*The workplace and colleagues may feel very foreign now to your co-worker. They may feel overwhelmed by workplace responsibilities and find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions. They may be tearful and withdrawn, not knowing how to handle the emotions that sideswipe them during the day. They may not be sleeping well, and look very tired. All of these are normal responses in the grief process. Be patience, understanding and compassionate.*

*Don’t nag that they join you for non-work related social activities you used to enjoy together. But don’t exclude the person or assume they will always say no, either. Invite your co-worker to join you on a cases-by-case basis, and let the person decide whether he or she feels up to socializing. Don’t take it as a personal slight if the answer is no; leave the door open for an eventual yes.*

***What may be helpful:***

* Write anote of condolence, however brief, written in your own words, rather than just signing an impersonal store-bought card.
* Say, “I am so sorry.” You can be honest and say, “I don’t know what to say, but if you want to talk, I am here.”
* A vague, general offer of assistance, such as “Let me know if you need anything?” may be too difficult for the person to respond to, if they are feeling overwhelmed. Be as specific as possible, for example:
	+ “Would you like me to go over the key things that have happened at work since you have been gone?”
	+ “I would be happy to assist you on your project. Please let me know, if that would be helpful.”
	+ “May I take you to lunch or dinner this week?”
* Don’t wait for the person to ask. Be proactive; grieving people feel isolated and lonely. Often, they will not reach out. Take the initiative and check up on them.
* Tell the person you are available to talk at any time—and really be there. Offer your shoulder to cry on, open your heart to the pain. This is perhaps the greatest gift—to listen, and to encourage the person to talk, rather than to hold the story inside.

***What may not helpful:***

* Avoiding the person or tiptoeing around as if there is something wrong with them.
* Assuming the person does or doesn’t want to talk about it.
* Saying trite and sentimental things, such as “Time heals all wounds,” or “It was God’s will.”
* Telling the person you know what they are going through (you don’t, unless you too have experienced the ***exact*** same thing).
* Asking for details, unless the person is clearly willing to tell you the story.

*A Grief Like No Other*, O’Hara, K. (2006)