Managing Workplace Grief--Vision and Necessity

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Part I: An Overview: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Addresses Workplace Grief

For more than 50 years, the FMCS has played the sensitive role of trusted, neutral conflict resolver in the labor-management community. The agency's focus has slowly shifted from primarily conflict mediation (contract negotiations, grievance mediation and EEO mediations) to more proactive, relationship-building activities labeled as "Preventive Mediation." Using a wide array of tools and techniques, the Federal Mediator now spends 39% of his or her time in this proactive work improving labor-management relations. To these ends, the Mediator functions as a labor relations consultant to both union and company. We've conducted workshops and seminars on interest-based problem solving, working cooperatively in a multicultural workplace and developing smooth-functioning labor-management committees.

In the course of offering workplace expertise, the FMCS has also presented its workshop "Managing Grief in the Workplace." The trainings have been given at local, regional, national and international labor relations and mediation conferences, and in college settings. We have found great receptivity to this cutting edge topic. Support in this area can greatly help unions and companies work through the conflicting expectations of a bereaved employee's job performance. Workshops in "Managing Grief in the Workplace" can initiate needed discussions and help the partners to set up

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After the sudden death of her 16-year-old son in 1994, Ms. Sunoo co-facilitated one of the local chapters of The Compassionate Friends, a national organization for bereaved parents. She and her husband frequently speak at labor-management conferences on "Facing Grief at the Workplace." Ms. Sunoo, a certified Grief Recovery Institute® and Reiki practitioner, lives in Orange County, California with her husband, Jan. They have one surviving son. For comments on this article, Ms. Sunoo can be reached at compassionatwork@aol.com, or visit the Compassion at Work website at compassionatwork.com.

compassionate and realistic bereavement policies in the workplace. Finally, many
participants expressed how relieved they were to finally have the subject of grief at the
workplace "legitimized."

On a bone-chilling January evening, members of the Society of Federal Labor Relations Professionals gathered at 25 Jacob Javits Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan. It was less than six blocks from Ground Zero.

The group of lawyers, human resource specialists and managers assembled to hear a mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and a private grief consultant--bereaved parents--address "Managing Grief in the Workplace."

In the course of the evening, the participants shared poignant stories of witnessing the World Trade Center's horrific collapse on September 11, 2001. Some had lost relatives and friends. They spoke of their inability to sleep. When an individual mentioned the nightmares, others nodded with shared understanding. This particular cataclysmic event, and the losses surrounding it, were then compared to the "normal," individual losses that transpire in our everyday lives. Most times they go unnoticed, several complained. Yet millions of workers suffer on the job, silently and invisibly.

One woman recounted that her brother had committed suicide two days before 9/11. After the terrorist attacks, he was all but forgotten by everyone around her. Her pain continues in isolation.

"It seems like September 11th has created one extreme reaction or the other," says Judith Neal, founder and executive director of Spirit At Work. "Either [people are] incredibly compassionate or clueless."

Indeed, no single event in recent American history has underscored the importance of facing death, dying and grief as gravely as September 11. Soon afterwards, many federal workers said they felt they were receiving conflicting messages from their political leaders: "Pause and remember the dead" vs. "Continue with business as usual," even as white-suited safety workers roamed the hallways testing for anthrax contamination. They were encouraged to be strong, even as they watched exhausted, ash-covered New York City firemen in tears. These are the same conflicting messages that continue to face the bereaved today.

Although many employers have provided immediate crisis intervention and employee assistance ("EAP") referrals, are they prepared to manage the long-term grief that permeates the workplace daily, or hourly? Unfortunately, employers can expect more grief and losses due to:

- Downsizings
- Terminal illnesses
- An aging workforce
- Catastrophic events
- Increasing job stress and depression

In the case of death, the standard three-day bereavement may cover time to plan and attend a funeral, but grief itself is rarely so contained.

"The three-day bereavement leave? It's ridiculous and not logical or very healthy," says David Russo, president and CEO of Empliant, Inc. and vice president and

secretary-treasurer of the Society for Human Resource Management. "It creates false expectations of how the employee is supposed to behave."[1]

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in an era when the median age of the workforce is rising fast, most employers' bereavement policies and programs are stuck in the 1960s. Employers need to face and prepare for grief and end-of-life issues in the future as the 76 million baby boomers grow old together. The oldest of the aging baby boomer workforce population (roughly those born between 1946-1964) turns 56 this year. This group will probably spend more years involved in eldercare than it did raising their own children. Significant losses and grief will hit this generation like a tidal wave for the next several decades until their own deaths.

"Normal" losses that will impact this generation of workers include: the loss of grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, children, co-workers, marriage breakups, strokes (loss of physical mobility), Alzheimer's disease (loss of mental functions and independence), loss of family pets and loss of jobs to which the baby boomers are so tied.

As our country reels from the traumatic aftermath of September 11, perhaps there's no better time to review union contracts, corporate grief and bereavement policies, programs and practices. Creating a workplace culture of compassion is not only a noble vision - it's an increasing labor-management imperative.

It's one in which Burger King CEO, John Dasburg, has painfully exacted from his own personal experience. After September 11, *USA Today* interviewed Dasburg for a cover story. He publicly shared his grief about the death of his 6-year-old daughter, Meredith, who died in a car accident 13 years earlier. "No one can stand it, the pain is so intense. It has never gone away for me. You learn to live with it, you get accustomed to it, you accommodate it."

As corporate leaders such as Dasburg speak out, the trend toward a more compassionate society and workplace is evolving with buy-in from the top. The transformation also is occurring because of the rank and file.

Fred Lowe, business manager for the Laborers' Local 777 in Southern California, which covers more than 7000 city and county public employees states: "There's such widespread ignorance and stigma in the workplace when it comes to mental disabilities, such as depression.

"For example, there was a member in the police department who lost his wife. After her death, he would start disappearing for over an hour at a time after coming to work. Rather than try to get him some help, his supervisor began progressive discipline on him to try and straighten him out. He had been a solid citizen for 20 years at work!

"Any problem that isn't a physical disability is seldom handled with grace. For example, there was a worker in one of my shops with Turret's Syndrome. Ignorance about his condition led to his supervisor placing him in a stressful situation. His needs weren't accommodated.

"The final problem I see is that even when an EAP referral is made soon enough, the worker can't get enough time off (Many drug rehabilitation programs take several months) to take care of the problem. Then, when he returns, the employer and co-workers stigmatize him for his 'mental problems.'"

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[1] *See* A CEO's Perspective on Workplace Grief (on file with the author).

