

Understanding Bereavement in the Workplace

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Replacing an employee could cost you £20k to £40k?

These figures include costs that you may not normally include or easily identify.

When working out the costs to your organisation for replacing a worker you need to consider:

- Logistical costs of recruitment including management time for interviewing, advertising or recruitment agency costs, along with HR personnel time processing a replacement
- Costs of temporary workers during the time it takes to get a new person in place
- Loss of productivity covering the time it takes to recruit the new person and bring them up to speed – this can include loss of productivity from existing workers who may have to cover some of the work or be key during the induction process.

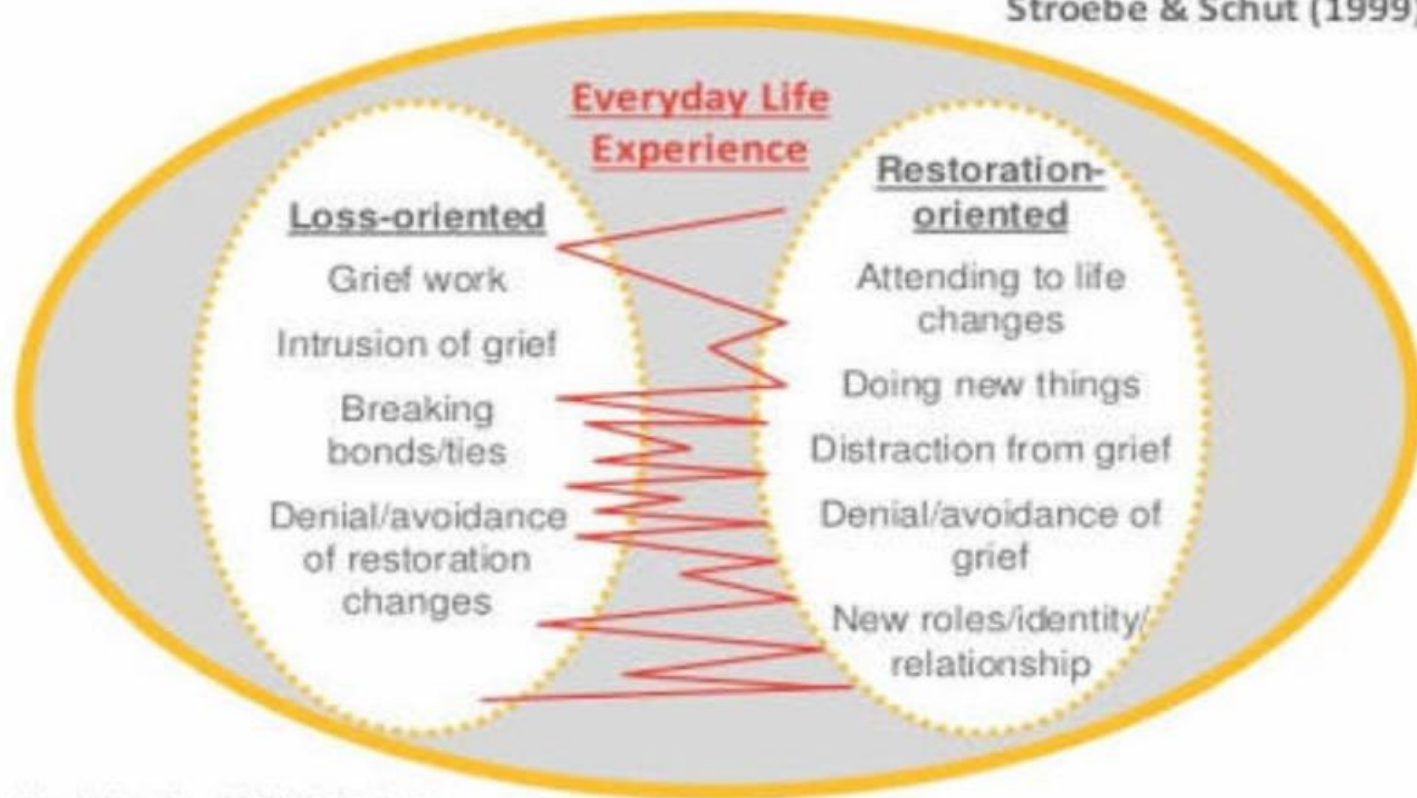
Source: A survey by Oxford Economics reported in HR Review online (2014)
<http://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/recruitment/it-costs-over-30k-to-replace-a-staff-member/50677> and ACAS <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4857>

Remember

- Grieving may start before the person has died – this is often referred to as pre-bereavement
- Grief does not have predicted stages and phases
 - Denial, Anger, Guilt, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance
- We need to be respectful of people's beliefs and cultures
- Everyone reacts differently to a bereavement and this should be understood, respected and be the starting point when supporting someone
- Grief Theory

A Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

Stroebe & Schut (1999)



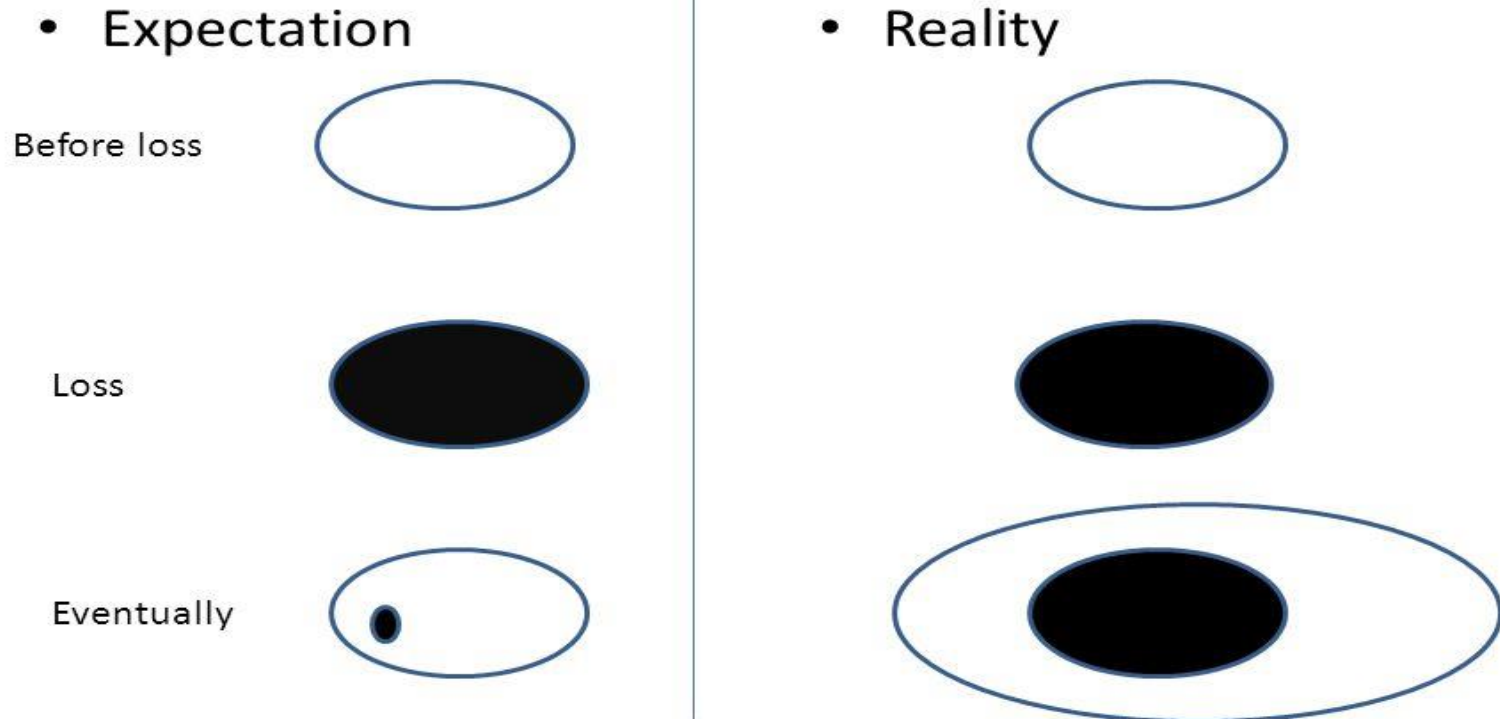
Death Studies 23(3):197-224

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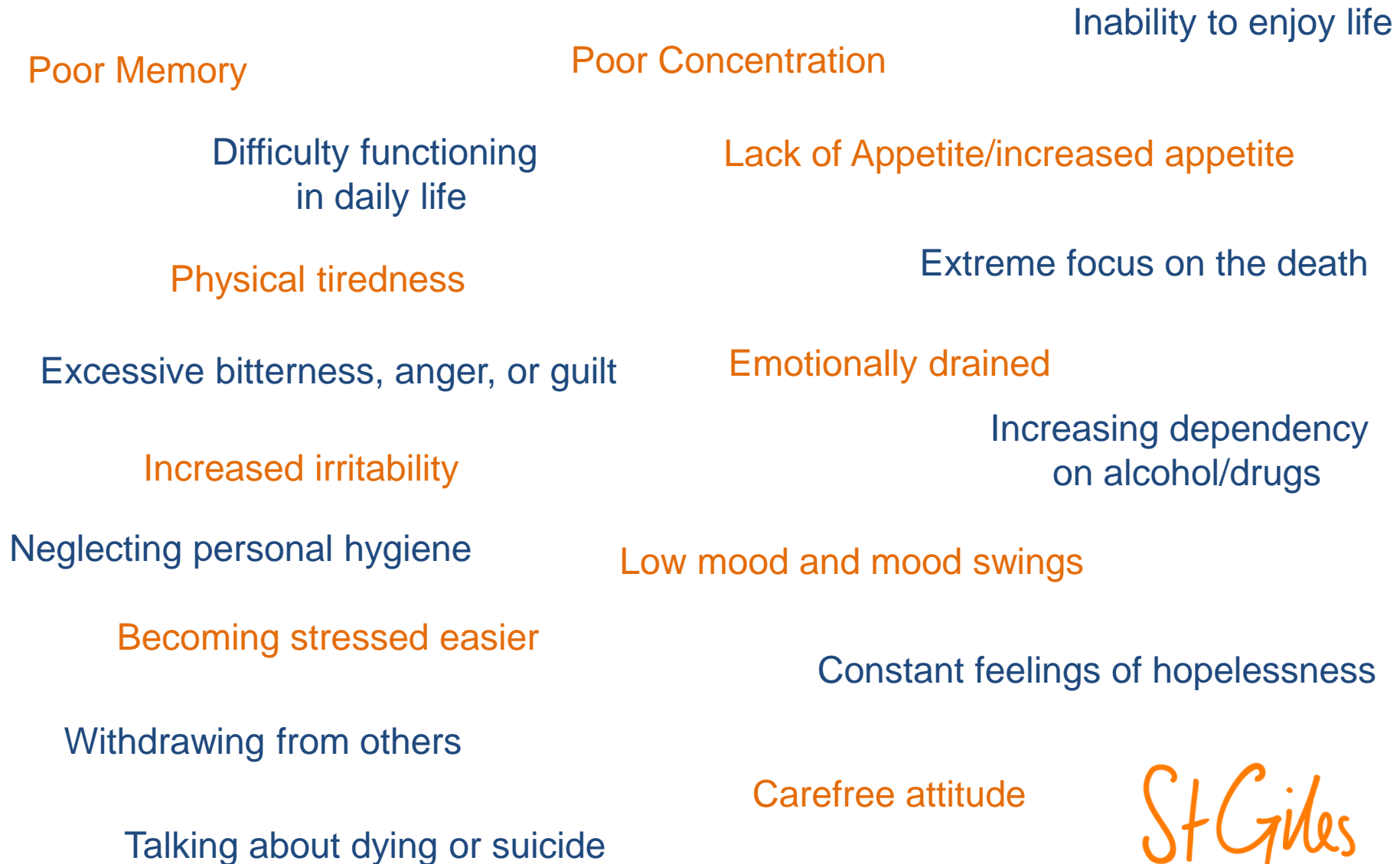
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Growing around grief

Lois Tonkin – Growing around grief



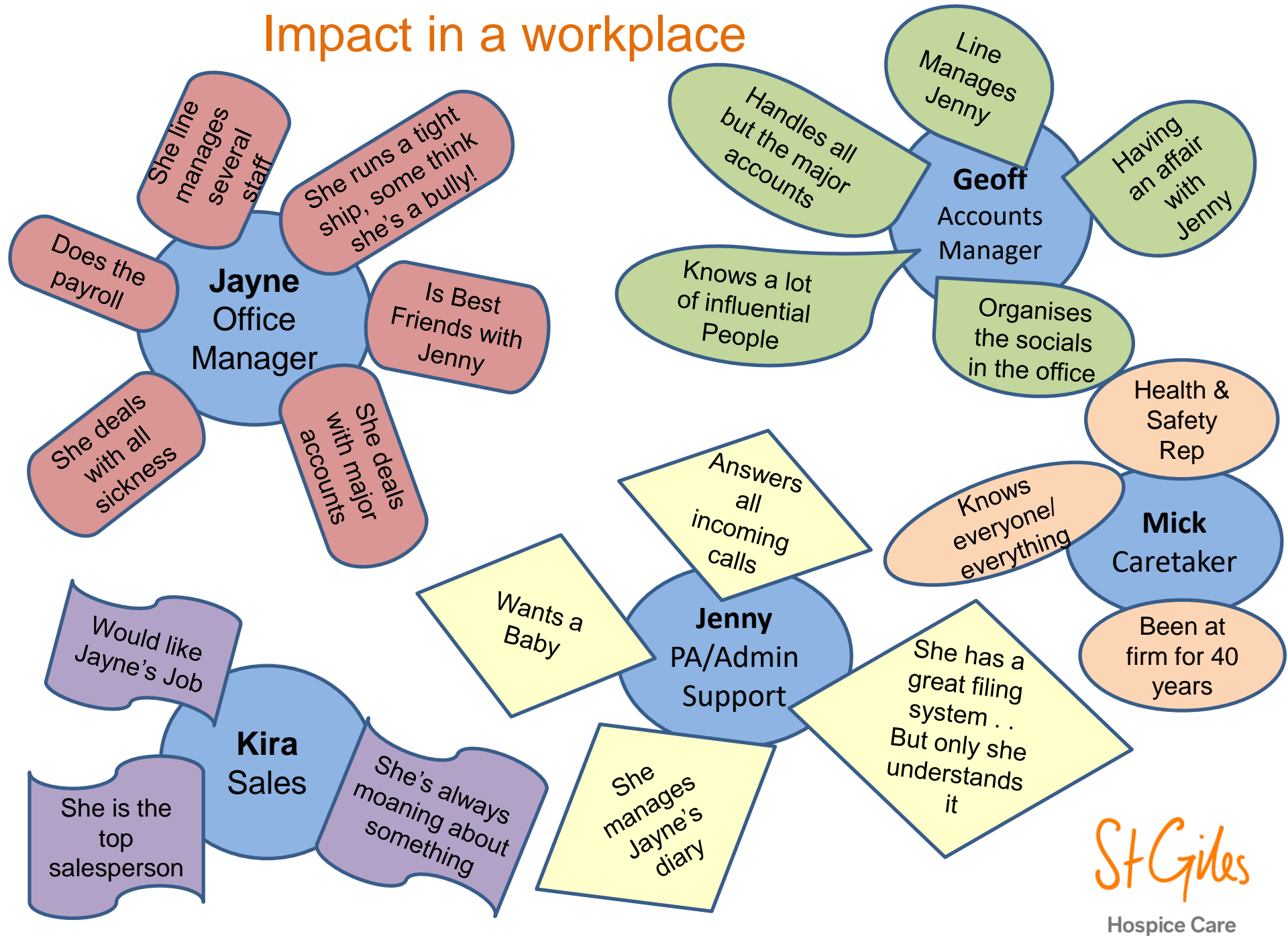
Recognising Behaviours Associated With Grief



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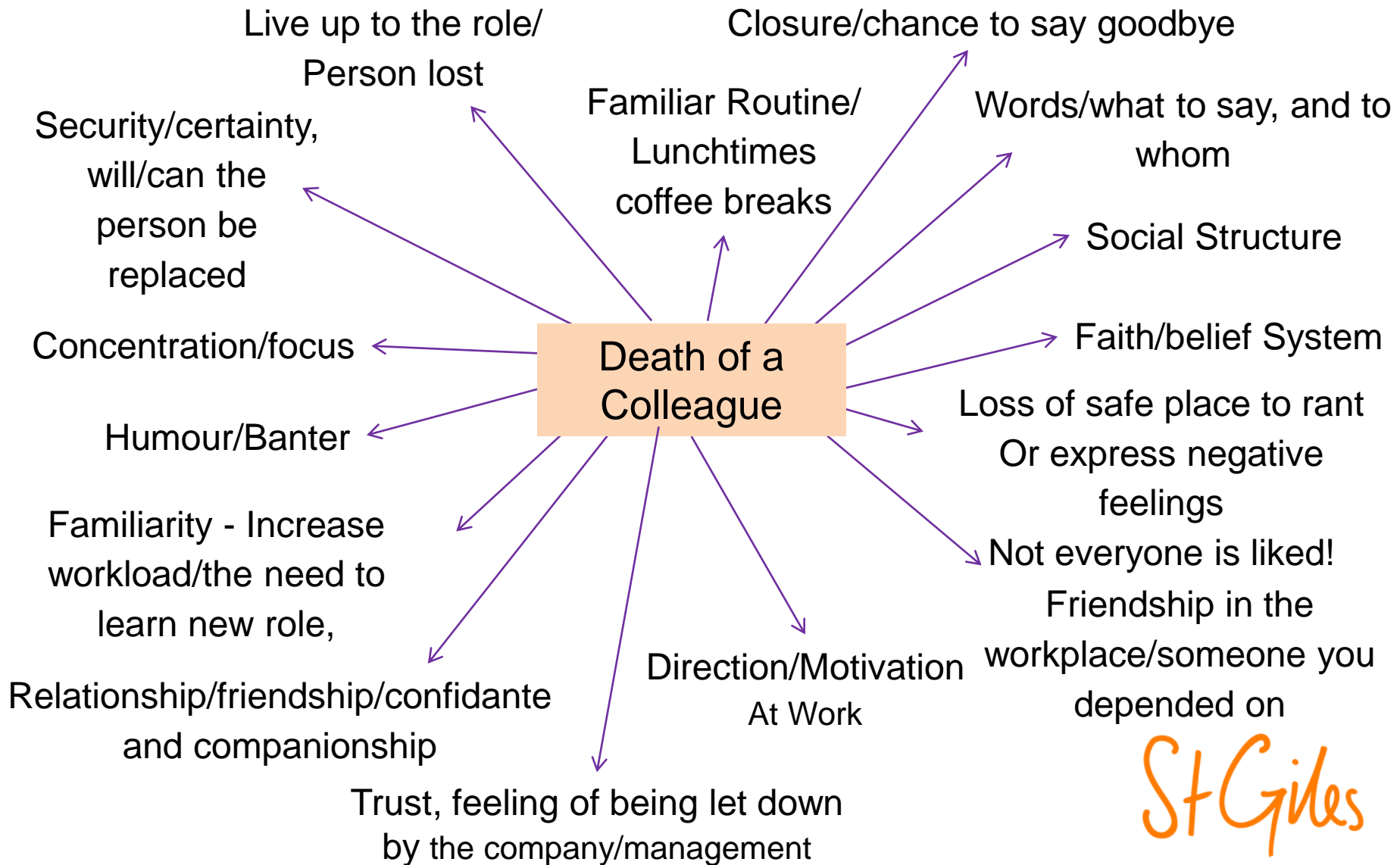
Impact in a workplace



Impact of the Loss

- How did the loss impact on the people left behind?
- What could potentially happen to the roles in the workplace?
- Are there any gains or feelings of guilt generated

Secondary Losses in Bereavement when a Colleague Dies



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Secondary Losses in Bereavement

Practical (*driving, cooking,
childcare, finances*)

Relationships with
partner/spouse

Familiar Routine/
Meeting up

Closure/chance to say goodbye

Hidden
Anniversaries

Shared family gatherings

Concentration/focus

Intimacy/Sexual
Relationship

Secondary
Losses

Faith/belief System

Humour/Banter

Loss of safe place to rant
or express negative feelings

Less Money
coming in to
the household

Someone you
depended on

Relationship/friendship/confidante
and companionship

Direction/Motivation

Of not being able to
put wrongs, right

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Children and Grief

0 – 2 years – No concept of death

- Will notice the absence of a parent between 4-7 months.
- Anxious about separating from parent.
- Acts in ways they did when they were younger (regressive behaviour).
- Feeding and sleeping difficulties.

2 – 5 years – See death as reversible, may feel they have caused the death, may make up fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge

- Fears abandonment and separation.
- Despair.
- Angry about changes to their daily routine.
- Sleep problems.
- Complaints such as tummy aches.
- Regressive behaviour eg sucking a thumb or wetting the bed.
- Takes explanations literally

5 - 11 years – Start to understand the finality of death at about 8 yrs

- Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness.
- Gets angry more often, difficulty concentrating at school.
- Tries to be the perfect child.
- Regressive behaviour.
- Tries to be brave and control things.
- Feels different to their peers, struggles to express him/herself verbally.

Grief in the time of COVID

- What has changed?
 - Separation at end of life
 - Funerals/rituals
 - Isolation/support networks

Do I have the necessary skills to support a bereaved colleague?

Supportive

Empathy

Confidentiality

Understanding

Listening

Acceptance

Respect

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Five minute break

How do we respond in the workplace when a colleague dies?

Responses may be dependent upon:

- the role the person had
- how well they were known/liked
- the circumstances of the death, particularly if suicide or violent death is involved and in current times, Covid-19

What can you do as an organisation?

Immediacy:

- Arrange a senior management meeting to discuss
- Informing staff face to face
- Ensure all staff have been made aware of what has happened
- Regular staff meetings to debrief, update, discuss further plans and support

Longer term:

Consultation with family and workforce around suitable memorial, tributes, marking of anniversaries etc.,

Key messages to remember if you are a line manager are:

- Liaison and discussion with the family of the deceased employee is vital
- We all benefit wherever possible, from being kept informed of a death through factual information. Be aware of social media rumour
- As well as the immediate response, consideration also needs to be given for the ongoing needs of staff

How do we respond when someone close to a member of staff dies?

Responses will be dependent upon the wishes of the member of staff and their family

What you can do as an organisation

Immediacy:

- Meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss their wishes
- Arrange a meeting with the staff member's line management
- Inform staff face to face (with staff member's agreement)
- Ensure all staff have been made aware of what has happened
- (with staff member's agreement)
- Staff meeting at the end of the day to debrief, update, further plans and support

Medium Term:

- Regular signposting to services (ie: Bereavement Support, Financial Advice etc.) if required

Longer term:

- Discuss ongoing support for bereaved person if required
- Meetings with staff (*especially close supporters*)

Key messages to remember if you are a line manager are:

- Liaison and discussion with the staff member is vitally important
- As well as the immediate response, consideration also needs to be given for the ongoing needs of the bereaved member of staff
- Consideration needs to be given to the needs of those staff supporting the bereaved person

How organisations can support their staff returning to work



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Phased return to work

Bereavement Support

Do not pressurise – be supportive

Access to Complementary Therapies

Signposting to Services

Opportunity to return to work in a different role/department

Dealing with associated sickness with compassion

Paid Bereavement Leave

Ask about support for other family/children of bereaved person

Legal Advice/support

Funeral Poverty -
Help/Advice around
funeral costs

Allow paid time off for
related appointments?

Longer term flexible working

Do not be assumptive
Bereavement is unique to each individual

Ways to respond when you think someone may be grieving



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- I notice that...
- You seem...
- That sounds difficult to cope with
- Tell me more.. Tell me about ...
- How does that affect you
- Remember –TREASURE – Trust, Respect, Empathy, Acceptance Safety, Unconditional, Real, Expert
- Silence

“You might not be ready to talk about it today, but when you are,
I'm here to listen.”

How are you?

Remember – You Can't Fix it!

Do not be afraid to admit that you don't know what to say

The Things People Say Or Assume

- Oh well, you've got another child

- At least you had chance to say goodbye, it wasn't like they died in an accident

How did they die?

Ah well, at least it was quick, that's good

At least you were prepared

You should be over it by now

You're young enough to get married/have children again

I know how you feel

The first year is always the worst

They've gone to a better place

Isn't it time you moved on?

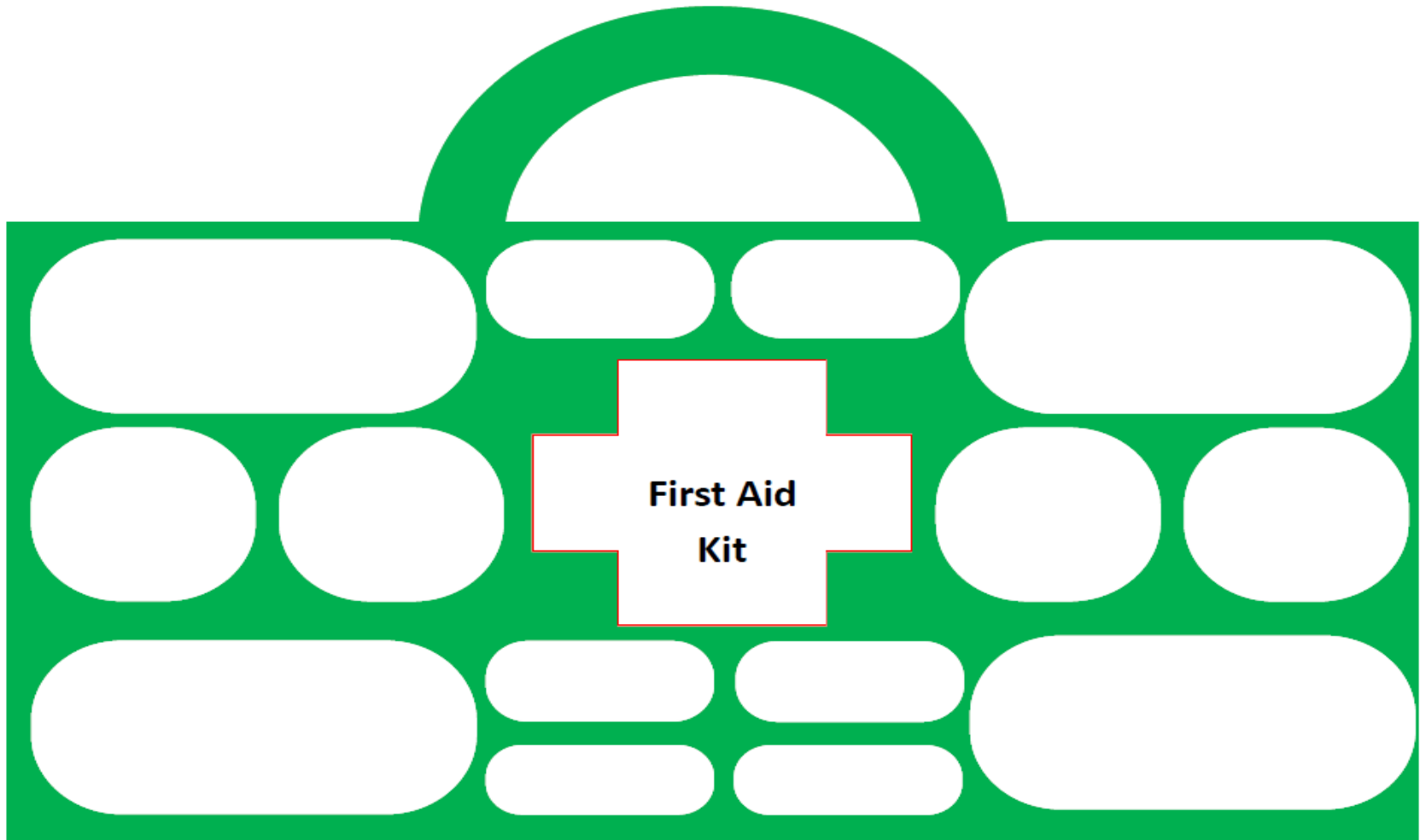
Well, they were very old and we all have to go sometime

