

Mental health confident course

Workplace training for managers

Enter



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Introduction	Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing	Module two: Supporting individuals at work	Module three: Signs of declining mental health	Module four: Having conversations about mental health	Evaluating management skills	Finding support
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Making a difference

How do I complete this course?

Making a difference

Mental wellbeing should be a top priority for employers. People spend around half their waking hours at work, so how employees feel at work matters. Influencing their [mental and emotional health](#) is vital to supporting their wellbeing at home and at work.

If you have completed the first course in this series, [Mental Health Awareness](#), you'll have a foundation understanding of mental health in the workplace and why it's so important at every level; employee, manager and beyond.

This course goes deeper and is aimed at those who manage or lead teams focusing on how to create a good culture. You'll also discover examples of how to hold and manage [vital conversations](#); demonstrated through audio scenarios of what to say and how to say it to help employees open up and discuss their wellbeing with you.

Struggling with workplace issues can be both a cause and outcome of conditions such as anxiety and depression, the aim of this training is to enable you to feel confident in conversations surrounding mental health and create an environment where the people you manage feel supported and comfortable in asking for help and in taking action. We can all make a difference.

What will I gain from this course?

Through a series of audio and text, this course will extend your knowledge of mental health in respect to:

- ✓ Tools to create a positive wellbeing culture in the team
- ✓ Having the confidence to hold a conversation about mental health
- ✓ Knowing what language to use
- ✓ Helping someone to open up, if they wish to do so
- ✓ Knowing appropriate action to take, how and when to follow up



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Making a difference **How do I complete this course?**

How do I complete this course?

The learning is divided into four short modules, each accessed from the menu tab, so you can dip in and out as it suits you. They take between five-10 minutes per module and we recommend you complete them in order. It is interactive, and you can input text into available form fields to capture your learning. Audio and resources are accessed through links, so you'll need an internet connection to make use of these.



How do you feel?

Before you start the course, take a moment to reflect on how you feel discussing mental health problems and whether you have sufficient knowledge to create a positive wellbeing culture for those you lead. If you noticed someone was struggling with their mental health, how confident would you be having a conversation with them about it?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being uncomfortable and 10 being comfortable), choose your level of confidence below by clicking against a number. We will look at this again once you have completed the course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Take a moment to reflect on the reasons for your answer:

Get ready to start module one.

Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing



Introduction

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Module aims

Creating a culture of wellbeing: model 1 2 3 4 5 6

Module one aims

- ✓ Understand a model that can be applied to create a culture of wellbeing in the workplace
- ✓ Learn practical ways of putting a wellbeing strategy into practice
- ✓ Hear examples from managers and team leaders of how they embedded a culture of wellbeing

The key facts

To combat the stigma around mental health, it's important to embed a culture that shows people they are not alone, and there will be support for them. It can often be hard for individuals to know how to start or where to turn to. In this module you will work through a toolkit of ideas to support you and your teams.

Creating a culture of wellbeing in the workplace

Numerous studies have shown that if employees are happier and more engaged, sick leave, staff turnover and wastage are lower, while motivation and effort are higher. It pays to focus on [employee wellbeing](#) and have a well-thought out health and wellbeing strategy with basic principles that can be applied for people you lead.

Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing



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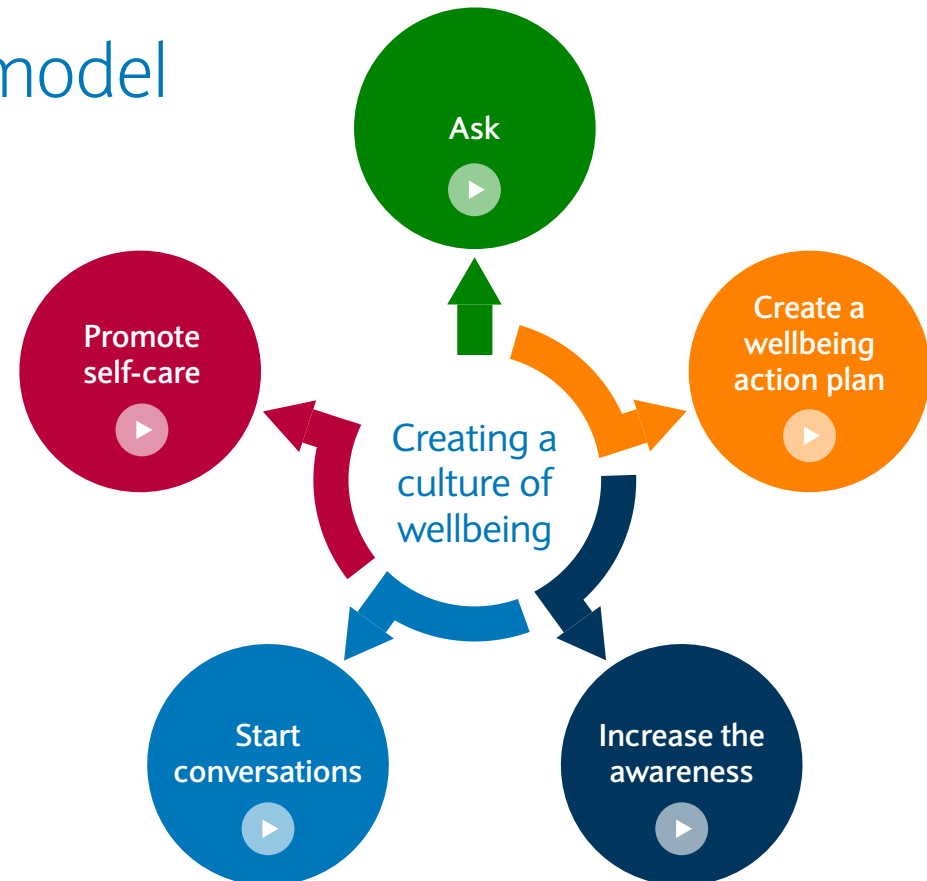
Module aims **Creating a culture of wellbeing: model** 1 2 3 4 5 6

Creating a culture of wellbeing: model

This module looks at what you as a manager can do to create a good culture of wellbeing with a suggested five-part model to start building a simple but effective strategy.

