
A Guide for Managers & Leaders

How to Have Supportive Mental Health Conversations

Creating a mentally healthy workplace starts with open, supportive conversations. Whether an employee is experiencing stress, burnout, or personal challenges, knowing how to listen, respond, and offer support can make a difference. Use this guide to build trust, provide resources, and create a safe space for employees.

4 Steps for a Meaningful Mental Health Conversation

1. Create a Safe and Open Environment

Set the tone by ensuring the conversation is confidential & non-judgmental.

Use verbal & non-verbal cues to make the employee feel comfortable.

Examples of conversation starters:

- "How have you been feeling lately?"
- "I want to check in—how's everything going for you?"
- "Is there anything on your mind that I can help with?"

Key Tip: Lead with curiosity and care—your tone and body language matter as much as your words when creating a safe space.

2. Show Empathy and Validate Their Experience

Employees need to feel heard and understood before solutions are discussed.

Acknowledge their emotions with reflective listening and empathetic responses.

Examples of supportive responses:

- "That sounds like it's been really challenging for you."
- "I can understand why that would feel overwhelming—thank you for sharing."
- "You're not alone in this—I'm here to support you."

Key Tip: Avoid saying, "I know how you feel"—instead, focus on acknowledging their experience.

3. Shift Toward Solutions and Practical Support

Once the employee feels heard, collaborate on next steps without rushing to fix the problem.

Offer resources like stress management tools, workload adjustments, or mental health benefits.

Examples of conversation starters:

- "What kind of support would be most helpful for you right now?"
- "Would adjusting your workload or schedule help manage stress?"
- "There are some great resources available—would you be open to exploring them?"

Key Tip: Offer options, not directives, so employees feel empowered in their next steps.

4. Follow Up and Provide Ongoing Support

One conversation isn't enough—ongoing support builds trust and reinforces a culture of wellbeing.

Set a clear follow-up plan and check in regularly.

Follow-Up Suggestions:

- "Let's check in next week to see how things are going."
- "You don't have to figure this out alone—let's stay connected."
- "If you ever need to talk again, I'm here to support you."

Key Tip: Keep follow-ups informal but consistent—this helps employees feel supported without pressure.