Although our country still has a long way to go in facing grief at the workplace, progress is visible. Over the past four decades, the public awareness and role models have shifted.

"When JFK was assassinated, we were taught how to grieve as a country. We saw a stoic wife who didn't cry, who held it altogether," says Diana Nash, a bereavement counselor and adjunct psychology faculty at Marymount Manhattan College.

"This time [after September 11], people weren't holding it together. Men were crying. Newscasters were crying. 9/11 taught us how to grieve collectively in healthier ways. The New York firefighters raised the bar. They moved the standard for being human, caring and compassionate to a higher level than I've ever seen in my life. The culture of death, dying and grief has really taken a step forward in this country. Crying in the workplace is OK. That wasn't true before."

Why is FMCS addressing grief at the workplace?

According to the American Hospice Foundation (before 9/11), nearly eight million people in the United States were directly affected annually by someone else's death in previous years. Half of those affected were in the workplace during the grieving period. Although death and dying is the one absolute experience we all share, it's the one topic we prefer to deny.

Quite simply, grief is a natural process that begins with an actual loss or threat of loss. The nature of grieving behaviors and the length of the grieving may vary according to the individual. It also is influenced by an individual's personality, nature of the change-loss and the degree of employer support received. Grieving employees experience predictable cycles of grief behavior. When grief behavior is addressed compassionately, bereaved employees can reach a point of acceptance and healing.

But first, employers and labor leaders need to overcome eight myths of grief, as identified by the American Hospice Foundation:

Myth 1: We only grieve deaths.
Reality: We grieve all losses.

Myth 2: Only family members grieve.
Reality: All who are attached grieve.

Myth 3: Grief is mostly an emotional reaction.
Reality: Grief is manifested in many ways- including physically.

Myth 4: Individuals should leave grieving at home.
Reality: We cannot control where we grieve.

Myth 5: We slowly and predictably recover from grief.
Reality: Grief is an uneven process, a roller coaster with no timeline.

Myth 6: Grieving means letting go of the person who has died.

Reality: We never fully detach.

Myth 7:   Grief finally ends.
Reality: Over time most people learn to live with loss.

Myth 8:   Grievers are best left alone.
Reality: Grievers need opportunities to share their memories and grief, and to receive support.

Naturally, the first responsibility of an employer is to the business. But the health of a business depends on the health of its most important asset: its employees. Giving assistance to bereaved employees will yield valuable dividends not only in productivity and profitability, but also in employee loyalty and good will, according to Therese S. Schoeneck, Executive Director of Syracuse, New York-based Hope for Bereaved, Inc..

CEOs, human resources managers and union leaders are, therefore, in the best positions to establish and negotiate compassionate programs and policies. If left unaddressed, grief can reportedly cost employers at least $300 billion a year, according to the American Institute of Stress. Employer costs can increase due to:

- Stress related absenteeism
- Lowered productivity
- Increased compensation claims
- Health insurance costs
- Direct medical expenses

Isn't it true that we are more apt to link downsizing to financial hardship than we are to link it to grief and emotional loss? Yet surviving employees often face lower productivity because of depression, survivor's guilt, anxiety about the future and resentment for picking up a displaced worker's load. The loss of a co-worker adversely affects others in the workplace. After all, full-time employees usually spend more time with their co-workers than with their friends or even their families.

Facing the threat of being laid off, millions of men and women find they work with no fallback plan. Most do not have the capability of maintaining their income because of inadequate planning. In fact, most have no idea at all what they will do if their careers were suddenly taken away.

The actual employment picture is much worse than reported by the Department of Labor. Those who are under-employed or working part-time are not counted in DOL numbers. Thus, many more individuals are out of work or looking for jobs than most of us realize. Consider this fact: In the last 10 years, more than 3.5 million executives have lost their jobs. Even worse, millions of white and blue collar workers are left out in the cold by re-engineering, lay off's and restructuring.

FMCS mediators frequently witness conflicting job performance expectations during grievance hearings, EEO mediations and contract negotiations. Emotional arguments fly back and forth across the bargaining table as unions and employers pit concerns over compassion for workers against the survival for the business in a

competitive marketplace. While much of this is inevitable, the intensity and level of dysfunction can be minimized.

Grief is a health issue: Minimize stress and depression

Medical research has determined that stress often is caused by conflicting thoughts and feelings that impact one's subtle energy system. These include fear, worry, doubt, anger and anxiety. Continual stress can actually block the body's natural ability to repair, regenerate and protect itself. The American Institute of Stress estimates that 75% to 95% of all visits to doctors are the results of reaction to stress. The effects of unreleased stress range from minor aches to major health concerns, such as heart disease, digestive disorders, respiratory and skin problems. These maladies cost employers.

What are the "normal" losses and sources of grief stress in the American workplace? Loss of a spouse, child, loved one, including a pet. Loss of a job, a position, a physical or mental ability. Loss of a marriage or relationship. All of these different types of losses can have a devastating effect on a person's self-confidence and self-image, and impact performance at the workplace dramatically.

Following a major loss, employees normally experience depression. Depression is the leading illness that contributes to lost workdays. According to the Rand Corporation, depression accounts for nearly $12 billion in lost workdays each year. People who do make it to work experience reduced productivity attributed to:

- Low energy
- Poor concentration
- Memory loss
- Inability to make decisions

All of these attributes are classic manifestations of depression. According to the Society of Human Resource Management, 80% of human resource professionals recognize depression as a problem in their workplace, and 56% admit that depression has hurt productivity.

Related to depression, job stress from excessive workload demands and conflicting expectations causes friction between managers and employees, and is fast becoming the most prevalent reason for worker disability. Approximately 40% of worker turnover is due to job stress. Xerox estimates the cost at around $1.5 million to replace a top executive. For most employees, the expense of replacement is about one-third of their annual salary, according to JSH Consultants.

The stress that results form the death of a loved one also creates deeply felt emotions that can cause chemical changes in the body. Such reactions put grieving employees more susceptible to the common cold, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, heart disease and cancer.

Facts show that unresolved grief may lead to major physical and/or emotional problems, proneness to accidents, weakened immune system, susceptibility to catastrophic illness, premature physical or mental illness and other diseases—even death.

Stress also sabotages physical and mental well-being and contributes to dozens of health problems from headaches to hypertension.

Ask employees and they will quickly articulate what they find helpful. These comments were obtained from participants in workshops conducted by the authors in the United States, Canada and Australia between 1999 and 2002. The participants were asked: "What helpful comments or gestures did you or another grieving person ever experience?"

