

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

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