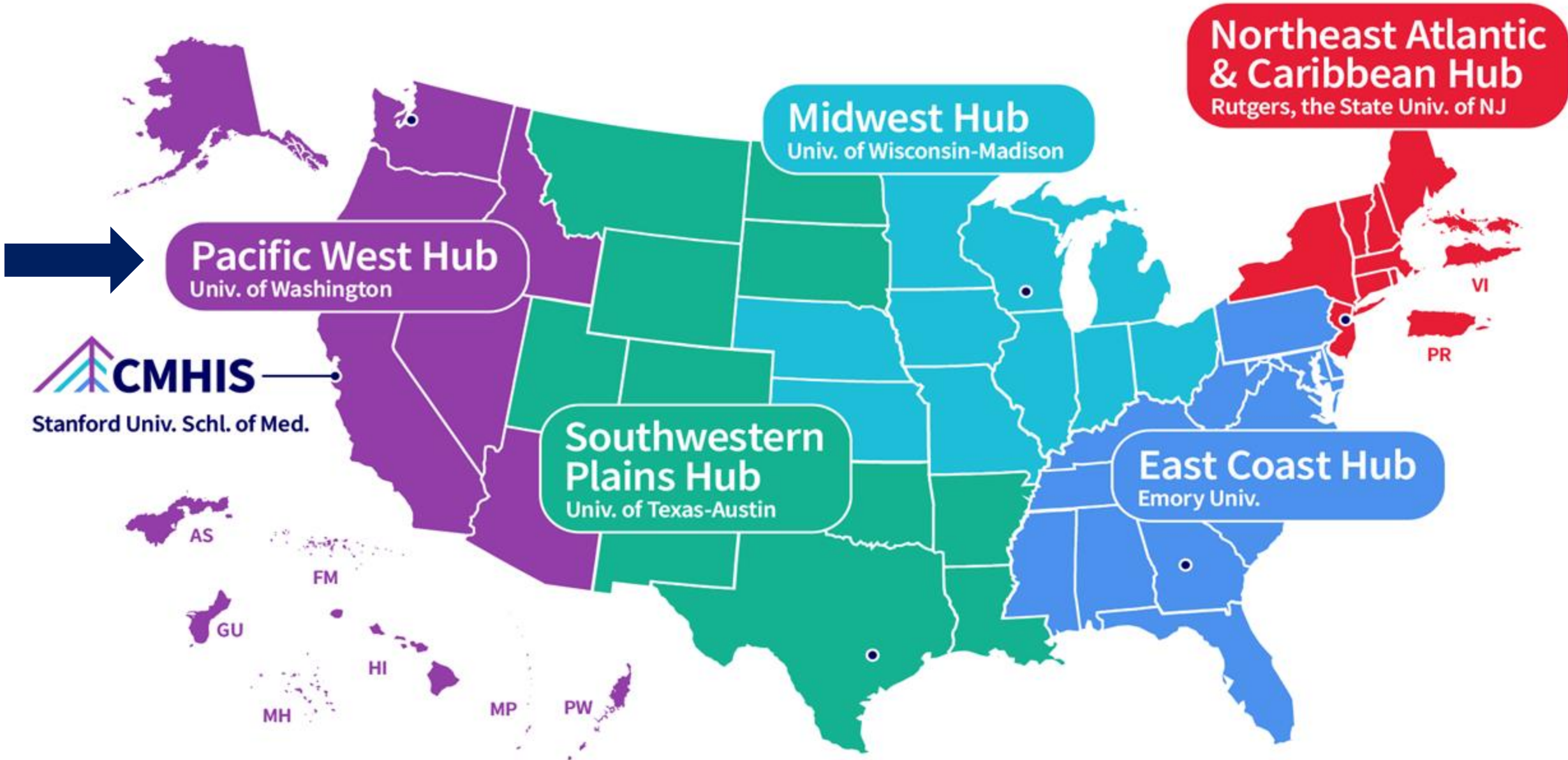
Resources

Practical tools and guides to get started, improve quality, and sustain services.



Online Learning

Experts at your fingertips through online courses and recorded sessions in our CMHIS Learning Lab.