It is flexible to be adapted to different work environments and contains quick and easy tips and guidance, depending what stage you are at.

Use the wheel to navigate to any of the five sections

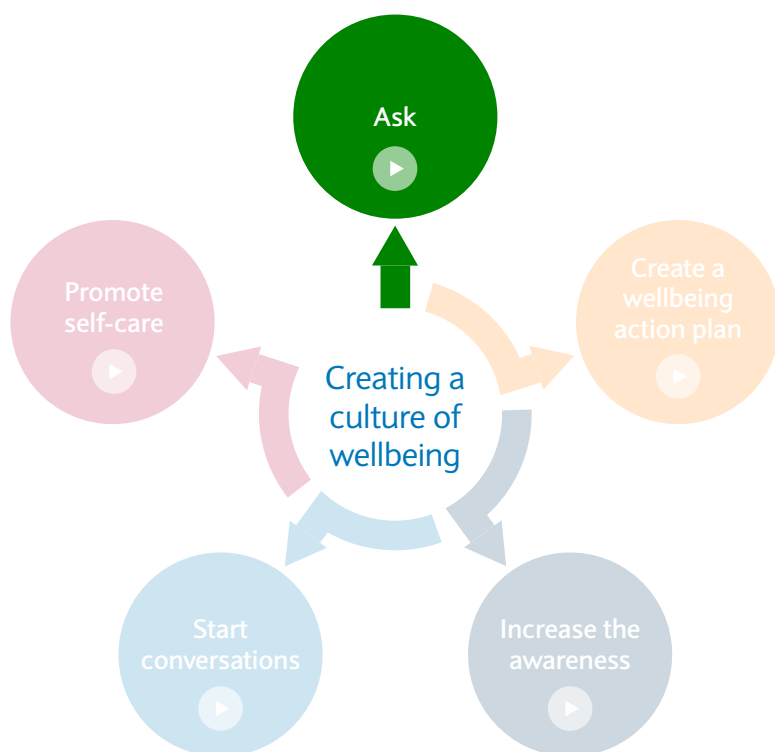


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Ask

Assessing the existing wellbeing culture in your place of work by asking employees is a simple way to get their point of view. This can be done by conducting surveys, focus groups and one-to-one discussions – you can use helpful resources from [Mind](#) and other outlets listed at the end of this course to guide with questions.

Areas to understand that could be having an impact on employees' mental wellbeing could include:

- ✓ Are there any barriers to talking openly about mental health at work?
- ✓ How do individuals feel about their workloads and work hours/patterns?
- ✓ If they feel overwhelmed by workload or working long hours, do they know who to ask for support?
- ✓ How do individuals feel about their work environment and flexibility?
- ✓ What changes could be made to the physical work environment? Such as incorporating more light, creating a place to eat lunch away from computers etc.

Ask what suggestions individuals have or may have come across that they think will have a positive effect on their work life wellbeing.

Use the wheel to navigate to any of the five sections



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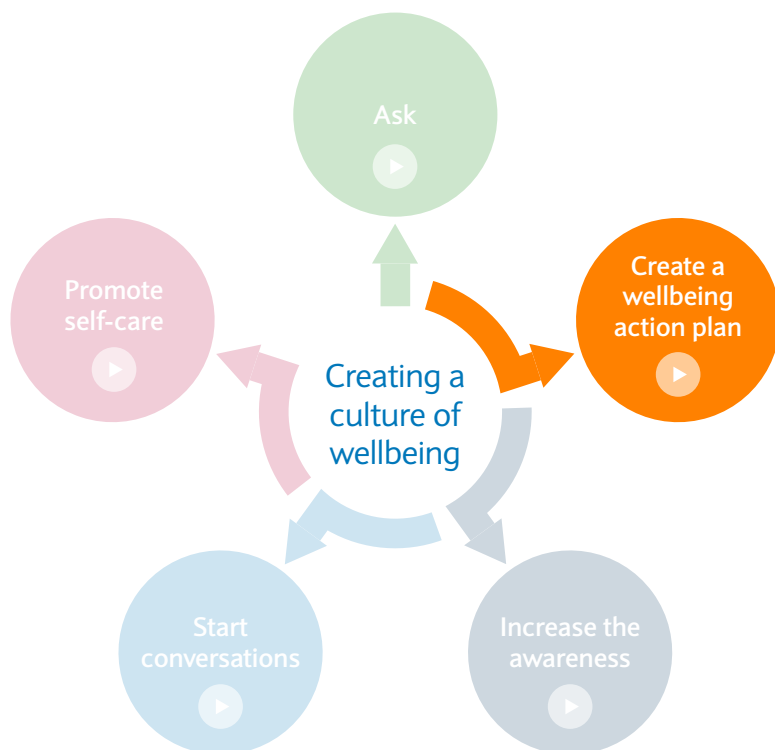
Creating a wellbeing action plan

Encouraging employees to fill out wellbeing action plans, like ones provided by [Mind](#), is an easy and practical way to support both your own mental health at work and that of others in your team. Anyone can complete an action plan, not just those who need support, so that there are practical steps in place to ensure everyone feels supported.

These are five simple steps that an organisation may want to consider as part of putting together an effective wellbeing action plan that ensures the right action is taken to support employees:

1. Gather feedback from people routinely to understand what affects staff mental wellbeing in your workplace, and identify what you're already doing or what can be done to support more
2. Upskill line managers by sharing courses on mental health and stress management like this one and [Mental Health Awareness](#) developed by LifeSkills
3. Encourage managers to speak regularly with staff about how they're doing and put in place review procedures which ask about mental wellbeing and stress
4. Review the physical work environment and talk to employees about how to improve it and what they need to consider for home office set ups
5. Outline how you will tackle the work-related causes of mental health problems and how you will support staff experiencing poor mental health

"We all filled in Mind's individual [wellbeing action plan](#). I chose to share mine not only with my manager but the others that I work with so they were aware of any triggers or preferences I have in terms of how I work and the type of environment that keeps me well." – Courier



Use the wheel to navigate to any of the five sections

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Increase the awareness

It's important for line managers and members of the senior management team to lead by example when it comes to raising awareness of mental health. Providing opportunities for learning, reducing stigma and instilling improved wellbeing habits sends a clear message to employees that their wellbeing matters and that they have permission to engage with the topic. Actively encourage your team to adopt [healthier working habits](#) by working sensible hours, taking full lunch breaks, taking annual leave and resting after busy periods yourself.

Simple actions can be put in place to encourage employees, not just managers, to support members of their team and recognise the signs if an individual may be struggling with their mental health:

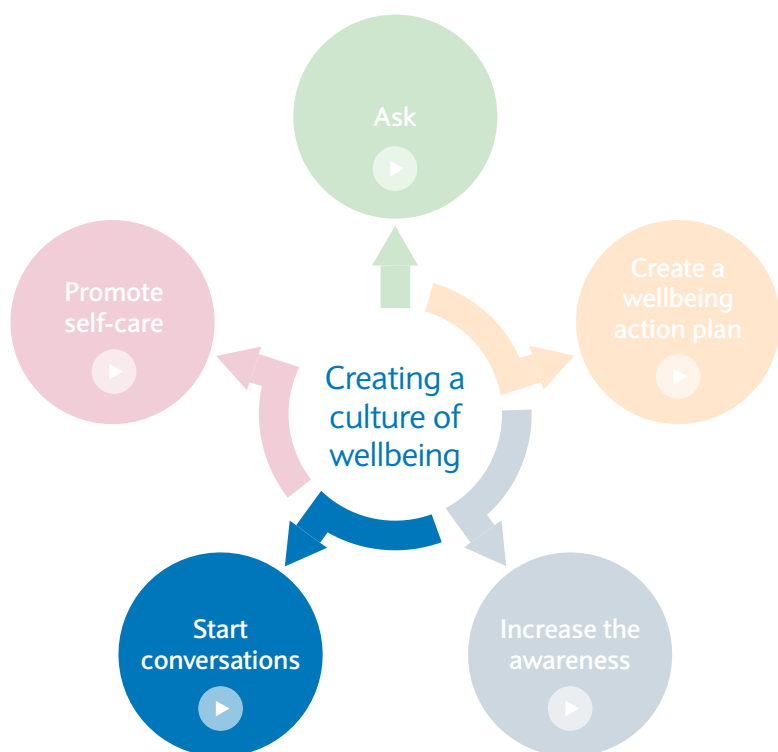
- ✓ Helpful resources, like ones available from [Mind](#), can be made available to help employees know where to start with supporting individuals
- ✓ Encourage all employees to complete course one in this series, [Mental Health Awareness](#), as a learning and development opportunity
- ✓ Invite in external speakers to talk to the wider company about wellbeing and managing their mental health
- ✓ Raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing by encouraging the team to share articles, tips and recommendations
- ✓ Make wellbeing part of staff catch ups and check ins

Use the wheel to navigate to any of the five sections

Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing

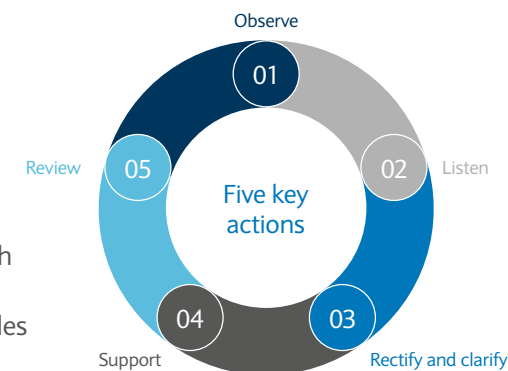


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Start conversations

Sometimes, the hardest part about being open about mental health is knowing how to start the conversation. This five-step model suggests an effective way to approach having conversations about wellbeing with employees to ensure they feel heard and supported. You can see examples of the model being put into practice in [Module two](#).



- 1. Observe** – get to know your team. Have there been any concerning changes in team members’ behaviour?
- 2. Listen** – If you sense something may be wrong, when you have the right opportunity – such as during a regular one to one – check in with them. Make sure you’re in a private space, so you can’t be overheard
- 3. Reflect and clarify** – As you talk, try to build trust and reflect your understanding of the conversation, clarify anything that may not be clear. Be explicit that you would like to help (where appropriate)
- 4. Support** – Towards the end of the conversation, where appropriate, summarise the individuals concern as you understand it and agree on the actions that you and they will take, including agreed timelines. Check that this is understood by the individuals
- 5. Review** – Confirm how you will keep in touch to review the issue and to see if further support is needed

“I start calls with people working from home by asking them to rate where they are emotionally from 1-10. You’re more likely to get an honest answer than asking how they are, when people often just say ‘I’m fine!’” – Customer Care Team Leader