- Listening without comments
- Financial counseling
- Reduced workload
- Workplace flexibility
- Calls from friends to listen
- Concrete offers of help to relieve someone of the chores
- Invitations to do things
- Contacting others who should know
- Donation of vacation days
- Attendance at the funeral
- Giving each other permission to grieve
- A warm hug
- Being non-invasive, but being there
- Being told: "You tell me what you need"
- Given time and space to grieve
- Meaningful rituals (like bagpipes, or a jazz band)
- Being willing to talk/listen about the deceased

As employers prepare for the economic and social ramifications of an aging workforce and other harbingers of grief and loss, the good news is that there are resources available to begin addressing these issues.

Managing grief and loss promotes wellness

One aspect of work/life balance initiatives is to include the needs of employees coping with a loss. Russo says: "Until very recently there was an attempt in the workplace to separate work and life…You have your work. You have your life. So the [growing] understanding that people don't leave their lives at the door is healthy."

Yet, if you looked at company policies, one would conclude that most workplaces appear to deny the emotional realities of death and grief. For example, while 87% of companies surveyed by the Los Angeles-based Employers Group say they have a formal bereavement and funeral leave-with-pay policy for immediate family members, approximately 80% have a maximum of three days. That doesn't include part-time workers. Only 40% include part-timers.

Furthermore, according to the Bureau of National Affairs, while funeral leave policies acknowledge spouse, children, parents and siblings as members of the immediate

family, other family members (and significant others) are not so uniformly treated. About 60% cover grandchildren and stepparent relationships. A labor-management issue for the future is to make the definition of family more friendly to who's close. At this point, it's actual "family members" in the literal sense. That's changing as time goes on.

In a study by Hewitt Associates, titled "Work and Family Benefits Provided by Major U.S. Employers in 1994," 83% of 1,035 major U.S. corporations surveyed offer EAP provisions, typically with an outside firm.

The study also found that more than a third of employers have leave policies that are more generous than required by the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") passed in 1993. This comes as a blessing, particularly for employees who may be required to care for seriously or terminally ill parents and/or spouses. It requires employers (with 50 or more employees—an estimated one-half of the workforce) to provide 12 weeks of unpaid leave for the birth or adoption of a child, or for the serious illness of a child, spouse, parent or the employee.

Yet, a recent study by the bipartisan Commission on Leave concluded that although nearly 46.5% of all American workers are eligible to take leave under the FMLA, only 2% to 4% actually have used the benefit. Clearly, there's room for encouraging this option.

One of the ways in which the City of Rapid City, South Dakota has assisted the bereaved is by working with a Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISMT). Years ago, when one of the city's employees was run over accidentally by a sanitation truck driven by a co-worker, then personnel director Jack Teems contacted CISMT. The volunteers, he says, represented different fields: psychology; firefighting; law enforcement; paramedics, emergency response; and nursing. "They're community volunteers who recognized there may be situations in the workplace or community that might profit from their intervention," he says. After the incident, the driver and fellow employees were offered sessions in which to discuss their feelings. "Any progressive company should view [grief] as one more disability and assist in returning [our] investment in employees."

Today's workplace is where employees spend at least half of their waking hours, so the work environment is critical to the healthy functioning of the company and each individual. People who feel ignored when facing the death or serious illness of a co-worker or family member may become so preoccupied that job performance suffers and they eventually must be dismissed. Or they can become so angry that they resign. Other employees observe the treatment of colleagues and form impressions of how they may be treated in similar circumstances.

The following areas are considerations for adapting current policies to the needs of grieving employees. The goal is to create a compassionate workplace environment where the bereaved employee will feel he/she can "be himself" and "stand in his/her grief" and be accepted by co-workers and supervisors. Some of them have been adapted from "Grief at Work, A Manual of Policies and Practices", written by Helen Fitzgerald, training director for the American Hospice Foundation. They should be viewed as components of Best Practices for becoming an Employer of Choice.

- Sick Leave

What should company policy be for the sickness of an employee? How should company policy help an employee to care for a chronically ill relative?

- Donation of Sick Leave

Can other employees donate sick leave to those who need it? How much per year? Who can coordinate this? Can human resources department remind people to donate excess leave ("use or lose") around the end of the year?

- Bereavement Leave

Are employees granted paid time off after a death? How much? Does this vary with circumstances (like travel out of the country)? How can the current bereavement leave language be made more flexible to accommodate the non-traditional non-nuclear family?

- Leave Without Pay

How does the current Leave Without Pay policy compare with the Family Leave Act? Are there provisions for extended leave? Job guarantees for return?

- Flex Time

Is flex time available to accommodate the scheduling needs of employees faced with long-term family illness? How easy/difficult is it to work from home?

- Job Security

How secure is the job during sick leave? How can the workload be shared and for how long?

- Financial Support

Is there a fund with meaningful amounts of money available to help families with funeral or travel expenses?

- Informing Others

Is there a consistent procedure for informing co-workers when a death has occurred? Who is responsible? How much information should be given to protect privacy?

- Calling on the Family

In the event of a death at work, who will call on the family and extend the company's condolences, offer assistance through the paperwork, explain benefits, etc?

- Attending the Funeral

Is there time off for co-workers to pay respects and attend the funeral? What about out-of-town funerals?

- Collecting Personal Belongings

    Who will gather the personal belongings of an employee who dies- family, supervisor or co-worker? Who will deliver these items to the family? Sometimes, "secrets" are discovered in these belongings. While this cannot be anticipated, it may be wise to consult with the general counsel before drafting a policy on handling personal belongings.

- Family Visits to the Worksite

    If family members wish to come to the office, who will be responsible for them? Should the company have a policy to provide for a reception? Who decides?

- Helping the Family with Paperwork

    What paperwork needs to be done? Who explains survivor benefits, life insurance, and health insurance and helps the family with the paperwork? Do any of the benefits continue for the survivors?

- Setting a Compassionate Tone at the Workplace

    There are many simple, but visible and symbolic things that management can do to indicate to workers that their grief is accepted at work. Providing a space with grief literature or a "quiet room" for privacy can help employees cope better on the job.

Organizational Benefits of Grief Policies

    Companies adopting comprehensive grief programs can expect to benefit in many ways.

- Improved morale and better teamwork. When employees feel valued and respected, interpersonal relationships improve. Feeling more secure about themselves, they are willing to contribute more to the team

- Production standards sustained and improved. Attending to grieving employees creates a feeling of group responsibility towards the individual as well as pitching in to keep the workplace moving. People feel that their contribution at work has more meaning if their efforts simultaneously are helping a fellow employee through difficult times. In addition, it is likely that there will be fewer mistakes, because people feel less pressured when they know they are understood.