Everything happens for a reason

Time is a great healer

Self Care

How do you ensure that you yourself are supported?



Supporting yourself, your friends and family

Smiling Mind App

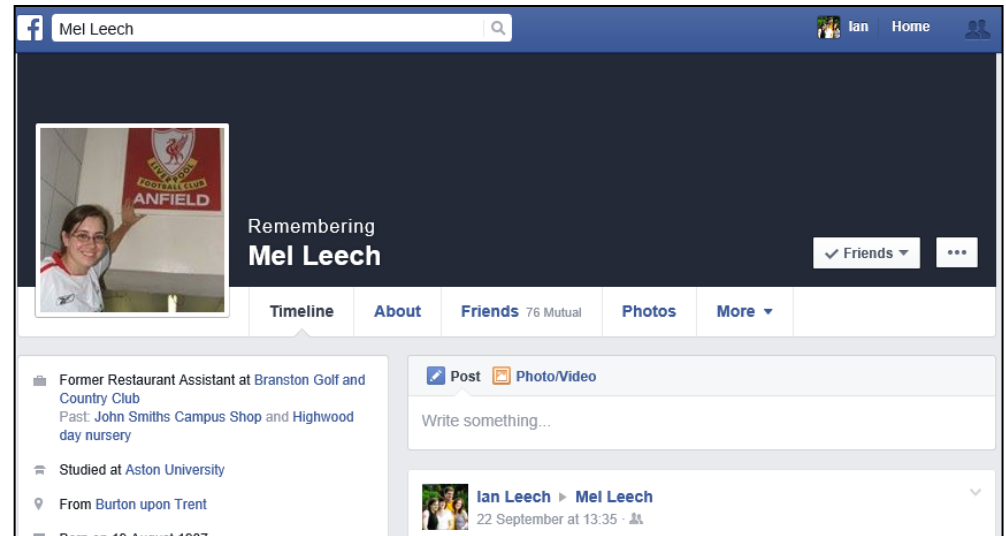


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Social Media

- As an organisation, when an employee dies, you have no control over social media.
- Inform your staff that any information you deliver to them will come from official sources and it is up to them whether they believe what is written in the media
- Be aware that your organisation may be apportioned blame - Caroline Flack and the CPS.



For some bereaved people, social media can be their greatest high or their absolute low

The Importance of Signposting

Bereavement Support

St Giles Hospice – www.stgileshospice.com

Cruse Bereavement Care - www.cruse.org.uk

SOBS: Survivors of the Bereavement by Suicide - www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Charity - www.uk-sands.org

SAMM (Support after Murder or Manslaughter) - www.samm.org.uk

Support for Road Crash victims - www.brake.org.uk

Pet Bereavement Support - www.bluecross.org.uk

Muslim Bereavement Support Service - <http://mbss.org.uk>

Bereavement Support for the Military - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/>

For the bereaved Child

Winston's Wish - www.winstonswish.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK - www.childbereavementuk.org

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Thank You

Any Questions?

“It wasn’t until I reflected on the support given to me and my family by my employer following the death of my 20 year old daughter that I truly appreciated the importance of good bereavement support in the workplace. They showed kindness, compassion and understanding at a time when it was most needed.”

Ian Leech

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