



International
Wellbeing
Insights

The People, Culture
& Wellbeing Specialist

A Managers guide to talking about Wellbeing, Stress and Mental Health

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Mental health and wellbeing are essential components of an individual's overall health and happiness. Unfortunately, many people still find it challenging to discuss their mental health concerns due to the stigma surrounding mental health. This stigma can make it difficult for individuals to seek the support they need, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Enabling managers and colleagues to have practical and meaningful conversations about mental health and wellbeing, organisations can help break down the stigma associated with mental health. These conversations can help create a culture of openness and understanding, where individuals feel comfortable discussing their mental health concerns and seeking the support they need.

Practical and meaningful conversations can also help managers and colleagues identify early warning signs of stress or mental health issues and provide appropriate support and resources to individuals who may be struggling. This can lead to improved employee wellbeing, increased productivity, and a positive workplace culture.

In conclusion, enabling managers and colleagues to have practical and meaningful conversations around wellbeing, stress, and mental health is crucial for creating a supportive workplace culture and promoting employee wellbeing.

The Importance of Conversations Around Wellbeing, Stress and Mental Health in the Workplace

Early Identification and Intervention: Practical and meaningful conversations around wellbeing, stress and mental health can help identify potential issues early on. Managers and colleagues who are trained to have these conversations can observe changes in behaviour, performance or demeanour that may indicate an employee is struggling. Early identification also allows for timely intervention and support, which can prevent the escalation of issues and, therefore, minimise the impact on the employee's wellbeing and job performance.

Support and Empathy: Conversations around wellbeing, stress, and mental health can provide much-needed support and empathy to employees who may be experiencing challenges. By creating a safe space for open and honest conversations, managers and colleagues can offer a listening ear, express concern and provide emotional support. This can help employees feel valued, understood and less isolated, which can positively impact their mental health and wellbeing.

Workplace Culture: Encouraging conversations around wellbeing, stress and mental health can contribute to fostering a positive workplace culture. When employees feel that their organization cares about their wellbeing, they are more likely to be engaged, loyal and productive. Conversations around these topics help create a culture of openness, trust, and empathy, where employees feel comfortable discussing their mental health concerns without fear of stigma or discrimination.



Prevention of Burnout and Mental Health Issues: Practical and meaningful conversations can help prevent burnout and other mental health issues. By proactively addressing stressors, workload and other factors that can contribute to burnout, managers and colleagues can work together to find solutions and support employees in managing their workload and maintaining their mental health.

How to Have Practical and Meaningful Conversations Around Wellbeing, Stress and Mental Health:

Normalise Conversations: Normalise having mental health conversations in the workplace by creating a safe and supportive environment where colleagues feel comfortable sharing their concerns without the fear of judgement or stigma.

Create a Safe and Non-Judgmental Environment: It is essential to create a safe and non-judgmental environment for conversations around wellbeing, stress and mental health. Managers and colleagues should approach these conversations with empathy, respect and confidentiality. Avoid making assumptions or passing judgment and focus on actively listening to the employee's concerns.

Provide Training and Education: Offer comprehensive training for managers and colleagues on mental health awareness, including how to recognise warning signs and how to have effective conversations. This can include, but is not limited to, interactive workshops, seminars or online courses.

Provide Support Resources with Established Policies: Offer support and resources to employees who may be struggling with wellbeing, stress or mental health. This can include providing information about available mental health resources, such as employee assistance programs, counselling services or charities such as Mind and Samaritans. These support resources should have established policies including confidentiality and privacy guidelines.

Use Open-Ended Questions: Open-ended questions encourage employees to share their thoughts and feelings openly. Instead of asking closed-ended questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no," use open-ended questions that require more elaborate responses. For example, instead of asking, "Are you feeling stressed?" ask, "Tell me more about how you've been feeling lately."

Show Empathy and Active Listening: Show empathy by acknowledging and validating the employee's feelings and experiences. Use active listening techniques, such as maintaining eye contact, nodding and summarising what the employee has shared to ensure understanding. Avoid interrupting or offering immediate solutions.

Promote Work-Life Balance: Encourage colleagues to prioritise work-life balance by providing flexible schedules, time off and other resources that support work-life integration. Managers and colleagues can also collaborate with HR or other relevant departments to explore reasonable accommodations,



flexible work arrangements or workload adjustments to support the employee's wellbeing.