- Less sick leave and less turnover. Allowing for sick leave when needed during the grieving period encourages employees to be open about their planned and legitimate need for time off.

When the Bereaved Returns to Work

For an employee who has lost a loved one, returning to work can be very difficult situation. Common greetings like "Hi, how are you doing?" demand a quick decision about whether to reveal how they are *really* feeling ("Well, it's been a real ordeal since my husband died suddenly") or to simply reply with a superficial, "I'm fine, thanks". Some of the following ideas may be helpful (Fitzgerald, 2000)

- What to Say

  Say something. Even "I'm sorry" can be a good start. Saying nothing can create tension and hard feelings. Ask if the bereaved wants to talk about the person who died, and be prepared to spend a few minutes just listening.

- What NOT to Say

  "I know how you feel"

  "Look at what you have to be thankful for"

  "It's a blessing…It's part of God's plan"

  "Well, he's in a better place now"

  Such well-intended comments may seem to trivialize the loss to the bereaved, and often leave the bereaved disappointed and angry. The remarks may reflect the speaker's views, but do not respect the bereaved individual's feelings.

- When There are Tears

  If people are crying, offer tissues or a hug, or ask if there is anything you can do. Suggest going for a walk, or ask if they would rather be alone for a few minutes.

- Good Communication

  Nothing is more important than good, open communication. Plan regular meetings with the grieving employee to find out how they are doing. Adjust the workload, if necessary. If you are a bereaved supervisor, plan to keep your staff updated on how well you are doing. Thank them for their help and invite feedback. If communication is open, you will not have to second-guess what others may be saying or thinking - and for a staff that is probably working extra hard, small rewards are appreciated. Refreshments, or tickets for sports or the theater, communicate appreciation.

- Staff Meetings

  Ask someone from the human resources department or EAP office to prepare your staff for the return of a bereaved employee. It is a good opportunity to give out the facts, dispel rumors, share emotions and ask questions.

- Home Visits, Phone Calls, Lunches

  Before the employee returns, a visit in the home or a short telephone call will help break the ice and get past those first formalities. Inviting the bereaved employee to lunch before he or she returns can also prepare the way. Discuss what's been happening at the office, but keep it simple. Too much information can add to the anxiety.

- Returning Part-Time

  Working part-time can provide a less stressful re-entry to employees who may be emotionally fragile. Does the company have a policy that makes this possible?

- Consideration for Co-Workers

  There are times when the whole staff is affected by a death and you may need to consider the grief of the co-workers.

Cultural Competency Enriches Grief Management

Although grief is universal, each employee may mourn differently. Diversity issues are very complex and multidimensional. Yet there are some aspects of diversity that have special impact on how we grieve. Therefore, the more an employer, union rep, supervisor or manager understands, the more valuable his or her communication toolbox will become. Nationality, religion and gender are three areas that are especially relevant to how one responds to loss. They reflect how America has evolved in terms of death, dying and grief.

In a modern western European culture, which defines the dominant culture in the United States, Australia, much of Western Europe, we are taught to separate our private lives from our work lives. Death and dying are considered part of the private life, and workers are expected to handle their affairs without them impacting their work life. Pittu Laungani and Bill Young ("Implications for Practice and Policy," in "Death and Bereavement Across Cultures") conceptualize the difference between "small group societies" (like India, Nepal, China, Pakistan, Greece) and modernized western civilization (like the United States, Australia, Great Britain) as one of "Public vs. Private Event of Death."

"They observe that in these small group societies, death affects not only the immediate family but one's community, of which one is an integral part. The disposal of the dead and the accompanying mourning then becomes a social, if not public affair. Crying, weeping, sobbing, wailing in public—in fact, expressing all the emotions in public, in the presence of all the mourners who themselves make no attempts to conceal their own emotional expressions—is an accepted part of the social ritual in such cultures.

"In fact, the bereaved family is encouraged, even exhorted to display grief openly. Such expressions of public grief are often seen as being cathartic for the bereaved and hence therapeutic….In many of the North European societies on the other hand- particularly in Britain, America and the Scandinavian countries- death, to a very

large extent, is viewed as a private event, affecting mainly the immediate members of the family.

"Even the funeral ceremonies are seen as private events and only those expressly invited to the funeral are expected to attend and offer their condolences. We noticed too that in such societies the free expression of emotions, although not expressly discouraged, is by no means encouraged.

"In some instances points out, the clergy may frown upon the display of what are considered as excessive emotional feelings. In general therefore, funeral ceremonies proceed with restraint, in a quiet and what is considered a dignified manner."

At the workplace, one of the most common dilemmas is whether fellow workers ought to "bring up" the issue of the loss and offer support, or whether it is more compassionate to "give the bereaved some space." Well-meaning colleagues would benefit from some guidance from their human resource managers on this issue. But the answer is relative. Different cultures have different expectations around the question of how they wish to be supported in times of grief.

Fear and sadness are universal human emotions. But as Tobin Gonzales Barrozo, an associate chancellor at State University in St Paul, Minnesota writes in "Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death and Grief":

"There are habits of mind and sentiments that are the products of growing up in a particular culture. Different cultures and the great world religions they embody are lenses through which reality is viewed. A lens with an amber tint reveals a world different from a world seen through a lens of a different hue. To think that all human beings experience reality the same way is ethnocentric. Dying and grief are intensely personal, yet these experiences are feelings and cannot be separated from who we are and from the cultures that nourish and surround us."

Cultural diversity in relation to death, dying and grief will manifest itself on the basis of gender, age, race/ethnicity and religion. The more filters one can access, the better one will be able to support the bereaved.

In "Death and Dying: Views from Many Cultures," Richard A. Kalish reminds us that: "Each society has developed roles, beliefs, values, ceremonies and rituals to integrate death and the process of dying into the culture as a whole and to help individuals cope with the mysteries and fears of death. And each individual must adapt these folkways to his or her own needs, wants, personality and situation."

Indeed, if ever there was a greater need for culturally sensitive death educators and counselors, it is now. In the post September 11th period, it is well to remember that there is no right or wrong way to mourn, only a human way.

Below are some examples to illustrate how race/ethnicity and religion can impact an employer's appropriate versus inappropriate actions in the face of an employee's loss. The most important thing to remember is that culturally aware gestures of respect—or restraint—can go a long way. Given today's workplace demographics, employees are better served by not expecting or imposing one dominant cultural response to death, dying and grief.

- In some Native American cultures, such as the Navajo nation, the name of the deceased is not mentioned. The same is true for some Aboriginal clans in Australia. Don't assume that invoking the names and pictures of the deceased are

always culturally appropriate. Some cultures honor the dead in non-verbal ways. Suggestion: Do not ask too many personal questions. Take your cue from how much a person shares with you. Be thoughtful with your words or lack of words.

- When co-workers attend a Japanese American funeral, it is customary to offer a "Koden"- a monetary offering that is given to the family in an envelope upon your arrival to the funeral or memorial service. The amount of "Koden" often is determined by how much money one has received in similar circumstances. Suggestion: Offer cultural information about appropriate obituary gifts.

- If you are invited to a Buddhist funeral or memorial service/reception, gifts of vegetarian food are appreciated. There will usually be an incense ceremony. One need not feel obligated to participate. It is okay to sit quietly and observe the ritual. Suggestion: Do only what feels comfortable in a new social/cultural situation.

- In Mexican-American cultures, individuals celebrate the Dias de los Muertos (Days of the Dead). It occurs on All Saints Day (November 1) and All Soul's Day (November 2). According to popular belief, the deceased have divine permission to visit friends and relatives on earth and to share the pleasures of the living. Portrayed with affection and humor by artists, bakers and craft workers, these cemetery and community celebrations shed a different attitude toward the loss of a loved one. Suggestion: Borrowing from Mexican-American culture, employees can create a temporary workplace altar to remember a fellow worker/s who may have died. Ore you can encourage individuals to attend the myriad public celebrations that take place in major urban areas where there is a large Mexican-American population.

- In the Jewish religion, the anniversary of a death has a special name: *yahrzeit*, the Yiddish word for "year time." For the family, it is a time to gather at a synagogue to recall the individual. On the first anniversary, in particular, family members visit the cemetery where they might dedicate the tombstone with prayers and brief remarks. Suggestion: Employers may want to add a special field in the personnel files to record significant dates for their employees. A card or e-mail that encourages the employee to take the day off might be appreciated.

- If you attend an Islamic funeral service, dress modestly, although black is not typically required. Women will be expected to cover their heads and the length of their arms. If the service is performed in a mosque, shoes are not allowed. There will either be a designated area to leave the shoes or a plastic bag will be given in which to carry them. In many instances, men only may be permitted to attend the burial. Suggestion: Inform supportive co-workers of an Islamic employee that they may encounter some gender-specific mourning rites.

Buddhists and Jews both have highly ritualized timetables for how long a person needs to grieve for a loss. Public and private gatherings mark, for example, 6 months, a year, two-year, three-year, and seven-year anniversaries of the death in some instances. The whole family knows when they will reconvene to celebrate the life of the deceased, and since this is a part of religious ritual, there are few personal decisions that the deceased's family has to make around these events.

Compare this practice to how Anglo-Saxon Christian families in the United States must decide whether to cremate or bury, have open or closed caskets, have a wake or not and make decisions about who should speak at the service.

Provide Crisis Intervention and Institutionalized Grief Programs

Truly understanding grief at the workplace means being clear on the distinct purposes of crisis intervention and long-term institutionalized grief programs.

The 9/11 and Oklahoma City Federal Building attacks resulted in an immediate national rally of support and attention. In Oklahoma City, an elaborate memorial, a national park and numerous ceremonies were initiated to assist the mourning process. Yet, after the nation rallied to help New Yorkers, there were feelings of resentment from some of the surviving families in Oklahoma City. Many claimed that they were not paid the same sums of compensation, nor given the same level of support.

What was really missing in both cases, however, was not the issue of equity for one's loss, but the plan for institutionalized long-term grief work follow-up. The victims, families and colleagues of these catastrophic events were given short-term emergency assistance. But the long-term effects: low morale, anxiety, survivor's guilt and depression are easily dismissed as the misleading face of normalcy returns.

It is within employers' and unions' grasp to create a workplace environment that's a win-win situation for management and employees. Treating workers with respect and dignity doesn't require vast amounts of internal resources and money. What is required is an awareness and commitment. Awareness of the importance of policies, programs and practices. Commitment to create, implement and sustain them over time.

Compassion is both a humane vision and a business imperative.

Part II: A CEO's Perspective on Grief

Any successful grief management program must be endorsed from the top. David Russo, president and CEO of Empliant Inc. and Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) was interviewed by one of the authors in December of 2001. By sharing his own experiences and viewpoint, he hopes to inspire other executives to become corporate role models. By setting a progressive tone at the workplace, managers and supervisors will feel freer to implement a grief management program. A culture of compassion, he says, can be set into motion with rippling effects, all the way to the rank and file.

The first grief experience I remember most vividly is when I was 13 years old. My grandfather died. It was so vivid because we lived in the same house. He was certainly the patriarch of my family. He and my father were very, very close. And so [my grandfather] and I were also very close.

I can remember the aftermath of the wake. Folks all gathered 'round, and we had fond remembrances. And then, it was over. How my mother and father helped me

understand it was by saying he had a long and healthy life. He was in his 70s. That was my first experience. I recall now that the explanation of dealing with the whole situation wasn't done effectively.

As I grew up, my personal expectation of dealing with grief was that death is a very natural thing. When one passes on, she or he goes to one's reward and the afterlife. You think of them fondly, but never ever dealing with the personal loss in a close relationship. [Those are] my earliest remembrances. Until adulthood, I never really dealt with having to pay attention to other people's losses.

In the workplace, as a HR person, you get a broader perspective of how people deal with grief and loss. Not only in death, but also with serious illnesses and care giving responsibilities. And then, there are the losses that occur with other human events: divorce, the breaking up of relationships, termination, loss of job opportunities. People grieve in a number of different ways. As a young adult, I never realized that grief was a legitimate emotion for lots of these things.

[In terms of our nation], I don't think we address grief very well. First of all, culturally, we speak very casually about the inevitability of death. But it's always externalized. We don't really personalize it. It's somebody else's issue. I don't think most Americans, except those facing a personal illness, such as breast cancer or other long-term illness, address their mortality. Otherwise, most Americans don't deal with death as a truly tangible part of life. As a culture, we're uncomfortable around people who are dying, and that's unfortunate. It's almost as if dying was contagious.

When someone is in that physical mode of having death upon them, people get uncomfortable. I know of many times when people had strong relationships with someone, and when they learned of the person's illness, suddenly the healthy one had a hard time visiting the dying individual. They didn't know what to do or what to say. As a result, the relationship became strained.

The other thing is that grieving…in America is viewed as a weakness. There's this whole cowboy, macho mentality. It's not just for men. It's for women, too. "Everyone's going to die. Get over it."…This is how our culture deals with it.

Until very recently, there was an attempt in the workplace to separate work and life…I think that's the way the workplace was designed. You have work. You have your life. They shouldn't be intertwined. Otherwise, it would create a responsibility on the part of the workplace to treat you as an individual. It would also create accountability for the employer to have empathy, not sympathy for the grieving person.

So when the workers--from executives down to blue-collar, hourly workers-- accepted the view that work and personal life were separate, they didn't grieve. That had tremendous psychological impact on individuals in the workplace. They had to be strong or more stoic. But the release they needed still came out in all sorts of ways: in lower productivity, reduced attention span, many different things.

The understanding by enlightened employers that work and life are interdependent, and that people don't leave their lives at the door is healthy. …Even though employers are uncomfortable with this stuff (grief at work), the recognition of these things is newly surfacing and is being recognized by high quality employers. …. (EAP's) were created to deal with psychological and other dependencies. The stigma was that if you're using an EAP, you had problems with alcohol, drugs, family or you had some type of mental illness. All those things are stigmatized in the worst ways in our society.

The earliest genesis of EAPs was in the 70s. There's no doubt in my mind that they were designed to deal with the stress of mental illness and psychological problems generated in or outside of the workplace and the advent of a drug-abused society. The other things were added as EAPs got a toehold.

One of the things companies did was put EAP "outside," never realizing that companies still had to understand that they were dealing with people in the workplace who just don't park their lives outside of the workplace. ..

When I worked in HR for SAS, we had support groups for disease management for cancer survivors. We had an elder care support group. We put a person in place not only to oversee the programs we had, but also to create the opportunity for individuals to get together and share. One of the things that's most important in all of these grieving types of situations—not just for death—is for people to know three things: They're not alone; they can share their feelings in a non-judgmental forum with others in the same situation; and their employer supports the concept that grief is OK. They can publicize the programs by inviting speakers to the support groups and by supplying connectivity with community agencies. The effort requires a combination of physical support, resource and referral and the use of internal networks.

At SAS, with 5,000 employees, you knew that one in three of our employees had been touched in the last two years by some grief-generated event. The support groups also help those who may want to understand what a spouse or fellow colleague is facing.

The three-day bereavement leave? We said, "Here's five days for paid leave. If you need more, ask. Present your situation." Don't get me wrong. That doesn't mean there shouldn't be some price one pays for an [extended] absence. If someone needs 15 days off or needs to do what they need to do, they need to pay that price. It may cost them in salary, pay docking, making up work, a reduced role in a team or whatever.

The idea is to support the individual. What companies fail to see is that if they say people are important, they really have to mean that individuals are important. And the more they can adjust their policies and loosely apply them so individuals get the benefit they need for the time they need, the better off they'll be.

It's so much crap to counter with the argument that it might set a bad precedence. The people who would take undue advantage are the people one should fire anyway. The people who try to do their jobs and love their work, they're not the ones who are going to take advantage. What they're going to do is get back as quickly as they can. It's evidence of their respect for the employer and for the respect shown to them.

On management fears of precedent setting

[W]hat I've always hated about HR policies…they're designed to protect the company from the 15% of the people who are going to try to give the company the shaft. And the 85% percent of the workforce who love their jobs and want to do the right thing end up suffering the pain from an inflexible policy. If you want to be a No. 1 employer, you have to be flexible.

Honoring non-nuclear families

The nuclear family, for example, has been gone a long time. One of the problems with senior executives of organizations over the last 10 years, which I think is coming to an end, is that they made up all the rules and all the goals. Fact of the matter is that two-career families, non-nuclear families, families with no blood relatives, need some type of social structure to support them. What companies can do to really engender loyalty and productivity is to remember that these families, whether domestic partners or not, are the families of today. Showing support for them is critical. Most of them will never need to take advantage of some benefits. But when you create 'domestic partner' benefits, what you're saying to them is that you value them. The fact that a benefit is available creates a tight bond between the employer and employee. It shows you care.

Here's another example of caring: On September 11, I was in Baltimore, Maryland at a tradeshow. I came on the tradeshow floor, and we were all connected because it was a technology tradeshow. We were aware of what happened while we were there. We had heard about the second tower. Shortly after, we heard about the third plane. We were all in shock. The thing that struck me was the disbelief that this could happen. I remember people I know and love saying life in America would never be the same. The third thing I remember were the two employees in Raleigh on cell phones who were worried about our safety because we were closer to the Pentagon. How were we going to get home? The idea of being home meant we'd be safe.

Impact of 9.11 on business

The biggest impact it had on our company was that it made us realize that what we have in America is very precious. We talked at length about the responsibility and accountability that comes along with our [freedom]. Also, the absolute futility of not living every day in a high quality fashion and caring for others….

Before September 11th, you never would've heard somebody say that. People who thought about security over personal freedoms were seen as right wing extremists. And

now, the vulnerability of living in an absolutely open society has been exposed. I hope the pendulum doesn't swing too far to the right, but at the same time, it's certainly a reality check.

Those who've traveled outside of America already know that in European, Asian, Middle Eastern, South American countries-- where there's less security--they do much more rigid things to protect their citizens. I just flew back from the West Coast yesterday. I can imagine how different things would be in August 2001, if an airline agent called 15 passengers to the counter because their bags were going to be checked. Can you imagine the reaction? Now there's a whole new understanding about the importance of security. We have to remember that the absence of another terrible event doesn't mean there's no potential of another terrible event. We have to be vigilant.

Now the grief we feel after the 11th, is television grief. If we're feeling sound byte grief, and it goes away without our having a keen understanding of the grief in New York City and Washington, D.C., then we become vulnerable again. I see America grieving about this in a way that I've never seen before.

Everyone remembers where he or she was when John F. Kennedy was shot. I remember exactly where I was and what I felt. It was awful, heinous and catastrophic. But it was an individual situation. The magnitude of what happened in New York and D.C. is unbelievable.

One of the things that any of us can do at the workplace for our employees is to help them relate to the later grief. You don't know why you're fearful. You don't know why you have nausea. But it's there. How can people deal with that? It's the fear and trembling of uncertainty and loss of control that were non-issues before.

When we talk about "post-traumatic stress syndrome," we label stuff and talk about it with analysts, and then the word becomes meaningless. They lose their personality. It becomes "Oh yeah, post-traumatic stress." Everyone thinks they know what it means. Nobody knows what it means. People then start to take from the media how they think they're supposed to behave. When they don't behave in the ways that signals come across the TV, radio and the written media, they're lost.