Co-directors

Lydia Chwastiak, MD, MPH
Christina Clayton, LICSW, SUDP



- Serves HHS regions 9 & 10
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Implementing MH program or practice

Community-based settings

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Peer Integration for Implementation Readiness Learning Community

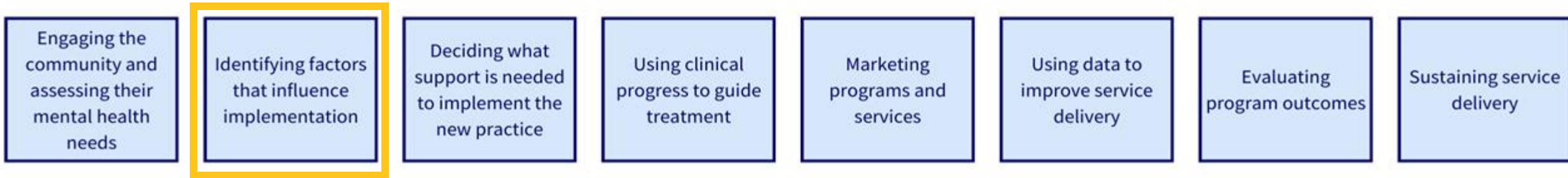
Thursdays June 11, 18, & 25
2:00-3:00 pm Pacific (3 Free CEs Available!)



Grief and Crisis Management Learning Community

Thursdays, July 16, 23, & 30
2:00-3:00 pm Pacific (3 Free CEs Available!)

Core Topics of Implementing Program & Practice Change



Identifying Factors That Influence Implementation

About the Core Topic

Factors influencing implementation are things that inform, support (facilitators), or hinder (barriers) efforts to deliver effective practices and maintain them over time. They can include characteristics of the practice; the people involved; clinics, organizations, systems, and communities; and other factors. Understanding these facilitators, barriers, and other influences can be essential for deciding what practice to use for a specific mental health need, improving its fit for a setting and community, and making the practice work and last. Factors influencing implementation are sometimes referred to as barriers/facilitators or contextual determinants.

Key Components

Factors influencing implementation can be related to:

- **The practice:** What it is and the resources it requires; what is known about how well it works, and how well it fits or can be adapted for a specific setting and population.
- **People served by the practice:** This includes patients, clients, caregivers, and families. Who they are; their needs, motivations, knowledge, and perspectives; and how these interact with providers, practices, or organizations.
- **Individuals who deliver the practice:** Who they are; their needs, motivations, knowledge, skills, and perspectives; and their relationships with the people served by the practice and their organization.
- **Organizations:** How the organization as a whole works; leadership, staffing, culture, communication, values, priorities, relationships, and physical infrastructure (including technology); the organization's approach to and readiness for making changes; the other available services and supports; and how accessible they are. These factors apply to specific clinics or sites within organizations.
- **Systems and communities:** Factors outside the organization; laws, policies, funding, politics, partnerships with other organizations, cultures, values, and community needs.

Why This Topic Matters for Implementation

Understanding the factors influencing implementation can be useful when preparing for a new practice, implementing the practice, and sustaining its use. While preparing for a new practice, understanding these factors can help with (1) selecting what practice to use for an identified mental health need and community (including fit between the practice and community); and (2) deciding what support is needed to implement a new practice and address barriers to practice success. Once a practice is being used, monitoring these factors can help identify and address new challenges and needs to maintain its effectiveness and sustain it into the future. Identifying these factors, prioritizing them, and addressing them can be challenging because they can be complicated, occur at multiple levels of an organization or setting, and change over time—and they can interact with each other.

Key Resources

These practical resources are designed to help you move from planning to action.

- [*The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool*](#). National Implementation Research Network.
- [*Evidence-Based Strategy Selection Worksheet*](#). Ohio Community Guide State Team, Health Policy Institute of Ohio, and Ohio Department of Health.
- [*Contextual Determinants Affecting Implementation: Qualitative Interview Guide*](#). Center for Dissemination and Implementation At Stanford (C-DIAS) and HEAL Data2Action Research Adoption Support Center (HD2A RASC).
- [*Inventory of Factors Affecting Successful Implementation and Sustainment \(IFASIS\)*](#). Center for Dissemination and Implementation At Stanford (C-DIAS).
- [*Prioritizing Implementation Barriers: Toolkit for Designing an Implementation Initiative*](#). University of Washington IMPACT Center and Optimizing Implementation in Cancer Control (OPTICC) Center.

Pacific West Hub
**Mental Health
Implementation Support**

**Meet Your Presenter:
Leora Wolf-Prusan, EdD**

UW Medicine
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY
AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES



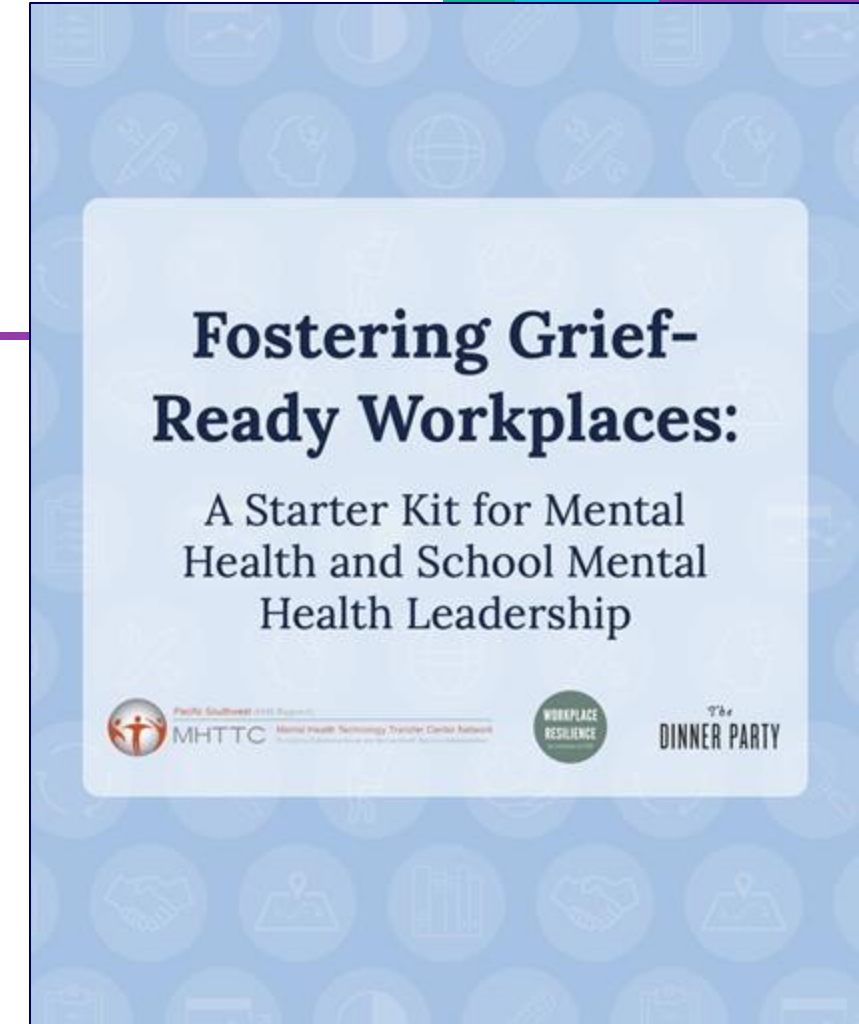
Guidelines for our time together

Be as present as possible: We've all got a lot going on. And this time is for us and our growth and learning.

Sharing isn't mandatory: We will offer a couple moments to free write and reflect, referring to personal and professional experiences. While we invite you to share in the chat, there's not requirement to share.

Recognize that no two grief experiences are the same and that grief isn't held equally (in our culture nor in our workforces).

Please have the starter kit downloaded or printed! We'll be referring to it a lot.



https://cars-rp.org/_MHTTC/docs/Fostering-Grief-Ready-Workplaces-Schools-Starter-Kit.pdf

Rewinding to Tuesday...



