

#MentalHealthAwareness

HOW TO: START A CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

Talking about mental health can be daunting, but the more we have open conversations around the subject, the easier it will become. You don't need to be an expert or to find solutions for someone, but your compassion and support can be invaluable.

1.

FINDING THE RIGHT SETTING

Consider having a chat over a cup of tea or coffee - this can help the person feel at ease.

Try to find somewhere private where you won't be overheard.

If you can't meet face-to-face, still consider a video or voice call.

2.

ASK AN OPEN QUESTION

Start with 'How are you?' or 'You don't seem yourself at the moment, is everything ok?'

If the person doesn't want to open up, you shouldn't force or coerce them.

You can let them know you're always there to talk in the future.

3.

LISTENING ACTIVELY (IF THEY DO OPEN UP)

Make sure you give that person your full attention (try to keep your phone away).

Make comfortable eye contact.

Ask open questions.

Don't interrupt.

4.

SOME TALKING POINTS

- How long have you felt like this?
- Do you have enough support?
- What can I do to support?

5.

SIGN-POSTING

If appropriate, make the gentle suggestion that the person sees their GP or a professional therapist.

You can suggest a range of other free resources - see right!

Direct them towards help offered within your organisation.

6.

SUPPORT

Don't forget to check in on them regularly.

You can offer both practical support (e.g. help with workload) and emotional support (here to chat when you need).

THINGS TO AVOID

DON'T try to fix their problems or find solutions - giving unsolicited advice could make the person feel worse.

DON'T try and perform the role of a therapist. It is not your job to find reasons for the way they are feeling.

DON'T compare their situation to others. Just listen, ask open questions, and find out how you can best support them.

RESOURCES

SAMARITANS

Confidential crisis support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

- 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)
- samaritans.org.uk

SHOUT

Text 'SHOUT' for confidential mental health support.

- 85258 (free 24-hour text service)
- giveusashout.org

