

# TALKING ABOUT STRESS

A Guide for Managers & Employees



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Navigating a conversation about stress at work can be challenging for both employees and managers. Each of them not wanting to immediately say what they really mean.

For an employee, there may be concerns about truly opening up about their stress in case it negatively impacts their reputation or career. Meanwhile, managers may find it difficult to spot signs of stress in the first place, never mind determining the best way to approach the subject.

Having a conversation about stress can feel daunting for everyone involved, but often a conversation and willingness to listen can make an enormous difference.

The checklists below can be helpful to guide the conversation and avoid common pitfalls, helping both managers and staff feel more comfortable talking about stress.



# GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

## 01. CHOOSE THE RIGHT SETTING

Find a private and comfortable space for the conversation so you can chat in confidence and any interruptions or distractions are avoided.

## 02. EXPRESS GENUINE CONCERN

Begin by expressing genuine care for your employee's well-being. Show empathy and create an open, non-judgemental atmosphere.

## 03. USE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Encourage your employee to share how they're feeling by asking open-ended questions. This allows them to express themselves freely and provides deeper insights.

## 04. ACTIVE LISTENING

Pay close attention to what your employee is saying. Avoid interrupting, and use verbal and non-verbal cues to show that you are fully engaged in the conversation.

## 05. VALIDATE FEELINGS

Acknowledge the employee's feelings and emotions. Validating their experiences helps build trust and encourages further openness.





# GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

## 06. BE MINDFUL OF TONE AND BODY LANGUAGE

Try to maintain a calm and supportive tone. Pay attention to your body language to convey empathy and understanding.

## 07. AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

Try to avoid jumping to conclusions about the causes of stress. Let your employee share their perspective and experiences without judgement.

## 08. EXPLORE SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

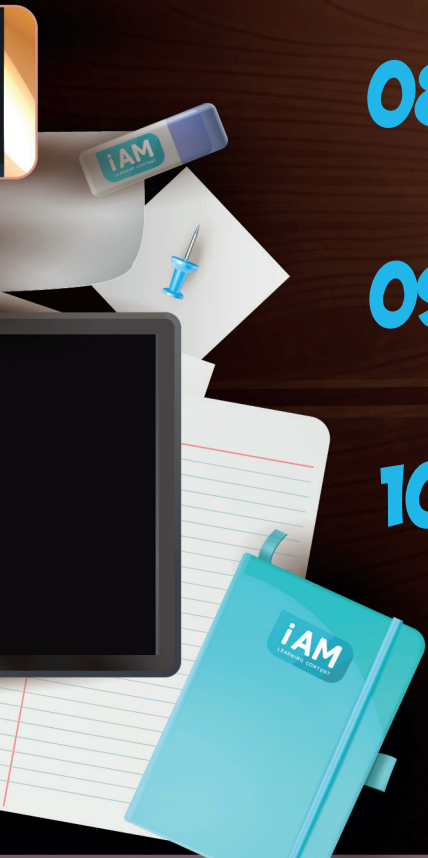
Collaboratively discuss potential solutions or accommodations. This involvement empowers the employee and reinforces a supportive environment.

## 09. MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW UP

Schedule follow-up meetings to check in on the employee's well-being and the effectiveness of any implemented solutions. Consistent support is crucial.

## 10. SIGNPOST TO RESOURCES

Offer information on available resources within the organisation, such as employee assistance programmes or wellness initiatives.



# QUESTIONS TO ASK...



How are you doing at the moment?



I've noticed that you missed a deadline, which is unusual. Is everything ok?



I noticed you've been arriving late recently, which isn't like you. I wondered if you're ok?



You seem a bit down/upset/frustrated/under pressure. Is everything ok?



Is there anything I can do to help?



What support do you think might be helpful right now?



Are there particular tasks or responsibilities that you find especially challenging or overwhelming? Is that something I can help with?



# QUESTIONS TO AVOID...



Your performance hasn't been acceptable lately. What's the problem?



You're clearly struggling. What's up?



What do you want me to do about it?



Your recent lateness is really unacceptable. What's going on?



Are you sure it's not just a time management issue?



Can't you just power through for now?



We're all in the same boat. Can't you just get on with it?



# GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

## Starting the conversation...

### Express your desire for open communication

Begin the conversation by expressing your intention to have an open and honest discussion about your well-being.

### Be clear and specific

Clearly articulate the specific aspects of work that are causing you some stress. Use concrete examples to help your manager understand your perspective.

### Use 'I' statements

Frame your concerns using 'I' statements to convey your feelings and experiences without sounding accusatory. For example, "I have been feeling overwhelmed because..."

### Highlight the impact

Share how stress is impacting your work performance, well-being, and overall job satisfaction.

### Proactively suggest solutions

Come to the conversation with some potential solutions or suggestions for improvement. This shows proactive thinking and a commitment to finding a resolution.

### Request any support that you need

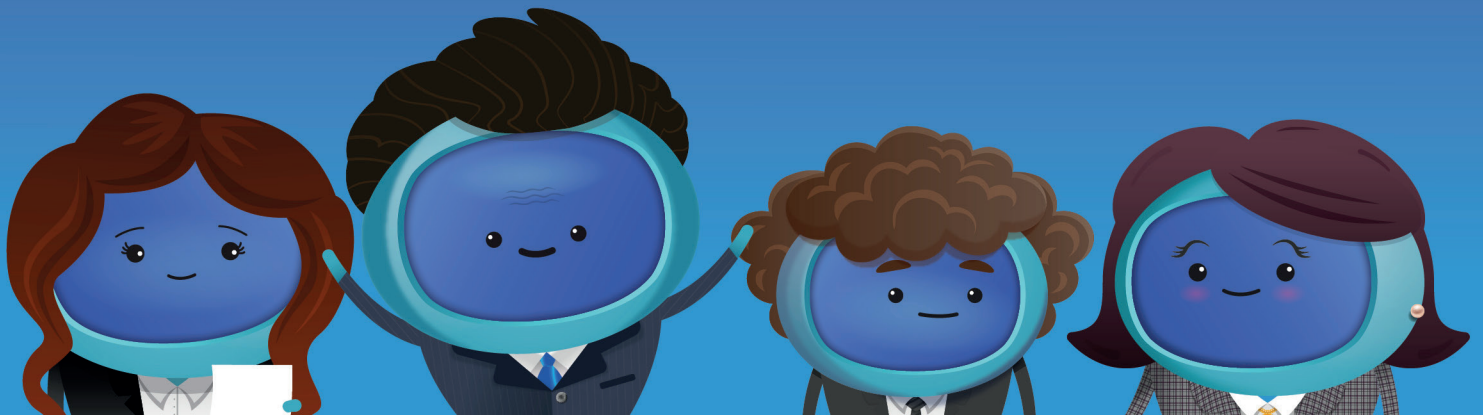
Clearly communicate the type of support you need from your manager, whether it's additional resources, training, or adjustments to your workload.

### Be honest about limitations

If there are personal factors contributing to your stress, acknowledge them without going into unnecessary detail.

### Ask for feedback

Encourage your manager to share their perspective and any insights they may have. This promotes a collaborative approach to problem-solving.



# WANT TO LEARN MORE?

For additional resources and support in managing workplace stress, explore the iAM Learning website for valuable eLearning content. Discover a wealth of tools to enhance well-being and create a healthier work environment. Your journey to a stress-free workplace starts here!

Simply **sign up to a FREE 7-day trial** and let the learning fun begin!



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