

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

- 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
- 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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