

DEALING WITH EMOTIONS AFTER A DIFFICULT DAY

Every business has its challenges. For the funeral profession though, dealing with raw, heightened emotions day-in, day-out, unarguably stands out as a challenging career on a personal level.

“If you don’t already have one, set-up and clearly communicate your business’s employee care programme, so that people know exactly what help is available to them if and when they need it.”

From the emotional toll of supporting others, while keeping their own emotions in check, to dealing with distressing situations and circumstances of death, employees in the funeral profession carry a lot on their shoulders.

As employers, it’s vitally important that you’re on top of your employees’ welfare, and are fine-tuned when it comes to spotting signs of people struggling.

Here are some starting points to consider.

ENCOURAGE EMOTIONS

Make sure you’ve developed a culture whereby employees feel comfortable sharing their emotions. It’s difficult enough for employees to maintain composure while facing customers – don’t make them feel they have to do the same around you, too.

Bottling up emotions is unhealthy, so implement a business-wide open door policy, to encourage everyone – regardless of their seniority – to open up and support one another.

LAUGHING ISN’T A CRIME

It goes without saying that this shouldn’t be when grieving families, relatives, or friends are around, but remind employees that workplace laughter shouldn’t be avoided for fear of being inappropriate.

Laughter is healthy for the mind, body and soul, and will help employees pull together and get through difficult days with a smile on their face. If you feel like employees are shying away from having fun, go out of your way to instigate it – this could be by making a joke yourself, organising workplace activities or team building events, for example.

HOW ARE YOU?

Those three little words can go a long way. Show genuine care and compassion to all your employees, and acknowledge when it’s been a particularly distressing day. Ask them how they are, if there’s anything you can do to help, and encourage them to do something after work to take their mind off it and relax.

EMPLOYEE CARE PROGRAMMES

If you don’t already have one, set-up and clearly communicate your business’s employee care programme, so that people know exactly what help is available to them if and when they need it.

Care programmes come in many forms. It could be internal coaching or counselling, an anonymous forum for employees to talk, group sessions, or regular one-to-one chats to assess how an employee is coping.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Some employees might not feel comfortable approaching people they work with when they're struggling. To ensure this doesn't act as a barrier for seeking support, make them aware of external provision that's available to them.

This could be services like their local GP, NHS helplines, counselling services, mind.org.uk or sane.org.uk, for example.

STRESS-RELATED ABSENCES

If employees start experiencing a number of difficult days and it simply gets too much for them, they may need some time off.

And if they state that the stress is work-related, you may wish to arrange a meeting with them while they're off sick, to see if there's anything you can do to alleviate the stress.

Remember, employees are entitled to at least statutory sick pay (SSP) if they have four or more days off in a row. If they're off for more than seven days, they'll need to provide you with a Fit Note from their GP.

Regardless of how long they're off work, you should conduct a back-to-work interview on their return and discuss things like: how they're feeling, what was wrong, whether or not they saw a GP, if they've taken any medication, and if there's anything you can do to help them.

Alternatively, if possible, you could try to orchestrate their future workload so that they have a breathing period from the types of situations that are distressing them.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU

If you need help with anything, from having difficult conversations to calculating sick pay, don't struggle alone. Citation has a team of highly qualified and experienced HR & Employment Law experts who are here to help. Just give us a call on 0345 844 1111 for a free, friendly chat. Or visit www.citation.co.uk/funerals for more information.