

Starting the Conversation

Encouraging people to talk about mental health

Starting a conversation can be a powerful way to challenge mental health stigma and get people to think about their perceptions. For all of us, our mental health is just as important as our physical health. Talking helps us all recognise this and can dispel misconceptions about mental health problems and the people who experience them.

How can I start a conversation about mental health?

- Talk about Time to Change and why you're supporting our work.
- Ask someone how they are doing, and take time to listen and engage with their response.
- If you have your own personal experience of mental health problems, and if it feels right for you, and you know how much of your story you want to share, you can talk about this personal experience with your colleagues or team.
- Talk about what helps you maintain wellbeing, relax or de-stress. Ask your colleagues what helps them. Check out our '[Coping with stress at work](#)' page.
- Use news stories related to mental health to start a discussion. Keep track of our Employee Champions LinkedIn group for article postings.
- You could start with a fact such as one of those in the box below:

- 1 in 6 UK workers experience depression, stress or anxiety.
- Mental ill health is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK.
- 1 in 10 people have resigned a job due to stress, 1 in 4 have thought about it.
- 19% of staff feel they can't speak to managers about stress at work.

See our [real life employment stories](#) for what people who have been in the same position have to say about how they dealt with mental health in the workplace.

The main messages to get across are...

We're all human. We all have mental health. Talking about it makes a big difference.

There are also other Key messages that you may want to build conversations around:

- Mental health is just as important as physical health
- Mental health problems are common and can be treated

let's end mental health discrimination

- Small things make a big difference when it comes to mental health
- It helps to talk about mental health, but it can take courage. Just asking 'how are you?' - and taking time to listen properly to the response - can make an enormous difference
- We all need support sometimes
- Look out for signs of unmanageable stress in you and a colleagues
- Find and implement ways to take care of yourself.
- The effects of dealing with stressful situations every day can build up over time
- Through their role individuals can be constantly exposed to stress, either in person or through their support of stressed colleagues.

Finding the words: sensitivities around language

Finding the 'right' language to describe experiences of mental health problems will always be difficult.

There is no one term or set of terms that everyone will agree on. The term 'mental health problem', as well as some of the specific diagnostic names (for example depression, bipolar disorder, etc) are widely used and understood by people outside of 'the mental health world', which is why we use them. We respect that some people reject any form of label, and some don't see their experiences as an illness or a problem at all. Conversely, we also respect that some people find their experience best understood in terms of illness, and find a medical diagnosis a useful way of talking about, and getting support for what they are going through. Within Time to Change, there are many people with personal experience of mental health problems who have diverse points of view. We don't see our role, or yours as an Employee Champion, as being to decide which of these points of view is 'right', or to tell anyone what language they should use to talk about their own experiences. It is up to you to choose language that you feel comfortable with and feel is appropriate. What we do ask is that you are mindful of the language you use and think about how those around you may feel about it.

Video: Workplace workshops on Starting the conversation

Starting a conversation about mental health can seem daunting, but it doesn't need to be. Our video workshop gives an overview of the prevalence of mental illness and mental health problems, and why it should matter to your line manager or co-workers.

The Video workshop last for approximately 40 minutes and should provide some useful input on how to start the conversation in your workplace.

You will first need to register by clicking [here](#) then selecting 'Starting the Conversation'.