Grief readiness in the workplace: Proactively preparing for the impacts of grief experiences on employee **wellbeing and **workflow**.**

Grief readiness in the workplace is being prepared to meet the needs of grieving employees by developing the policies and cultural norms for them to thrive at work.

4 Stages to Grief-Ready Management & Organizational Culture



Trauma-informed grief management



Assumptions

(They probably know what to do)



Agreements

(Yep, we've had a conversation; they've been trained and are clear.)

Core Principles of Grief Readiness

- **It's not if, but when. And, it's probably right now. And it may be invisible.**
- **Standardize support without losing humanity.**
- **Knowing less can be more.**
- **Shift from prescribing to listening.**
- **Recognize how systems and beliefs are impacting their experience.**
- **Even if you don't have letters behind your name, you can do this.**
- **Knowing less is more. This is NOT about extracting personal information or becoming their therapist.**
- **How do we show the same amount of support/forethought to people experiencing loss as we do to new parents?**

We can't fix, solve, or save people from grief.

What we can (and must) do is ensure our workplaces lessen the isolation and disconnection that comes with grief and loss.

Fostering Grief-Ready Workplaces:

A Starter Kit for Mental Health and School Mental Health Leadership



Review all four phases of grief readiness and the starting questions for each, focusing on the first section, “Get Ready.”

After reviewing all four phases of grief readiness, identify a question that will be the entry point to your grief readiness at work

Turn to pages 22-24

I. GET READY:

Put clear protocols, training, and cultural norms in place to minimize the negative impacts of your organization being unprepared for a loss.

STARTING QUESTION:

Name one policy or structure (formal or informal) that your organization already has in place to support grieving employees. How are grieving employees identified? Whose role is it to carry it out? Does it happen consistently?

DEEPER DIVE QUESTIONS:

1. What policies or support systems do we have in place?
2. Are those policies being followed? Are the benefits well known and being used? Is there any inequity in how these benefits are being administered or received?
3. Do we feel confident that everyone in management roles could gracefully support and engage an employee who was struggling?
4. Do we know what's legally required in my state, or industry standard with peers/competitors? What are other organizations doing?
5. Is our leadership team recognizing that Grief Readiness in the workplace is a priority? If not, how can we be stronger internal champions?

Reflecting on your organization's grief readiness



Given what we've discussed, in which ways are you / your organization prepared?

In what ways are you / your organization not?

Reflection Question #1

What are you observing about what it's like to be an acutely grieving person in your organization?

Reflection Question #2:

What are you observing about how colleagues interact with acutely grieving colleagues?



-2-

**Being a Manager, Supervisor,
or Leader in the Context of
Loss**



Preparing for a conversation



It's about knowing that if someone is having a grief experience, there are resources available to help them step back if need be, to regain control and, when they're ready, re-engage with work, without employers needing to know any of the personal details.

In the case where a manager is unclear whether a performance issue is grief related, or just general bad behavior, managers can clarify with this sort of question:

“Is there something going on related to grief in your personal life? I don't need to know the details, but I do need to know that something is up.”

Walk the Talk of Care



What are some specific supports you have received as a griever from your supervisor or manager?

What are some specific ways you have supported grieving or bereaved direct reports or your team members?

As a manager, how might you support your own grief activators as you support others?

What would you add? Edit?

✕ STOP SAYING THIS

✓ SAY THIS INSTEAD

WHEN THEY FIRST TELL YOU

"I hope things go well."

They already know the outcome is loss. This signals you don't understand what they're facing.

"I want to acknowledge what you're going through. I don't have the right words, but I want you to know we're here and we want to support you however we can."

OFFERING HELP

"Let me know if you need anything."

Sounds supportive. It transfers all the decision-making to someone in the worst position to make decisions right now.

"I'm going to check in with you every Tuesday. And I'm bringing dinner Wednesday. What time works?"

Be specific. Be proactive. Remove the burden of asking.

TIME OFF

"Take all the time you need."

Creates anxiety, not relief. They'll spend energy decoding what's acceptable instead of grieving.

"Take this week. I'll call you Thursday and we'll make a plan together. Here's how we're handling your work while you're out."

PLATITUDES

"Everything happens for a reason." "They're in a better place." "At least you had all those years together."