On Gender Differences

There's another thing about the way one deals with grief. Because you're sad, you're not supposed to be happy. I learned something from my wife. Not everyone cries when they're grieving. Some women cry much more often when they're angry or happy, but not when they're sad. So the depiction of sadness being a veil of tears is not accurate. Sometimes, sadness is stillness and quiet. That's why I go back to the support groups we had at SAS. People need to know it's OK to be sad and be around people who know that it's OK to be sad.

The Rhythm of Grief

Grieving is not a constant state. When my wife's mother died, she didn't grieve for a period of time. She was too busy taking care of things. Then, she would grieve in small bits, when driving along in her car or at some other unexpected moment. Grief isn't like a three-day bereavement leave. You grieve when you remember or something happens during a conversation that reminds you of a wonderful time and you feel the loss. Grief is a process. That's why the three-day bereavement is not logical or very healthy. It creates false expectations of how the employee is supposed to behave. But with better knowledge on the part of employers, it would increase employee productivity, increase loyalty and brand their company as a "Great Place to Work."

Part III: A Global Cultural Diversity Perspective On Grief

In the course of delivering FMCS' diversity and grief management training abroad, the authors learned to be more humble, open and flexible. For example, in Australia, to many Aboriginal families, death is not a final separate event. It is part of the cycle of life that includes social ceremonies and initiations, as well as for death. This holistic view of the world is articulated well in an interview with Ray Minniecon, head of Indigenous Programs for World Vision, Australia. Brenda Paik Sunoo interviewed him on December 2001 at the New South Wales Museum in Sydney, Australia.

Similar to Native American tribes, many Aboriginal groups view life as closely linked with the earth in both a spiritual and physical way. Grief issues among Aboriginals, he says, are further complicated by the absence of an official apology from the Australian Government to the indigenous people. Supporters of the Reconciliation Movement have called for a government apology for forcibly removing children from their homes, and killing thousands of Aboriginals over the years. The apology has not been forthcoming.

My name is Ray Minniecon. I come from the Kabi Kabi people in Queensland, and I'm head of Indigenous Programs for World Vision, Australia. You've asked: What are some Aboriginal beliefs/customs of death, dying, grief and the afterlife?

It varies [from] place to place. But some of the essential elements of our beliefs are that everything in our culture is connected. From birth, right through [death]. In our Aboriginal belief system, when a woman first feels the pangs of childbirth, in our custom, it is the spirit of that place. Like *totems*, in English words. What we call the *Dreaming*, the cultural heroes of that place who have participated in the birth of that child. So that child is a Spirit Being or a Spirit Child.

From that particular moment on, the moment the mother has that child, she will take the afterbirth and she'll bury it in the land, bury it in the soil. When the person grows older and older, in a sense, that's the only piece of land ownership that the Aboriginal person has. As an old fella would say, "That's where my Mother laid me down." That becomes Mother Earth. That's the whole notion of what we understand as "The land is my Mother."

Then, you go through the cycle of initiations in order to grasp hold of the incredible knowledge and wisdom of the Aboriginal culture. We're talking some 50,000 years of wisdom that people have to understand and know. And that's all given orally from our elders.

Our elders are like the voice of God. They are the ones who speak God on earth. In a sense, they represent the God of that particular area because they've been given the law. They know the law, and they're actually passing on the law. We call the law *Dreaming*. *Dreaming* isn't only about laws, how society is run. *Dreaming* is like what the Bible is to Christianity or what the Koran is to Islam. It's everything. This is where all of our authority comes from. This is where all of our ceremony comes from. This is where our law comes from. All of it comes from the *Dreaming*.

So when a person is born, they have to go through these initiations, right through until they die. What happens at death, there is a huge mourning. The women will cut themselves to express their sorrow and anguish at the loss of someone so important to the community. There will be bloodshed, and a whole range of incredibly deep emotions expressed.

That blood is being shed not only because of the personal depths of sorrow, but to express to the family that has lost a loved one. This is their way of saying 'sorry' with them because it is a very painful thing to lose someone so close. If the person who dies is of high esteem, it becomes a very big community affair. That person then goes back into the Spirit World again, and they become what we would call a part of our ancestors who are always with us. We don't worship our ancestors. We don't have ancestral worship, but we do "ancestral listening." They're there as your spiritual guide. They're there as people to look over you, help you when you need that support. They're there all the time in terms of your journey through life.

We do speak to them as if they are real people. Only they don't have body form anymore. We speak to our ancestors in that way. But they're there. Within that whole period, that name of the person [who died] is cut off from the community. The name that that person's been given…. if anyone else in the community has that same name, that name is finished. We cannot speak that name anymore, from that day forward. So if I come into a community, and I have the same name of that [deceased] person, I would have to change my name to show my respect for the family that lost the loved one. It's not trying to forget that person. It's more the memory of the pain and suffering and showing respect. In a nutshell, that's the way in which people are born into their lives. They go through a process of initiation ceremonies to get the knowledge and laws of Dreaming. And then they die and pass into the other life, becoming ancestral beings in spirit form.

There are burials. I'm not too familiar with people who've been cremated. But lots of our people have been put in trees or at burial places where they're laid to rest. It depends on which nation you're talking about. All have different ways of disposing of the

body. I haven't heard of the ways in which Westerners do it--in terms of digging a grave and placing them in the soil that way. It's more likely that the Aboriginal people offer the body to the elements, knowing that they're still part of the natural environment.

Bodies aren't necessarily returned to the place of their birth, although the person would be dying within their Mother Country (the place of one's birth). If they are deceased in another area, they must come back. In some cases I've heard, they've brought a body back to their country. In modern times, it's becoming much more the practice to be returned to one's own country.

Another part of the dying process is that when there's a death in the community, all the knowledge, all the remains--the physical things--are destroyed. In modern times, when someone died in a house, all the people just left. They don't stay there. They move on to another part of the country or homeland. Our people are very spiritual and believe the Spirit Beings are always there. They're always a part of you, a part of your understanding of yourself and the universe.

These are some of the major elements of life, death, birth and the afterlife of Aboriginal beliefs. The other thing to note is that for us, from a theological point of view, God doesn't live hidden behind the blue skies and stars. Our understanding of God is that he is here. He is metamorphosed in those places that the Creation heroes created--e.g. Uluru or in a waterfall, a couple of trees, a river, a lake. This is where God lives. That's his home. That's his address. That's where he has, within himself, all the Spirit Children--from creation time forward.

In some communities, especially on the coastal sides, when Aboriginals saw white people coming, they thought they were their long lost relatives or brothers, cousins or sons coming back to them from across the sea. This belief originated from the notion that a person who dies goes across the sea to another place.

