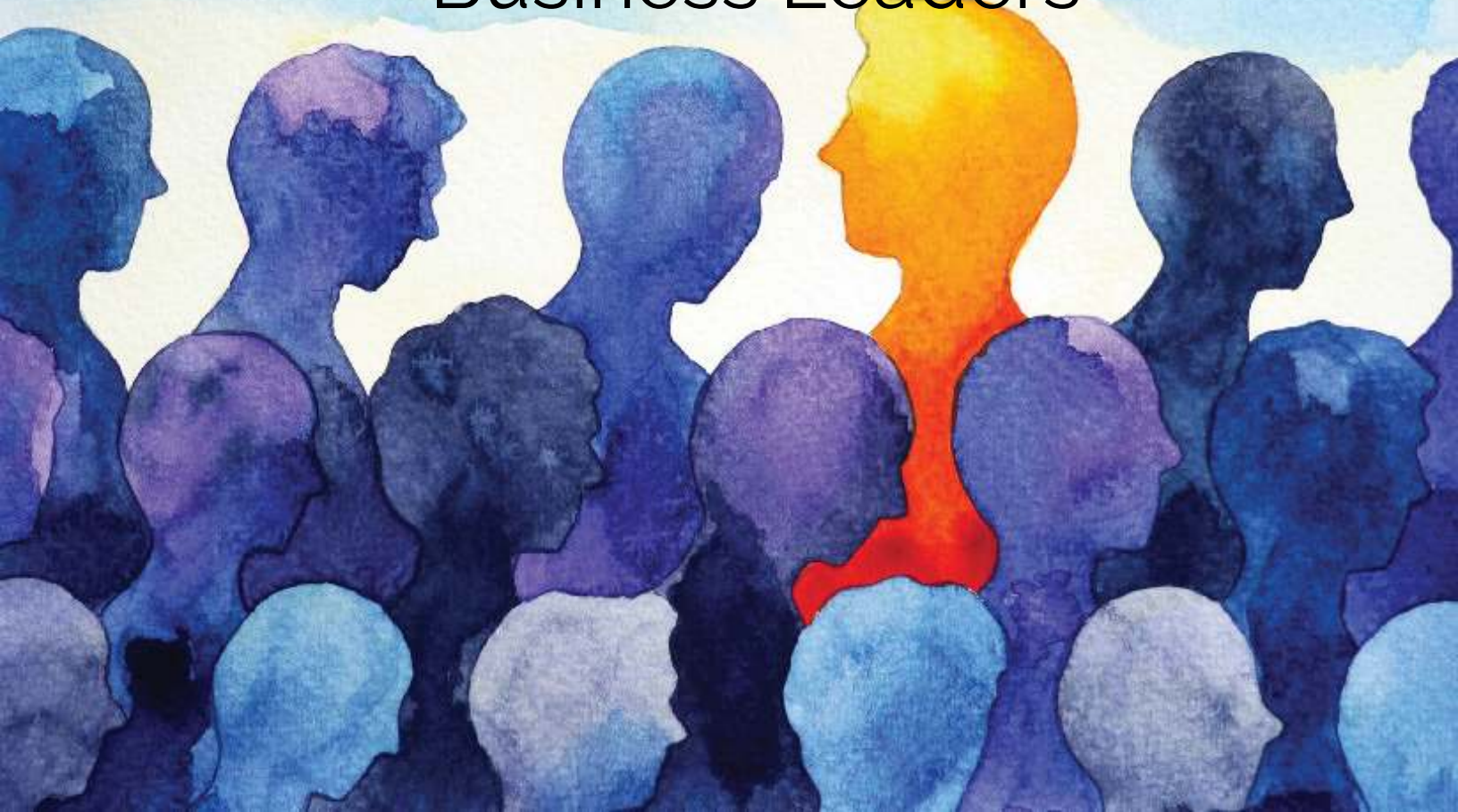


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HOW TO HELP OTHERS MANAGE GRIEF

16 Lessons For
Business Leaders



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Since the pandemic began earlier this year, many professionals have experienced feelings of grief, whether in their personal lives or at work. As a leader, one of the most important things you can do is to learn how to support your employees and help them navigate challenging times.

Working through feelings of grief and mourning with your team can not only improve everyone's mental health and overall satisfaction, but can also provide valuable insights to help you become a better leader. Below, the members of [Forbes Coaches Council](#) share 16 important lessons that business leaders can learn from the principles of grief management.



Members offer lessons in grief management for business leaders.

1. Accept That EQ Is As Important As IQ

Accept that EQ, or emotional intelligence, is as important as IQ and that acquiring EQ is nonnegotiable. Understand and accept that each person's response to life events, as well as their healing process, is unique. It requires finesse, empathy and intuition to navigate. Out of all possible stages, discern which stage of grief they're experiencing. It varies with culture. Accordingly, learning should be applied gracefully and with patience. - [Rajal Chattopadhyay, ATOS](#)

2. Find Out What Matters To Your Employees

Lending a supportive ear means inquiring, asking questions and offering resources for matters that are important to your employees. Leading with deeper levels of empathy and tending to the whole person is more natural and meaningful than any other approach. It's a great reminder of the call of leadership, and that is to serve. - [June Stewart, Amplify Partners, LLC](#)