"That really sucks. I'm so sorry."

You don't need to fix it. You need to witness it. Simple and honest beats polished and hollow.

THE EVERYDAY CHECK-IN

"How are you?"

Forces a performance. Grieving employees say "fine" because they feel they have to. Then they carry the weight alone.

"Good to see you."

Removes the pressure to lie. Signals presence without demanding a status update on their grief.

WHEN THEY RETURN TO WORK

"I was surprised you needed more than three days. Are you sure you can't come back sooner?"

"Here's what our policy covers, but more importantly, what do you need right now? Let's figure it out together."

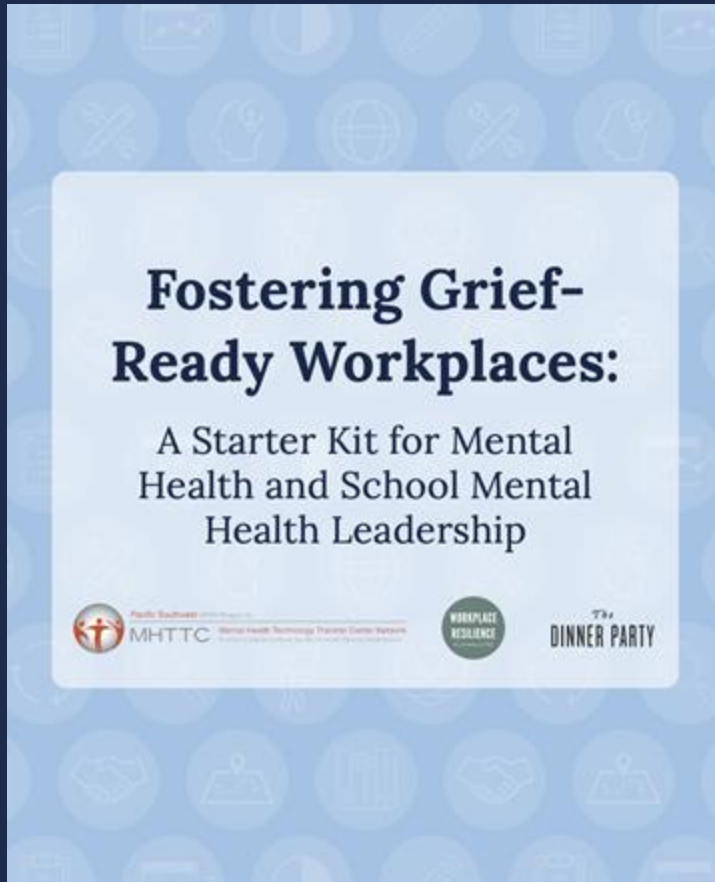
WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

"I can't imagine what you're going through."

Or worse: silence, avoidance, a different hallway. Silence is still a message. It says your loss doesn't belong here.

"I don't have the right words. But I'm here, and I'm glad you trusted me with this."

Name your discomfort. An imperfect attempt beats silence every time.



Turn to page 31

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Which of these ten principles do you want to focus on improving?

What are two additional principles you would add to this list?

Ten Principles to Guide Conversation with Grieving Employees

1. Be conscious of time and place
2. Stay away from cliché sayings & attitudes
3. Offer support that's specific
4. Identify their options, but reaffirm their agency
5. Knowing less is more
6. Avoid advice giving or assuming you know what's best for them
7. Listen and ask open & honest questions
8. Erase the pity face and instill confidence
9. Make a plan and follow up
10. How do employees' experiences differ?



Closing



What did you get?

What did you bring?

What's unfinished?



Resources & Extended Learning



[The Humanity Gap: What Most Leaders Miss About Bereavement at Work](#) (The Center for Creative Leadership, April 2026)

[The Workplace Is Full of Grief We Refuse to Name](#) (McCastle, 2026)

[APA Presidential Task Force for Culturally Informed Trauma and Grief Recovery Toolkit](#) (American Psychological Association, 2024)

[Grief Literacy: The Leadership Skill Most Organizations Haven't Learned Yet](#) (Kilby, 2026)

[State of Grief Report: Building a Sustainable Culture of Grief Support](#) (New York Life Foundation, 2025)

[A Guide to The Human Side of Workplace Transitions](#) (Weaver, 2026)



New York Life Foundation's Grief-Supportive Workplace Initiative (GSWI)



SCAN OR
[CLICK HERE](#)

Grief affects everyone at some point in their lives and can have an impact wherever we are, including at work. New York Life Foundation's **Grief-Supportive Workplace Initiative (GSWI)** offers resources, inclusive practices, and suggested policies that help companies build compassionate bereavement support for employees while maintaining business productivity.



77% believe bereavement-related benefits are important when deciding on a new job.*



93% would be proud to work for a company committed to bereavement support.*



74% would be interested in voluntary grief-support training at work.*

Tailored training and resources:

The New York Life Foundation has long supported families, communities, and schools navigating grief and continues to expand this work to address grief in the workplace. Through GSWI, training and resources are tailored by audience and circumstance, including support for individuals who are grieving, colleagues and managers, and business leaders. The initiative offers free grief-supportive training modules, along with complementary communications tools and templates.

Learn About the Grief-Supportive Workplace Initiative

Join a GSWI Overview Webinar

The Grief-Supportive Workplace Initiative (GSWI) webinar series introduces how organizations can better support employees experiencing grief — and why this support matters for workplace culture and workforce outcomes.

- Learn about grief in the workplace and its impact beyond bereavement leave
- Get an overview of GSWI training modules and practical resources
- Explore ways organizations can begin or strengthen grief-supportive practices

Who Should Attend?

Anyone interested in learning more about grief in the workplace — including HR leaders, managers, and employees.

How to participate

Register using the link or QR code. One registration provides access to multiple webinar dates, and all sessions are recorded.

Scan to Register



SCAN OR
[CLICK HERE](#)

*According to New York Life Foundation's 2025 State of Grief Report.

See you in July!

Grief and Crisis Management Learning Community

Thursdays, July 16, 23, & 30

2:00-3:00 pm Pacific

3 Free CEs Available!

Life After Loss

Virtual Summit Exploring Grief Aftermath

RECORDINGS & RESOURCES
NOW AVAILABLE

ABOUT THE SERIES

Grieving is not a process to rush through – it's a lived experience that deserves informed support. Explore what life after loss really looks like.



Grief is not Linear

Explore trauma-informed frameworks that honor each person's unique journey through loss – across cultures and communities.



Community is Medicine

Learn how peer support, collective healing, and culturally-responsive care reduce isolation and build resilience.



Practical Tools for Providers

Evidence-based strategies you can bring directly to your work with clients, families, and teams.



ACCESS:

- On-Demand Recordings
- Downloadable Grief Aftermath Resources
- Faculty bios
- And More



SCAN QR CODE TO ACCESS

cars-rp.org/life-after-loss

Thank you!
Please scan to
complete our
evaluation survey



Obtaining Certificate of Completion - Instructions

- 1) Complete post-event survey (***this is required to get your certificate***)
- 2) Right after survey completion, click on the step-by-step instructions and event page links (screenshot below)

Your responses were successfully submitted. Thank you!
This document [PDF LINK](#) provides step-by-step instructions for receiving your Certificate of Completion for this event.
Once you've reviewed it, visit this event page [here](#) to begin the steps to claim your certificate.

If you accidentally close out of this window or have questions, email pacificwest@cmhisupport.org and we will help you get your credits

Note: You will need to be 1) logged into the CMHIS website to obtain your certificate and 2) click 'Register/Enroll' on the event page

The screenshot shows the login page for the Center for Mental Health Implementation Support. A purple button labeled 'Register/Enroll' is circled with a '2'. The 'Sign in' section is circled with a '1' and contains fields for 'Email Address' and 'Password', a 'Remember Me' checkbox, a 'Forgot Password?' link, and a 'Log in' button. A 'Create an Account' link is also visible.

You will be able to generate the certificate from the event page

The screenshot shows a section titled 'Learning Session or Consultation Content'. A button labeled 'Generate a Certificate of Completion' with a lock icon is circled with a '3'.

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