

My Whole Self: Talking tips



My Whole Self



Starting a conversation about mental health doesn't have to be difficult. Talking about mental health can help you, and those around you, be happier and healthier.

Mental Health First Aid England® has put together some tips to get you and your colleagues talking. Let's help everyone feel empowered to bring their whole self to work.

29%

of employees never discuss mental health in meetings with their line manager*

Getting started

We shouldn't have to hide parts of our identity at work - be that our cultural or ethnic background, gender identity, caring responsibilities, sexuality, disability, or health.

Employers should create inclusive workplaces where people feel valued and safe. Bringing our whole self to work means being able to talk about our mental health.

If you've made an effort to get to know the whole person, it's easier to approach a conversation about mental health. You'll know more about them and their life - and should be in a better position to spot if they might be struggling.

*My Whole Self survey, March 2021

Choose a setting

- It can be easier to **talk face-to-face**, but you can also speak online or over the phone
- Make sure you can both talk freely. **Reduce distractions**, turn off notifications and put your phone on silent
- **Meeting outside the workplace** might help you both feel at ease. You could go to a café, for a walk, or plan an online coffee catch-up
- Give yourself plenty of **time** so you're not rushed

Talking tips

- If you're meeting online, **encourage the person to have their camera on** if they are comfortable. Seeing each others' body language will help you connect
- Keep your **body language** open and non-confrontational
- Be **empathetic** and take them seriously
- **Don't offer throwaway advice** such as "pull yourself together" or "cheer up"

My Whole Self MOT

- If you don't know where to start, our **My Whole Self MOT** will help guide your conversation
- You can share the MOT with the person in advance, or talk through it when you meet

Listening tips

- Give the person your full focus and **listen without interrupting**
- **Pay attention** to their words, tone of voice, and body language. These will all give clues as to how they're feeling
- **Listen non-judgementally** and don't criticise. Place yourself in their shoes. Respect their experiences and values, even if they differ from yours
- Use phrases such as, "**I understand how difficult this must be**" and "**I am so glad that you are telling me about this**"

What's next?

- **Share sources of support.** Find out what's available through HR. For example, an employee assistance programme, occupational health, or on-site counselling
- If your organisation has limited support services and you're worried about someone's mental health, **encourage them to speak to their GP** or call 111
- **Discuss self-care too.** What small things can they do to boost their wellbeing?
- Suggest that they create a **Your Mind Plan with Every Mind Matters**



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Find out about the My Whole Self campaign for workplace culture change, and download more free resources, at mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self.

To learn more about how you can support the mental wellbeing of your staff, visit mhfaengland.org.



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