3. Learn Patience And Self-Acceptance

Leaders can learn patience and self-acceptance as they support team members experiencing the five stages of grief. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross describes these five stages as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Leaders who listen with empathy during these transitions are often viewed as empathetic and supportive. They can support employees moving through the stages with greater ease and awareness. - [Gina Lavery, Gina Lavery Inc.](#)

4. Commit To Being There For Those In Grief

Everyone does not grieve in the same way. Leaders need to understand that not everything is a process. Understand that grieving is a personal journey and that there will be ebbs and flows and ups and downs. Instead of trying to figure out the journey, just commit to being there for the individual with the trust and faith that they will come through it. Belief is the most important practice in all things. - [Bobbie Goheen, Synthesis Management Group](#)

5. Encourage Employees To Talk About Their Feelings

Grief is the foundation of change, and people will cycle through the stages of grief several times before they can move forward effectively. Also, it is important to note that we even grieve the things we are ready to let go of. Lastly, I would ask leaders to encourage their people to talk about their feelings. Unexpressed feelings usually leak in the form of ineffective behaviors, such as resistance. - [Eugene Dilan, Psy.D., DILAN Consulting Group](#)

6. Practice Self-Compassion

Most importantly, leaders should learn how to manage their own disturbing thoughts and emotions without being judgmental. They can do this by nurturing complete self-acceptance while practicing self-compassion and engaging in good self-care. Once they get to know and treat themselves better, they can more readily support their followers in similar situations. - [Zoran M Pavlovic MD, Heruka Health Innovations](#)

7. Model The Way For Your Employees

Business leaders need to understand how to deal with their own sadness and grief as well as the emotions of employees. The best leaders model the way. Their comfort and ease in dealing with their own loss and grief will enable them to show empathy and compassion for the losses of others. This is the right thing to do. And when employees feel seen and cared about, they remain loyal and engaged. - [Christine Allen, Ph.D, Insight Business Works](#)

8. Lead With Compassion

By the nature of their position, leaders can model behaviors that help employees, teams and the entire organization heal by leading with compassion and unleashing a compassionate response throughout the entire company. Leaders can be authentic and share their feelings, which can be powerful for employees as they listen and a catalyst for them to open up about how they are doing themselves. - [Jonathan Silk, Bridge 3 LLC](#)

9. Plan To Manage Grief As Part Of Change Management

Grief is often associated with loss, but a change in the workplace can produce a similar emotion in people. Planning for grief management as part of the change management process is ideal. Providing opportunities for communication and expression is a great way to help a team process the change. Leaders also need to remain patient and calm while leading the team through the change. - [Lindsay Miller, Reverie Organizational Development Specialists](#)

10. Embrace Emotional Reactions To Change

Grief is a natural reaction to change. Most business leaders are trained to check their emotions at the door, and they train their people to do the same. Being aware of, allowing for and embracing emotional reactions to change has a positive impact on organizational performance. - [Katharina Schmidt, Inspiration & Discipline](#)

11. Create A Healthy Space For Grief

Grief is a byproduct of loss. Accompanying someone in their grief requires empathy in its most unadulterated form. It is not about solving the problem or curing the ailment. A leader demonstrates and builds resilience by creating a space for grief without shutting it down, standing beside another in solidarity. Not all leaders can do that well, but the very best can. - [Karyn Gallant, Gallant Consulting Group](#)

12. Step Into The Accompanying Emotions

We often associate grief only with a loved one's death. We can experience grief over failed projects, missed promotions, missed opportunities, lost clients, lost contracts, a retiring colleague or even firing someone. Step into grief and the accompanying emotions. Recognize and acknowledge the contradictory nature of those emotions. Don't let them blindsides you because you thought you could ignore them. - [Leann Wolff, Great Outcomes Consulting](#)

13. Be Prepared For Recurrences

If the original loss or disturbance occurred weeks, months or even years ago, recognize that certain events, such as anniversaries or changing seasons, can trigger a recurrence of the emotional impact. Try to prepare for these by checking in with your teams to see how they are doing and ask what could help them cope with the re-emergence of past experiences. - [Tonya Echols, Vigere](#)

14. Don't Force Yourself To Be Strong

Leaders often tell themselves that they should put up a strong front. They think that nobody wants to see them looking sad. If leaders have to stay strong for other reasons, then it can get tricky, but they should still admit to feeling weak if they're really devastated. Don't try to act "tough" or as if you've got all under control when you know that's not the case. - [Cristian Hofmann, Empowering Executives | SUPERGROUP LTD](#)

15. Be Prepared To Enter The Abyss With Them

I was in New York for 9/11. Although I lost no one close to me, I experienced the post-traumatic stress disorder of a city and a nation firsthand. As I worked with people, me listening to their stories helped them to release some of their trauma and begin to reconnect. Pretending everything is fine and ignoring the obvious is a mistake. You have to be prepared to enter the abyss with your people and be with them to take action. - [Jeff Altman, The Big Game Hunter](#)

16. Allow As Much Time Off As Needed

The world can wait! I lost my father suddenly 2 years ago, and all I could think about was, "What will happen to my clients?" I made a lot of bad decisions, and my productivity naturally decreased. A three-day bereavement policy isn't enough time for a reasonable person to grieve. I realized that I needed to take as much time as I needed to heal so that I could best serve others and myself. Take time off. - [Joyel Crawford, Crawford Leadership Strategies, LLC.](#)

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