

When A Coworker is Seriously Ill



Best Care EAP shares guidelines to consider when someone you work with is facing a serious illness.

- 1) Listen. Encourage the individual to process the feelings they're experiencing.
- 2) Be willing just to be with the individual without doing anything specific.
- 3) Allow the individual to express feelings honestly and encourage reminiscing.
- 4) Don't be afraid of embarrassing yourself by thinking you'll say the wrong thing.
- 5) Respect the desire for privacy by allowing the individual time alone, but let them know you'll be there if needed or wanted.
- 6) Be attentive to simple needs. Offer help with daily practical matters and tasks such as cleaning, cooking, lawn care, caring for family members or pets.
- 7) Invite the individual to do things with you.
- 8) Don't take any anger or other negative feelings they might have personally.
- 9) Don't tell them that they are "lucky" it wasn't worse. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.
- 10) Don't underestimate the power of a smile and eye contact. A smile can communicate that you care in ways that words cannot express.
- 11) Do something special to clearly convey you care. Ideas include writing kind words in a card, giving a small gift to help lift spirits, creating a photo board with pictures of coworkers being silly or, leaving a blank journal on the individual's desk for coworkers to write encouraging messages or funny work-related stories.
- 12) Suggest reading materials or encourage attendance at support groups to possibly help the individual better understand and cope.

During this difficult time for both you and a coworker, remember your Best Care EAP benefits. Our licensed counselors are compassionate, caring and ready to help in any way they can. Visits can be in-person or via telehealth and are always confidential. To request an appointment, please fill out our [counseling registration form](#). If you have any issues with the form, please call our office and we'll be glad to help: (402) 354-8000 or (800) 801-4182.