Get started with supporting your staff to cope with death and dying

Caring for people who are dying can impact aged care workers' mental, emotional and physical health. Self-care is an important practice that can help to protect care workers from burnout and support them to recover from the emotional toll that caring for people at the end of life can take.

As part of developing the Self-Care Room, we heard from many people working in aged care and learnt about how death and dying affects them.

Here are some useful ways organisations can care for their staff:

- Raise awareness among staff that death is a natural part of life and that as many people die in aged care each year, caring for older people as they die is a part of the service that aged care provides.

- Make time for staff to talk about their feelings following a death.

- Support staff to attend a resident's funeral if they wish to do so.

- Communicate with staff about a resident's death.

- Acknowledge a resident who has died by forming an honour guard.

- Set aside time during staff meetings to remember residents who have died.

- Allow time after the death of a resident before placing a new resident in their room.

- Set up a remembrance table or card for staff to write special messages and share fond memories with family members.

- Create a quiet space for staff to take time out.

- Organise discussions with staff about their comfort with death and dying.

- Offer staff opportunities to access free counselling services.

- For home care workers, let them know where their client has been moved when they transfer to residential aged care or hospital.

- Include kitchen, cleaning, and administration staff in rituals because they interact with residents too.

Identify three actions to get started

What three things will you do to get started with self-care? We've started this list for you.

1. Make your staff aware of the Self-Care Room on the ELDAC website.

What two other actions will you do?

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

Before you start

Before you implement anything, engage your staff. Find out about their needs and preferences. Let them know what you're proposing and get their inputs.

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