

HAVING THE TALK

HELPING EMPLOYEES YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT



Regardless of how it comes about, a conversation about someone's mental health can be stressful, but using some tried and tested techniques can reduce this stress.

- * When preparing to discuss mental health concerns with a team member, remember that **every situation is different** – some variables you'll need to consider are the personality of the team member and the nature of their problem, your relationship with them and how you're feeling on the day.
- * The safest approach is to always communicate in a **respectful and concerned** way - this will encourage the team member to open up to you, or help them to feel safe doing so at a later time.

WHEN TO CONTINUE OR END THE CONVERSATION

- * The stronger your **relationship** with the team member, the more you can persist and use the strength of your relationship to enquire further.
- * Never continue a conversation if you start to **feel angry or frustrated**. Bring the conversation to an end, but make it clear that you'd like to touch base again soon.
- * Hostility, defensiveness, being very abrupt or challenging, and direct eye contact are all signs that they feel threatened and want you to back off. Bring the conversation to an end, but **indicate that you're concerned** and want to discuss things again at another time.
- * Remember that although you may want to help, an employee ultimately has the right NOT to discuss their mental health condition in detail with you.

**FIVE STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE CONVERSATION
& SUPPORT FOR SOMEONE TALKING ABOUT
SELF-HARM OR SUICIDE**



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5 STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE CONVERSATION



STEP 1: SETTING

- ✓ Choose a private, comfortable place to have the conversation with the team member, and ensure you allocate enough time.
- ✓ Avoid leaving it until late in the day when you're both tired.

STEP 2: LISTEN ACTIVELY

- ✓ Listen actively and allow them to talk (don't interrupt or offer advice).
- ✓ Avoid the temptation to fill the silences.
- ✓ When appropriate, reflect back on some of what you've heard to show you understand.

STEP 3: TALK TOOLS

- ✓ Try to comment only on behaviour that you observe and add something positive – e.g. "you're usually so upbeat"
- ✓ Encourage them to talk by using open-ended questions beginning with words like 'what' or 'how' - e.g. 'What can you tell me about it?'
- ✓ If they're reluctant to talk, ask more questions or agree to speak again at another time.

STEP 4: NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Encourage the team member to seek help by asking what they plan to do next.
- ✓ Help them decide on the first step towards a solution.
- ✓ Plan for a follow up - Always end the discussion with a plan for follow-up so the issue can be reviewed and/or adapted if required. Remember, you don't have to have all the answers right away; you can arrange a time to come back with more information.

STEP 5: FOLLOWING UP

- ✓ Follow-up with them at a later date, e.g a week later.
- ✓ Ask them how they are and what steps they've managed to take since your initial conversation.

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SUPPORT FOR SOMEONE TALKING ABOUT SELF-HARM OR SUICIDE



Treat suicide risk as you would a medical emergency, and
never leave the person alone.

Lifeline has outlined 3 steps to prevent suicide if you think someone might
be at risk:

1. ASK

- Ask directly “are you thinking about suicide?”
- This shows you care and encourages them to talk
- Asking does **NOT** increase someone’s risk of attempting suicide

2. STAY & LISTEN

- Stay and listen closely and let them express their feelings
- **Don’t leave them alone** – make sure you or someone reliable stays with them

3. GET HELP

- Call Lifeline on **13 11 14** (available 24/7) or 000 if life is in danger
- Don’t forget to seek support for yourself too

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