



*Returning to  
work following  
a bereavement*



It's what we do

# *Returning to work after you have been bereaved*

It's not always easy to know when you are ready to return to work following a bereavement. You may be anxious about how you will cope and what to say to people.

Here are some you can do, which may help you manage the transition:

- Talk to your manager and plan your return in advance. Share any concerns and be open about any changes that you think will help you settle back in.
- Sometimes you may feel you have returned too soon – talk to your manager if you need further adjustments or more time off, and as your situation changes over time.
- The thought of working may be too overwhelming for some, and for others it may be a place of familiarity that provides some routine and respite from home life and the bereavement. Focus on what suits you.
- Following a bereavement there may be changes in your home life (e.g. child care, travel, hours of availability etc.) that mean you need to talk about what adjustments are possible to your role. These might include a phased return, more flexible hours, home working etc.
- Check with your manager what other people have been told about your time off and ask what has happened since you have been away, to help make returning easier.
- You might find you're anxious about what to say and how to answer questions like 'how are you?', from colleagues. Rehearsing possible replies with someone you trust can help.

- Being upset is normal. Think about strategies for dealing with this that work for you, e.g., mindful breathing, talking to a colleague, taking time out, finding a quiet space...
- Be kind to yourself. You can expect changes in your mood, motivation and energy levels that may affect your performance, for longer than you expect. It's normal to find that for a time, you can't concentrate as well as you want to. Talk to your manager if you are struggling.
- Don't feel you have to manage on your own. There is lots of information and support available to you.
- Colleagues may find it hard to know what to say and your loss may remind them of their own losses. Give them the benefit of the doubt if they seem distant or ignore the topic and help them understand how you are feeling.
- Working in partnership with Cruse Bereavement Support, we have developed a number of resources which may help to explain the way you're feeling. You can find more information [coop.co.uk/griefsupport](http://coop.co.uk/griefsupport)

working in partnership with:

