

TEN TIPS ON... **STARTING A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMPLOYEE ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH**

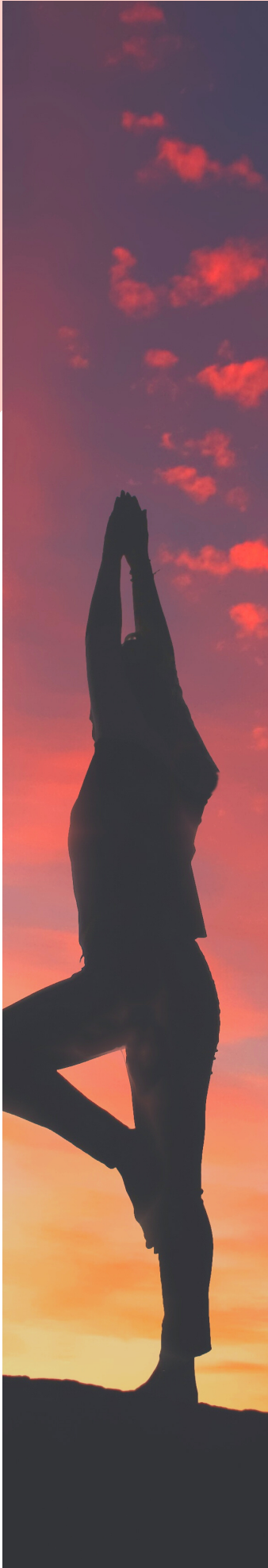
1. Choose an appropriate place Somewhere private and quiet where the person feels comfortable and equal. Possibly a neutral space outside of the workplace. If they are a remote worker, consider whether going to where they are may help.

2. Encourage people to talk

People can find it difficult to talk about their mental health but it helps to have an open culture where conversations about mental health are routine and normalised. Ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions and let people explain in their own words how their mental health problem manifests, the triggers, how it impacts on their work and what support they need.

3. Don't make assumptions

If you are educating yourself about an employee's mental health condition that is fantastic, but it's also important to remember not to try to guess what symptoms an employee might have and how these might affect their ability to do their job – many people are able to manage their mental health and perform their role to a high standard but may require support measures when experiencing a difficult period.



4. Listen to peoples' needs and respond flexibly

Everyone's experience of a mental health problem is different so treat people as individuals and focus on the person, not the problem. Adapt your support to suit the individual in finding solutions to any work related difficulties they're experiencing. Remember effective workplace adjustments are often quite individual but needn't be costly or require huge changes.

5. Be honest and clear

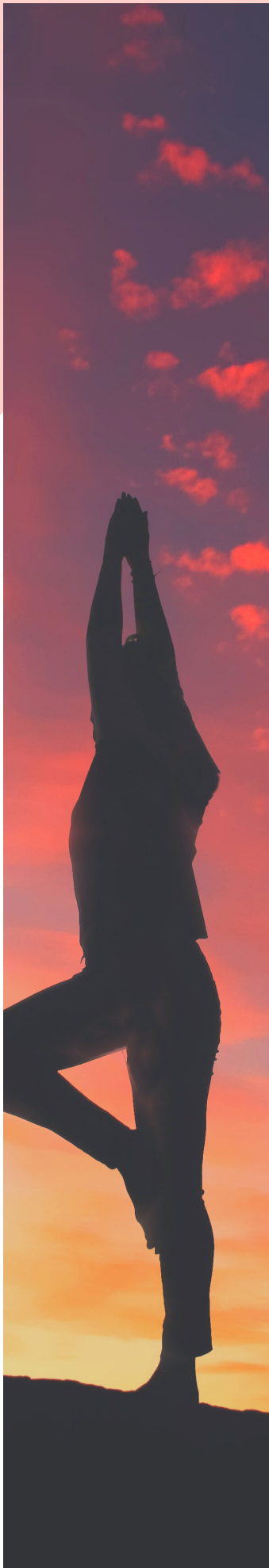
If there are specific grounds for concern, like high absence levels or impaired performance, it's important to address these at an early stage.

6. Ensure confidentiality

People need to be reassured of confidentiality. It's sensitive information and should be shared with as few people as possible.

7. Develop an action plan

Work together to develop an individual action plan which identifies the signs of their mental health problem, triggers for stress, the possible impact on their work, who to contact in a crisis, and what support people need. The plan should include an agreed time to review the support measures to see if they're working.



8. Encourage people to seek advice and support

People should speak to their GP about available support from the NHS such as talking therapy. We offer CBT therapy for people aged between 11-25 and so if your employees fall under our age range and you want to know more about our counselling and support we can offer then please get in contact with us.

Alternatively, if your organisation has an Employee Assistance Programme it may be able to arrange counselling. You could also encourage your employee to contact Access to Work or Remploy.

9. Seek advice and support yourself

Occupational Health can provide tailored advice to support both employers and employees, as do ACAS. Small businesses can also access the free Health for Work Adviceline service provided by NHS occupational health services.

10. Reassure people

People may not always be ready to talk straight away so it's important you outline what support is available, tell them your door is always open and let them know you'll make sure they get the support they need.

If you would like to contact us about anything mentioned in this article, please email us at info@thelowdown.info and we will be happy to help.