In terms of Aboriginals' mourning process, it varies across the board. In some cases, depending on the stature of the person, it could be a season (up to a month or six months), there is a mourning period that people have to go through. It's intensified at the beginning and goes on for some time. It also depends on the type of death. With a natural death, it's different from a situation in which a person has been murdered. Then you have a completely different set of circumstances. And the memory may linger for quite some time because of the whole notion of payback and getting revenge for that particular death. So it does depend on those kinds of elements as well.

This is mainly to do with Aboriginal people. It's different from the Torres Strait Islands. They have different kinds of mechanisms. There's the mourning process they go through, but also all the clothes, names destroyed. There's also a memorial service, or a wake, somewhere on the track, where they'll have a stone erected with that person's name on it to remember that person. It's different in various communities and nation groups.

Among the Aboriginal people, there are distinguishable common elements. But when you localize it, the practices can change slightly.

In terms of my own grief experience, I don't think grief was ever dismissed. It's just that we don't have any mechanisms, culturally, to deal with it. Especially when forcibly removed from your Heart Country or whether you're forcibly removed from your families. So there is no mechanism, culturally, to help you cope with that stuff. You have to develop, invent, create ways in which you deal with it. Those who can cope with that … are very rare. Many of us who've felt that loss have usually dealt with it through alcohol or some other kind of abuse. Because the systems and structures aren't there to help us grieve or help give us any hope of getting some kind of restoration of the things we've lost so dearly. We haven't had any mechanisms to deal with [the grief]. It's sitting there all the time, unresolved.

The problem we have is that if there [are] any cultural practices we can retrieve, we can probably bring these to the [forefront] and practice them and put [them] in place. But after you've gone through that ceremony and that process…at the end of that, there's the stark realization that [the pain and political dispossession] is still there. And so, if you have got a mechanism that gives hope, we'd use it gladly. Every Aboriginal person in the country would start that ceremony tomorrow if they felt that at the end of that process, the healing could be completed by a restoration of land.

But at the moment, no, it's not there because we just know that if we get through this process, there's nothing at the end of it. You're still dispossessed. You wake up dispossessed.

Now, the whole notion of an apology, of the government saying "Sorry," has much more to do with history and politics, as well as the spirit of who we are. Because in this country, here, when the [English] came here and invaded our country, they settled here under the notion of *terra nullius*, which means "no man's land." Now, that particular doctrine was a part of the political landscape right up until 1993, after the Mabo decision said there is such a thing as Native Title within British common law systems. The moment that decision was handed down, it removed the whole notion of *terra nullius* and gave people the opportunity of acknowledging there were people here in the first place. That's one level of apology.

The second level, which hasn't taken place in terms of the Native Title process, is to recognize the people who actually live here. They recognized that people were here. But who were these people?

So the reason the apology is so important is that it would be the first time that this government actually recognizes the people who belong to this land. And says "Sorry for dispossessing you, taking your children away, doing horrible things to you, and now we can recognize you as people." That's why it's important to us.

We're not just Australians. We didn't come from England … this is our country. We were here first. We are the First Nation's peoples. By the government actually saying, "Sorry," they're actually acknowledging us as humans. It's only a human being who can say 'Sorry' to another human being. It would be a true process of mutual respect.

Because the Prime Minister cannot say this word "Sorry" to us from a governmental level, it's says to us—very clearly—that he has not recognized us as a distinct unique people who were here first. There's all these political connotations wrapped up in this, very, very clearly. And the moment he does say "Sorry," you can see that it will bring in the common law principle of recompense. So the apology is all tied up with compensation terms as well. It just continues that cycle of dispossession. That's why, for me and others, particularly, the whole word "Sorry" for us is so important because it begins to recognize me as a human being, as a person.

In terms of forgiveness, there's a little saying I picked up. It says, "Forgiveness is the giving up of all hope for a better past." I like that. It resonates with something. And I think that's the principle I'd like to see. "Forgiveness is giving up of all hope for a better past." We can't change the past. But we can acknowledge it; we can acknowledge the bad things that have been done in it to a group of people. That would satisfy us. We can then say, "We can't change the past. But we can work together so it never happens again." And our kids will never have to experience those kinds of fears by anybody, by any invader or by any other communities. We can build a better community or nation together. Forgiveness is, for us, a part of a process of rebuilding and restoring the things taken away from us, in order to give our kids a better hope for the future.

Put it this way: Our people are not going to move. We're not going anywhere. This is our country. We're going to live here forever and ever. Amen. Our kids are going to live here forever and ever. We're not going anywhere. So it behooves us to say, "Yeah, we accept your apology. Please accept our apology because we're going to have to live here together. Let's get over this, so we can get on with the business of living together.

I don't think it's a radical change or anything of that nature. The only element we'd be looking for in the process of forgiveness is this element of "*restorative justice*." We can then start to work on the way to rebuild ourselves, rebuild our identity, dignity and integrity. Culturally, socially, we can be the people that we believe God has meant us to be. That's what we say, from a theological viewpoint, that God has never dispossessed us. So we can appeal to that higher court in terms of those kinds of issues.

Anger, on the other hand, is the only emotion that demands a physical manifestation, strangely enough. It demands that something has to be done physically. If I am so angry that I hit a wall or something, the anger dissipates very quickly. Aboriginals already are expressing anger, physically, through the abuses we're self-inflicting upon ourselves. We've done enough physically to express our anger and frustration with things. Another way in which we can express our anger is through symbols or memorials that say, "Look, we've come to this point." This memorial here says, "We've gone

through this history. We've come to this. Here's a physical representation of all that we've gone through, all of our emotions and spirit." Now we can look at this particular memorial and say, "We've done it. This is all of our anger, love and emotions. We can move on."

There aren't memorials like this at this particular stage. In Canberra, they're trying to develop a reconciliation place, but there's some protest from their people. But I'm planning to go there to protest against this. It has to represent the anguish that we've gone through. I don't think one monument is enough for us. There has to be a whole range of monuments. For example, look here at this country. If we want to look at the ways we express our sorrow, anger and anguish over the ways in which our people have been treated or lost in world wars, we go to the memorials. It's there. We celebrate all week. We have memorials for that. For our people, that's what we need. Look at the Israelis. They go to the Wailing Wall. We need those kinds of monuments also. We need to go to such places year after year and express our anguish and sorrow, as well as our hopes for the future. It would give us a physical identification with our past and future.

The connection you have to your country, that's your heart country. That's your spirit. That's where you come from. You can never get rid of your heart country. And hopefully, when you die, that's where you want to be buried as well. It's unthinkable to disconnect from that.