Encourage Self-Care: Encourage colleagues to prioritise their mental and physical health by providing resources, such as meditation or yoga classes, and promoting healthy habits like taking breaks and getting enough sleep to reduce stress and improve focus. Physical health can also be promoted through wellness programs, health screenings and healthy lifestyle initiatives. Highlight the connection between physical and mental health, and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Lead by Example: Encourage managers to lead by example by prioritising their own mental health and wellbeing and modelling healthy behaviours for their team. Managers should demonstrate the importance of self-care and mental health by incorporating it into their own routines.

Foster a Culture of Providing Feedback and Celebrating Success: Organisations should adopt a culture of feedback and open communication, where colleagues feel comfortable providing and receiving feedback on their work and wellbeing. Similarly, Colleagues should feel encouraged to celebrate their co-workers' successes and milestones to boost morale and create a supportive work environment.

Step-by-Step Guide

Sensitive conversations, such as those surrounding mental health and wellbeing, require empathy, active listening, and an understanding of how to create a safe and non-judgmental environment. Here is a step-by-step process to help you have sensitive conversations in a thoughtful and effective way:

Overall, having sensitive conversations requires sensitivity, empathy, and a willingness to listen and learn. By following these steps, you can create a safe and supportive environment for these important conversations.

Conclusion

Enabling managers and colleagues to have practical and meaningful conversations around wellbeing, stress and mental health is crucial for creating a supportive and healthy work environment. These conversations can help identify and address issues early, provide support and empathy, foster a positive workplace culture and prevent burnout and other mental health issues.

By following the "how-to" tips discussed in this whitepaper, organisations can empower their managers and colleagues to have effective conversations that contribute to the overall wellbeing and mental health of their employees.

Prioritising employee wellbeing and mental health is not only the right thing to do, but it also benefits the organisation by creating a more engaged, productive and resilient workforce.



Step-by-Step Guide	
Set the Scene:	Start by setting the scene for the conversation. Choose a quiet, private place where you won't be interrupted, and make sure the person you're talking to feels comfortable and safe.
Start with Open-Ended Questions:	Start the conversation with open-ended questions that encourage the person to share their thoughts and feelings. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no," and instead ask questions that require a more elaborate response. For example, instead of asking, "Are you feeling stressed?" ask, "Tell me more about how you've been feeling lately."
Show Empathy and Active Listening:	Show empathy by acknowledging and validating the person's feelings and experiences. Use active listening techniques, such as maintaining eye contact, nodding, and summarising what the person has shared to ensure understanding. Avoid interrupting or offering immediate solutions.
Use Non-Judgmental Language:	Use non-judgmental language to create a safe and non-judgmental environment. Avoid using language that is critical or dismissive, and instead focus on showing understanding and concern.
Respond with Openness and Honesty:	Respond to the person's concerns with openness and honesty. Share your own experiences if appropriate, and be transparent about the support and resources that are available.
Offer Support and Resources:	Offer support and resources to the person if appropriate. This can include providing information about available mental health resources, such as employee assistance programs, counselling services, or national resources like Mind and Samaritans.
Follow Up:	Follow up with the person after the conversation to check in and see how they're doing. Let them know that you're available to talk again if they need support.



National resources

MIND

Supported online community where you can safely share and be heard, as well as listen to others: <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/support-community-elefriends/>

<http://www.mind.org.uk/>

MIND INFO-LINE: 0300 123 3393

TEXT: 86463

info@mind.org.uk

BEYOND SHAME/BEYOND STIGMA

· <https://beyondshamebeyondstigma.co.uk>

HUB OF HOPE

<https://hubofhope.co.uk/>

SHOUT

<https://www.giveusashout.org/>

Get 24/7 help from their team of crisis volunteers

· TEXT SHOUT TO 85258

SAMARITANS

· <http://www.samaritans.org/>

· 08457 90 90 90* (UK) *CALLS WILL COST 2P PER MINUTE PLUS YOUR TELEPHONE COMPANY'S ACCESS CHARGE

· 116 123 (FREE TO CALL) (ROI)

· TEXT: 07725 909090

· JO@SAMARITANS.ORG



We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

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