HOW TO:

Start a conversation about mental health at work

A simple framework

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.

FIND 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 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Start with a simple '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.

LISTEN ACTIVELY (IF THEY DO OPEN UP)

Make sure you give that person your full attention (put your phone away).

Make comfortable eye contact.

3.

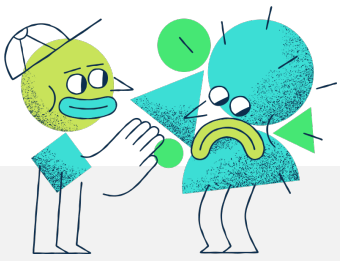
Don't interrupt.

Continue to ask open-ended questions.

SOME TALKING POINTS

4.

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



5.

SIGN-POSTING

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

You can suggest a range of other free resources - see list of UK crisis resources.

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).

DON'T try to fix problems or find solutions - unsolicited advice can make people feel worse.

DON'T try to play the role of therapist. It's not your job to find reasons for the way they feel.

DON'T compare their situation to others.