



Tips for talking to your employees about performance and mental health

As a manager, you play a key role in creating a mentally healthy and safe workplace culture. A healthy culture can help employees feel more comfortable coming forward with mental health concerns. It can also encourage a stay-at-work approach and successful return to work.

Talking to an employee about mental health is still a delicate task. **Discussions should focus on their work performance.** This is to make sure you aren't infringing on their human rights.

Here are some tips for meeting with an employee:

Before the meeting	During	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared. Know what you can offer in advance. • Document observed behaviour. • Stick to what you can measure objectively. Use phrases like 'I have noticed' 'Help me understand', 'Is there anything I'm missing?'. • Keep information confidential at all times. Assure the employee that meetings are confidential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach your concern as a workplace performance issue. • Raise the option of providing accommodation. • Use open-ended questions. Avoid assumptions. • Be ready to refer the employee to EAP or other relevant resources. • Fully document the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a time to meet again to review performance. • Seek help from HR or other resources if the employee shares that they have a mental health concern.

As a manager, you can ASK

- About the type of absence (illness, personal emergency)
- About the duration and expected return to work date
- If there are barriers to a return to work
- If accommodations would help to promote a prompt and safe return to work
- If the employee is aware of the resources they can access

You CAN

- Refer the employee to HR
- Decide – together with the employee – on the communication method to use during the absence
- Make sure the employee is aware of the supports available
- Practice the conversation with an EFAP resource or fellow manager/director

Points of caution

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't ask the medical reason for the absence• Don't ask if the employee is taking medication• Don't ask if the employee is seeing a psychologist, counsellor or specialist• Don't give advice based on personal experience with family or friends | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't express doubts about the reason for the absence• Don't pressure the employee to return to work• Don't suggest the absence is creating extra work for the team. |
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