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Promote self-care

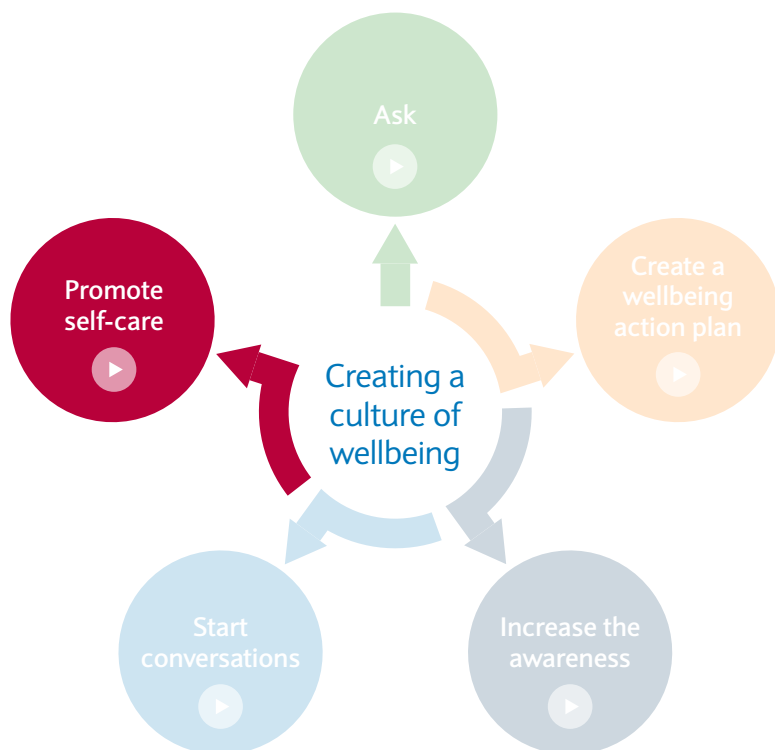
Looking after your mental health starts with practising good self-care. Encourage your team to make use of popular and effective wellbeing resources such as:

- ✓ Wellbeing apps like [Headspace](#), and NHS approved [breathing exercises](#)
- ✓ LifeSkills blogs on [Improving looking after your mental health](#) and [Looking after your mental health in the workplace](#)
- ✓ It is always a good idea to ask for help – even if you're not sure you are experiencing a specific mental health problem
- ✓ Online training such as the LifeSkills [Mental Health Awareness](#) course
- ✓ Free wellbeing webinars centred around sleep, nutrition, stress and more

Point out the importance of [self-care](#) to employees by drawing attention to:

- ✓ Movement and posture – there are simple exercises which can even be done in the workplace to improve this
- ✓ Taking regular lunch breaks
- ✓ Promoting a good work/life balance
- ✓ Avoiding working late nights if not on shift work
- ✓ [How food can impact moods](#)
- ✓ [The importance of sleep on mental health](#) and how to manage sleep if working night shifts
- ✓ Understanding the link between financial and mental wellbeing

When you're ready, start module two.



Use the wheel to navigate to any of the five sections

Module two: Supporting individuals at work



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Module two aims

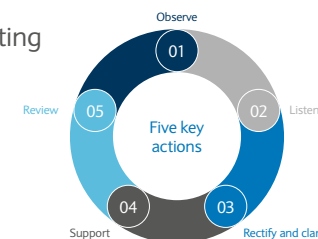
- ✓ Know how to support an individual experiencing difficulties with their mental health
- ✓ Recognise what language to use to open up the conversation
- ✓ Become familiar with the guidelines for a supportive and open conversation

There's often no clear right or wrong approach for those leading teams so it can be difficult to feel confident having conversations. Being able to say the right thing, at the right time, in the right way can really help someone speak up and get help.

In the next three modules you'll hear a number of workplace conversations and hear first-hand how they can help people get the support they need. You'll explore the approach people often take in these conversations, as well as discover some simple things you can do to build trust and help people feel comfortable talking openly.

Supporting an individual with their mental wellbeing

But before we start getting into the conversations let's remind ourselves of a suggested approach when having conversations.



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Samira and Henry

In this module, you'll get the opportunity to listen to a series of conversations where out-of-character behaviour in a meeting leads Samira to check whether everything is okay with Henry.

There are five conversations. After each, you'll find a multiple-choice question, answers between A, B or C. Be honest in your answer, and make a note as you go – you'll find out what type of support you tended to offer, and whether this could improve next time.



Notice where Samira:

- ✓ Observes that Henry is behaving out of character and takes action
- ✓ Aims to understand Henry's situation and its impact
- ✓ Uses fact-based examples
- ✓ Uses open questions and active listening
- ✓ Reassures Henry
- ✓ Offers her own experiences of speaking to a counsellor
- ✓ Reflects, clarifies and supports
- ✓ Allows Henry to decide what is best for himself

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Module aims **Samira and Henry** 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7

Audio 1

 Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

Reflect

What do you think is happening with Henry?

- A** He's just having a bad day
- B** He's worried because he hasn't met his call response targets
- C** He's feeling stress and pressure at home and at work

Summary

Samira isn't assuming she knows what's behind Henry's out of character behaviour, the key thing is that she's recognising the signs that things aren't right and knows it's best to say something. As the conversation continues, we'll return to this question to see whether your view of the situation changes.



Notice phrases that can help open up the discussion:

- ✓ “But it's not like you, I just wanted to check and see how things have been going”
- ✓ “It's just, I've noticed you've been behaving a bit differently”
- ✓ “It's just not the Henry I know”
- ✓ “Everyone loves working with you, we all care about you. You're normally so... “
- ✓ “Talk to me, maybe I can help. You're not alone, you know? I've had times when...”

Module two: Supporting individuals at work



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Samira and Henry

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Audio 2



Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

Reflect

What do you think Samira should do?

- A Suggest someone helps Henry with his work
- B End the conversation, as Henry doesn't want to talk
- C Ask about the out-of-character behaviour

Summary

Even though Samira is reassuring Henry, asking lots of open questions and providing the opportunity for him to talk, Henry hasn't opened up yet. Remember, Samira doesn't have to provide a solution; **she first needs to understand the situation and its impact.** [This article](#) outlines six key steps for approaching difficult conversations like this in the workplace.



Notice phrases that can help to explore and empathise:

- ✓ “So, what’s been making you late for work recently?”
- ✓ “I know how difficult it is when you’re trying to juggle a lot of different projects. How do you feel you are coping?”
- ✓ “Is it just work that’s causing the stress and making you anxious?”
- ✓ “I’m really sorry to hear that. I don’t need to know the details, I just...”
- ✓ “That must be really hard for you”

Module two: Supporting individuals at work



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Module aims **Samira and Henry** 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7

Audio 3



Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

Reflect

What do you think Samira should do now?

- A** Enquire further about Henry's family issues
- B** Suggest that Henry takes some time off work to handle his personal issues
- C** Ask whether Henry is aware of the support that's available at work

Summary

Samira is doing a lot to help Henry open up. **She's using fact-based examples** such as Henry working late, **open questions and active listening** to get Henry to tell her how he's feeling. When Henry was defensive, **Samira reassured him** that this isn't about the quality of his work or clock watching. Once Samira understands the situation, she doesn't need to know all the details. **She needs to be able to direct Henry to the support that's available.**



Notice phrases to highlight adjustments and **signpost support**:

- ✓ “Would it help to talk to someone...”
- ✓ “When I spoke to a counsellor, when I felt overwhelmed...”
- ✓ “I can help you get this support if you like...”
- ✓ “What do you think would take some of the pressure off there?”
- ✓ “I mean, we're all here to support each other.”

Module two: Supporting individuals at work



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Samira and Henry

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Audio 4



Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

Reflect

What response from Samira would be most effective?

- A Ask what Henry would like to do next and whether she can help
- B Suggest that Henry takes some time to think about what should happen next
- C Summarise what's been said and suggest next steps



Notice phrases that summarise how they will follow up:

- ✓ “I’ll get some numbers and some website links for you, if you like.”
- ✓ “I’d like to carry on helping you in any way I can. How about...”

Module two: Supporting individuals at work



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Audio 5

 Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

Reflect

Now you've heard the full conversation, what do you think is happening with Henry?

- A** He's just having a bad day
- B** He's worried because hasn't met his call response targets
- C** He's feeling stress and pressure at home and outside of work

Summary

What do you think now, having heard the full conversation? Only a professional can provide appropriate interventions, but when working with someone, you can help them by being open-minded about their situation. **By encouraging Henry to talk about his issues at work and outside of work, and the impact it is having, Samira avoided making assumptions and was able to offer real support.**

Results

Take a look at the options you chose during the conversations, find out what kind of approach you tended to take and the potential impact of this.

Mostly option A

If you chose mostly option A, you took a mostly practical approach to helping Henry. Providing adjustments can help, but these need to be appropriate and agreed with Henry.

Mostly option B

If you chose mostly option B, you took a mostly **non-interventionist** approach to helping Henry. It's good to allow Henry space to open up in his own time but be careful about avoiding the conversation.

Mostly option C

If you chose mostly option C, you took a mostly **supportive** approach to helping Henry.

Mix of A, B and C

If you chose a mixture of A, B and C options, you took a mixture of approaches to helping Henry. While it's good to allow Henry space to open up in his own time, be careful about avoiding the conversation. Workplace adjustments could help, and these need to be appropriate and agreed with Henry.

Module two: Supporting individuals at work



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Summary

Samira offered Henry **reassurance** that the conversation wasn't about the quality of his work, took time to **ask open questions** about how he was feeling, and shared her own experiences, all of which helped Henry feel safe to open up. Samira suggested using work-based support but **left Henry to decide what was best**.

What happened next? Samira set up regular meetings so that Henry didn't feel left on his own. Over the next few weeks, Henry got support and, with Samira's help, was able to **make adjustments** to relieve some pressure.

The **Evaluating management skills** section of this course encourages you to consider the conversations you can have with employees to ensure the correct adjustments are made.



Well done, you have completed module two. Continue to module three.

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



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Module aims	Building trust in the workplace	Malik and Alyson	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Module three aims

- ✓ To embed effective conversation skills
- ✓ To build the confidence to guide a conversation
- ✓ To know how to build trust, so people open up
- ✓ To know how to follow up

Noticing a change in an individual's mental health

The first thing is noticing that someone has been behaving unusually for a period of time. They may be underperforming, or be less engaged, or snappy. Then you can suggest having a conversation. The key thing here, as before, is to build trust and create an environment where the other person feels comfortable to open up.

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



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Module aims **Building trust in the workplace** Malik and Alyson 1 2 3 4 5 6

Building trust in the workplace



Practice active listening

When people feel heard and not judged, they often feel safe. Repeating what they say is a really good way of doing this. For example, “What I heard was...” or “You mentioned...”



Ask open questions

For instance “How do you feel?” rather than “Do you feel anxious?” This allows the other person to find their own words and express themselves fully



Have empathy

Put yourself in their shoes. How might they feel? What might they need?



Reassure the person

Often people with mental health problems will have a negative self image. Knowing that they are liked and respected will make them feel more comfortable



Ask twice

It’s normal for the other person to feel defensive, so persisting with a question in a caring way can break down natural defenses



Share your own experiences

If you have relevant experience of the issue, consider sharing it if you feel comfortable doing so. This may support your colleague in feeling that they are not alone, and that this is something that others go through too

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



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Malik and Alyson: The conversation

Malik has noticed a change in Alyson's behaviour and has decided to speak to her to check everything is OK.



Listen out for Malik:

- ✓ Focusing on the impact at work with work related and fact-based examples
- ✓ Providing reassurance
- ✓ Continuing when Alyson is defensive
- ✓ Using open questions
- ✓ Using active listening
- ✓ Empathising with Alyson
- ✓ Reflect and clarify
- ✓ Support, this could be suggesting adjustments
- ✓ Review and making a plan to check in later in case there are changes

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



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Audio 1



Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

How did the conversation go?

This clearly wasn't an easy conversation for either Malik or Alyson. How do you think it went?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not very well and 5 being great), choose how well you think the conversation went.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

Summary

There's no perfect conversation and there really is no right or wrong. It all depends on the person and the situation. If you have some key principles and phrases up your sleeve, that can really help. **The key thing is that you give the person the time and space to open up** and then signpost them to the appropriate support, as Malik did with Alyson in this case.

Starting the conversation

How did Malik initially raise his concerns with Alyson?

- ✓ Focusing on the impact at work
- ✓ Continuing when Alyson was defensive
- ✓ Using fact-based, work-related examples
- ✓ Providing reassurance
- ✓ Asking about her home life

Summary

- Malik didn't make any assumptions about Alyson's situation. Instead he provided reassurance to Alyson all the way through
- He continued when Alyson was defensive: "But I just want to help and if something's troubling you, it's best to share your worries..."
- He used a work-related example of Alyson's out-of-character behaviour – her being unusually quiet in meetings – to get Alyson to open up and discuss her feelings
- He asked about her home life just to make sure he understood what adjustments might help

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



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How to prepare before the meeting:

- ✓ Be able to define the 'out of character' signs and also what's normal for them
- ✓ Make sure they are work related and fact based
- ✓ Do go in as calm and relaxed as you can
- ✓ Look at the phrases you can use throughout
- ✓ Check that you have a respectful attitude towards them

Conversation skills

What do you think were the three most effective actions that Malik took during the conversation?

- Offering his own experience
- Reassuring Alyson
- Empathising with Alyson
- Active listening
- Asking open questions

Phrases that are good for starting a conversation:

- ✓ "I just wanted to ask how things are..."
- ✓ "It's just that you haven't been yourself lately and I'm a bit concerned"
- ✓ "It's unlike you to..."
- ✓ "I just wonder why..." or "I'm curious about..."

Summary

All of these can help to open up the conversation, but you don't have to do all of them, choose what feels right. Let's have a look at how Malik did:

- Malik was very good at reassuring Alyson that she wasn't in trouble
- He asked open questions to invite her to open up like "how are you feeling at the moment?"
- He listened actively to show that he heard and understood Alyson. "Look, you mentioned that you felt hopeless and I can understand how bleak things might seem"
- He didn't talk about his own experience. Although you may have insight or experience, sometimes it won't feel right to say anything
- If you think that someone may be at risk of harming themselves you should ask direct, clear and closed questions to establish the level of risk. However, notice how Malik prefixed his questions with "I'm not suggesting that you may feel this way... but have you ever thought of hurting yourself." He did this to make sure he wasn't putting words into Alyson's mouth



Offering support

How did Malik offer support?

- Offering a suggestion for the support that's needed
- Making a plan to check in later in case there are changes
- Suggesting workplace adjustments
- Signposting to work-based support

Feedback

- Malik offered a suggestion for adjustments and signposted her to professional help
- He made a plan to catch up with Alyson at a later date, just in case anything changes
- He reinforced that the advice was confidential. Follow your organisation's guidelines on this

Summary

Although there's no perfect conversation, Malik did well. During the conversation he:

- Provided reassurance and continued when Alyson was defensive
- Used fact-based, work-related examples
- Asked open questions to get Alyson to open up
- Listened actively to encourage Alyson to talk
- Signposted to work-based support and suggested workplace adjustments

Phrases around workplace adjustments and what might help:

- ✓ “So, what might help?”
- ✓ “I’m thinking of some practical things that might make life easier”
- ✓ “I’m always here for you”
- ✓ “How does that sound?”

Following up

When it comes to support and making adjustments at work, every person's needs are different. The most important thing is that you follow up to check things are OK and make sure that person feels fully supported.

Two weeks later, Malik has arranged a meeting to check in with Alyson and see if there's more he can do.

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



Introduction	Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing	Module two: Supporting individuals at work	Module three: Signs of declining mental health	Module four: Having conversations about mental health	Evaluating management skills	Finding support
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Module aims	Building trust in the workplace	Malik and Alyson	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Audio 2

 Click [here](#) to listen to the conversation.

Seeing the impact

What was the impact of the support Malik offered?

- Alyson is less tired
- Alyson is no longer behaving out-of-character
- Alyson is more engaged in the conversation
- Alyson is more open and willing to share her feelings with others

Summary

Malik has done a great job of creating an environment where Alyson feels able to be open about her mental health and the support she's getting. She's less tired and more engaged in the conversation. Because of the acceptance Malik has shown, Alyson is a lot more trusting, open and willing to share, even to the extent of sharing with others she works with.



Understanding the benefits

Why is this follow-up conversation so important?

- It provides Malik with the chance to suggest adjustments
- It ensures Malik has closure and doesn't need to worry about Alyson
- It ensures Alyson doesn't feel left to find her own support
- It provides the opportunity to see how any support and adjustments are working

Module three: Signs of declining mental health



Introduction	Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing	Module two: Supporting individuals at work	Module three: Signs of declining mental health	Module four: Having conversations about mental health	Evaluating management skills	Finding support
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Module aims	Building trust in the workplace	Malik and Alyson	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Summary

This follow-up conversation is vital to **demonstrate genuine support and care**, and to ensure Alyson **doesn't feel left on her own to access support**. Some people with mental health problems may struggle to find the motivation to follow through and access support. Following up allows Malik to check whether Alyson has found support and how effective the support and adjustments have been. If they haven't worked, it gives Malik the opportunity to make further suggestions. For further reading, [this article](#) follows the journey of an individual who fought his way back from depression.

During the follow-up conversation, Malik:

- Saw the results of building trust with Alyson, who was open and engaged in the conversation
- Demonstrated genuine support and care, and ensured Alyson felt supported
- Checked how support and adjustments were helping Alyson in case any changes needed to be made



Phrases for following up:

- ✓ “I wanted to catch up with you and see how you're getting along”
- ✓ “How are you feeling about...?” or “How are getting on with...?”
- ✓ “Is there anything else we can help you with?”

Phrases to help show empathy:

- ✓ “That must be so difficult for you”
- ✓ “That's very... for you”
- ✓ “You must be...”
- ✓ “You mentioned that... and I can understand how that would make you feel”

Well done, you have completed module three. Continue to module four

Module four: Having conversations about mental health



Introduction	Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing	Module two: Supporting individuals at work	Module three: Signs of declining mental health	Module four: Having conversations about mental health	Evaluating management skills	Finding support
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Module aims

Discussing mental health challenges 1 2 3 4



Module four aims

Having conversations about mental health

Whether you have concerns about someone else or need to talk about your own feelings, it's often difficult to open up and start the conversation about mental and emotional health. So how does it feel when you do?

- ✓ To give you an experience of how these conversations can make a difference
- ✓ To demystify the process
- ✓ To explain how the techniques create a safe environment

Module four: Having conversations about mental health



Introduction	Module one: Creating workplace wellbeing	Module two: Supporting individuals at work	Module three: Signs of declining mental health	Module four: Having conversations about mental health	Evaluating management skills	Finding support	
		Module aims	Discussing mental health challenges	1	2	3	4

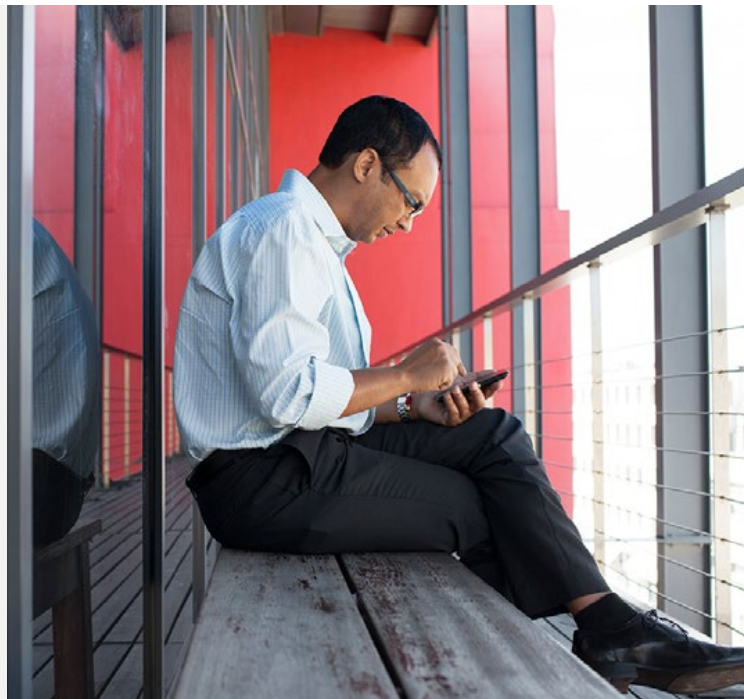
Discussing mental health challenges

Malik shares his experiences of his own mental and emotional health, as well as supporting others.

What was your first experience of mental illness?

“My first experience of poor mental health was in my early 20s and I was in a very high-pressured environment, there was no way I could speak to my manager so I kept myself to myself. I was very quiet and I just coped alone. And I feel in hindsight if I’d had some help at that time, my [depression](#) probably wouldn’t have lasted as long. And as I got older and I got into a more senior position that memory helped shape the support I had for other individuals suffering from poor mental health.

I think the advice that I would give to anyone would be to set the right tone, keep things simple, to notice and really listen and to understand adjustments and to always follow up.”



Opening up about mental health

- ✓ Set the right tone
- ✓ Keep things simple
- ✓ Notice
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Understand workplace adjustments
- ✓ Always follow up

Module four: Having conversations about mental health



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Module aims	Discussing mental health challenges	1	2	3	4
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How do you set the right tone?

“Words really matter when you’re talking about poor mental health and also to create an environment where people don’t feel like they’re being judged, that they’re being respected, and it’s also very important to challenge others that use inappropriate language. For example, “Oh he’s playing the stress card,” or “He’s bipolar, a little bit OCD,” and worse is “He’s mental”.

This is not about political correctness, it’s about caring for people. As a manager I want to create an environment that nurtures and supports people. So I’d rather find out about the difficulties earlier rather than later so that people don’t go off sick. And it’s really important to maintain a supportive culture so that people can come forward and talk.”

How do you set the right tone?

- ✓ Words really matter
- ✓ Create an environment where people don’t feel judged
- ✓ Make them feel respected
- ✓ Challenge inappropriate language
- ✓ Create an environment that nurtures and supports
- ✓ Maintain a supportive culture

How do you keep it simple?

“To keep things simple it’s best not to see yourself as a therapist, because I’m not a therapist. But I see my role as someone who is there to support and guide any individuals who might be struggling and to let them know about the support services available to them which of course are completely confidential, and to ask if they’ve seen a doctor.”

How do you keep it simple?

- ✓ Best not to see yourself as a therapist
- ✓ Be there to support and guide
- ✓ Let them know about support services
- ✓ Ask if they’ve seen a doctor

Module four: Having conversations about mental health



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What signs do you look for?

“Well the signs that I look for are normally a change in behaviour, something that’s out of character. For instance, someone who’s usually very punctual and smart, comes in late and very dishevelled, or someone who is very outgoing, suddenly becomes very withdrawn, or someone who’s very level-headed suddenly gets very irritable, or someone who’s just less productive. These are the signs that I look for to see if something’s wrong.

I find a quiet and confidential place in which we can talk in, and when I’m asking them questions I don’t assume I know how they’re feeling. So I ask them things like “Have you asked for support?”, “What support do you think you need?” and “What would you like to happen now?” So they feel the support is being led by them, not by me.”

What signs do you look out for?

- ✓ A change in behaviour
- ✓ Don’t assume to know how they are feeling
- ✓ Ask if they have requested any support
- ✓ Ask what support they need
- ✓ Ask what they would like to happen next
- ✓ Make them feel the support is being led by them

What are the workplace adjustments?

“Workplace adjustments are practical solutions to support the individual. For instance, changing their working pattern, perhaps they could come into work later or finding them a quiet place to work in, or even providing them with a mentor. These are practical solutions, tailor-made to the individual.”

What are the workplace adjustments?

- ✓ Practical solutions to support the individual
- ✓ Tailor-made to the individual

Further guidance on how to implement:

- ✓ [NHS health at work](#)
- ✓ [Acas’s guide](#)
- ✓ [Mind’s reasonable adjustments](#)

Module four: Having conversations about mental health



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Why is review of these important?

“Follow-up is vital. It’s important to make clear to the individual what the next steps are, who is doing what and when we’re next going to catch up. So, my advice to anyone would be, view mental health in the same way that they view physical health, and not to feel uncomfortable to approach anyone who’s struggling, and ask them how they’re feeling.”

Why is follow up important?

- ✓ To make clear to the individual what the next steps are
- ✓ Who is doing what
- ✓ When the next catch up will be
- ✓ View mental health in the same way as physical health

How do you feel now?

Now you’ve had an opportunity to look at some suggestions for embedding a wellbeing culture, hear some conversations and explored how to help people open up, how confident would you be discussing your own or another’s mental health?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being uncomfortable and 10 being comfortable), choose your level of confidence below and note the number down, as we will look at this again once you have completed the course.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Feedback

Everybody is different and each conversation you have about mental and emotional health will vary. This course has given you the opportunity to see what others do first hand, learn what language and techniques to use and to explore and reflect on your own approach. The key thing is that you feel confident to start the conversation and feel comfortable offering support to them. Remember, these conversations can make a real difference to help us all open up, get the support we need and get well.

Now you’ve completed the various modules, you can now have a chance to reflect at all the ways you can put your learnings from them into practice.

Finally, at the end you can access the finding support section where you can find further advice and more information surrounding mental health conditions.



Evaluating management skills

Now it's time to reflect on your own management skills. Use the questions below to review how open and wellbeing-focused the culture within your team is and what barriers there may be stopping them speaking up about issues, especially when working flexibly. Read each of the areas below and rate yourself out of 10 (10 being very good). Text boxes are provided if you'd like to add any notes.

1. Ensure your team has the basics

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Do your team know where to get help with their devices or equipment? Do they have the right tools and software? Is their workspace set up appropriately? Are they able to avoid distractions? What small adjustments could they make to support productivity?

2. Establish ways of workings

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Do you bring your team together, either face-to-face or virtually? Have you agreed consistent ways of working as a team? Have you planned ways of working that suit team members and their work?

Evaluating management skills



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3. Set up structured check ins

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Have you established a 121 schedule with each team member? Do these create a consistent, predictable experience for your team? Are the schedules appropriate to your teams' needs and work? Have you considered buddying-up team members to support each other?

4. Choose the most appropriate forms of communication

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Are you over-reliant on one format? Do you make the most of virtual meeting formats when you are unable to catch up in person? Do your team know the most appropriate format to use, depending on the type of communication? Is this applied consistently across the team?



5. Making meetings work

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How would you rate your team meetings? Do you have a structured agenda? Do you build in time for small talk? Do you allow time for Q&A? Is everyone actively engaged in the meeting? How do you draw in quieter team members without making them feel exposed? How do you ensure one voice doesn't dominate?

6. Encouraging social interaction

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Do you provide opportunities for social interaction? How do you help your team get to know each other? What social activities do you build into team meetings? How much do you know about your team outside of work? How much do they know about each other?



7. Manage concerns and build trust

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How often do you check-in with each of your team to see whether they have any concerns? How do you ensure that no one feels 'out of the loop'? Are you accessible to all of your team members? Do they know how and when is best to get hold of you? Does everyone feel seen and heard?

8. Be flexible

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Which of your team need extra flexibility? Who has carer responsibilities for children or loved ones? Do your team's work patterns provide the balance they need between work and life? Does their work pattern support them to be productive? Does each team member respect the needs of others?



9. Celebrate success

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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How often do you provide encouragement? How do you recognise achievements and success? What personal recognition do you give? Do you tailor your recognition for each individual? What do you do to motivate the team?

10. Lead by example

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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If your team look to you for clues about appropriate behaviour, what would they see? How do you show empathy? Are you sensitive to individual's concerns? How would a team member describe your outlook? Does the team know when you're having a bad day? How do you protect your team in times of challenge?

By reflecting on these questions you'll be able identify some helpful adjustments to enable your team to feel even more supported. You may want to use this template to ask you team for their ideas on how to work more productively, especially with during flexible working patterns. Encourage innovation and you'll discover unexpected strengths in both yourself and your team.



Support and resources

Please be aware of accessing information from the internet or non-expert sources. Treatment advice should only ever be given by a qualified health care professional. These are our recommended additional support services:

- [Time to Change](#): aims to change the way people think and act about mental health problems. Produces a range of resources and research documents for use in schools
- [Mind](#): provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Mind also campaigns to help improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding
- [Rethink Mental Illness](#): a charity that improves the lives of people severely affected by mental illness through local groups and services, expert information and training and successful campaigning
- [Mental Health Foundation](#): provides information, guidance and resources on all aspects of managing mental health at home, at school and in the workplace
- [Action for Happiness](#): focuses particularly on wellbeing and how to lead a happier life. Its Ten Keys to Happier Living is also available as an app
- [Learning and Work Institute](#): offers various mental health resources including for in the workplace
- [Mental Health in Further Education](#): provides a network for those interested in adult education and mental health
- [Samaritans](#): If you're going through a tough time, you can talk to Samaritans free – day or night, 365 days a year

The links below provide additional information about mental health conditions and their related treatments, as well as some of their causes:

Conditions

- [Bereavement](#)
- [Obsessive compulsive disorder](#)
- [Anxiety](#)
- [Self harm](#)
- [Eating disorders](#)

Causes

- [Alcohol misuse](#)
- [Abuse](#)
- [Trauma](#)
- [Suicidal thoughts](#)
- [Domestic violence](#)