



International
Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing



Mental Health Champions Handbook

Equip your people.
Empower your culture.
Lead with care.



MARS

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WELCOME FUTURE

MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS

In today's rapidly changing world of work, **mental health is no longer a side conversation**, it's at the heart of how we lead, live, and look after one another.

You've joined this programme because you care, about people, about culture, and about making a meaningful difference in the workplace. Whether you're here to support your team, your peers, or your own growth, becoming a Mental Health Champion is a powerful commitment. It's a role rooted in empathy, awareness, and courageous action.

Mental Health Champions are not therapists or counsellors, they are compassionate, trusted colleagues who are equipped to:

- **Safeguard** their peers by recognising early signs of distress
- **Signpost** to appropriate resources and support
- **Support** others through active listening and psychological safety

You don't need all the answers, but you do need to be present, prepared, and willing to act when someone needs support.

This handbook is your guide. Inside, you'll find practical tools, frameworks, and conversation techniques to help you:

- **Spot early warning signs** of poor mental health
- **Hold safe, compassionate, and non-judgemental** conversations
- **Know when and how to escalate** or refer concerns appropriately
- **Protect your own wellbeing** and set healthy boundaries
- Promote a culture where **it's okay not to be okay**

Thank you for showing up with care, courage, and humanity. You are now part of a growing global movement to champion mental health in the workplace, one conversation, one colleague, one step at a time.

Let's begin.



GROUND RULES

We introduce ground rules at the start to create a safe, respectful, and focused learning environment, one where everyone feels comfortable to contribute and reflect. These rules set the tone for how we'll engage with each other, helping to build trust and psychological safety from the beginning.

But more importantly, this isn't just about this session. As future Mental Health Champions, participants will often be in situations where establishing clear boundaries and expectations is essential, whether they're facilitating conversations, leading sessions, or supporting colleagues. This moment is also about modelling what it looks like to set ground rules confidently and intentionally, so they can apply the same principles in their own contexts.



- **Be Here Now:** Mobile phones should be **off or on silent**.
- **One Voice at a Time:** You can't listen if you are talking over someone.
- **Participation:** Take responsibility for your own learning. What you put in is what you will get out.



- **Honesty**
- **Respect:** Keep an open mind.
- **No Judgement**
- **Confidentiality:** What is discussed in the room stays in the room.



- **Safeguarding:** There is a caveat to confidentiality. If anyone reveals anything that could be a risk of harm to themselves or others, SMS is obliged to alert the authorities.

WELLBEING GPS

In order for a GPS to plot the best route to your destination it needs two pieces of information:

- **Starting Point: where you are now**
- **Destination: where you want to go**

Satnav can only work if it knows exactly where you are and a clear destination has been established in order to plot the optimal route to get there. A good satnav will also alter the route for any unexpected roadblocks, delays or traffic. Without both current position and intended destination, the satnav cannot guide you – the same applies to a wellbeing journey.

This is also a Framework for Navigating Conversations as a Mental Health Champion. You may be approached by people who are struggling, or you might notice signs that someone isn't themselves. In these moments, it's not always easy to know what to say, how to help, or where to begin.

The Wellbeing GPS is a simple tool to help you navigate these encounters with clarity, care, and confidence. Just like a GPS, it helps you:

- Understand where someone is right now (their starting point)
- Help them clarify what support they might need (the destination)
- Consider the best next steps (the route map)
- And stay aligned with your purpose as a Champion (your why)



WELLBEING GPS

**ESTABLISH A CLEAR
STARTING POSITION**
(Where you are NOW)



STARTING POSITION – Where are they now?

Start by listening. What's going on for this person right now, emotionally, mentally, or situationally? Use active listening and open questions to gently explore their current state. You're not diagnosing, you're helping them feel heard and seen.

"It sounds like things have been really overwhelming lately... Would you like to talk about it?"

Your role: **Understand. Empathise. Hold space.**

DESTINATION
(Where you WANT to be)



DESTINATION – Where do they want to be?

What would a better state look like for them? It might be feeling less anxious, accessing support, or just making it through a tough week.

Help them clarify this, even if it's just one small step forward.

"What would help you feel even a little bit better right now?"

Your role: **Explore needs. Encourage self-awareness. Empower.**

WELLBEING GPS

ROUTE MAP

(HOW you get there)

ROUTE MAP – What's the best next step?

Once you've helped them identify where they are and where they'd like to be, you can explore options. This might include:

- Signposting to EAP or HR
- Encouraging a GP appointment
- Sharing internal wellbeing resources
- Checking in again at a later date

"Would it be okay if I shared a few options with you that might help?"

Your role: **Signpost. Support decision-making. Know your boundaries.**

WHY – Why does this matter?

Always stay connected to your intention as a Champion: to create a workplace culture where it's okay not to be okay. You're not there to fix, you're there to walk alongside, to listen, and to guide.

"You're not alone. I may not have all the answers, but I'm here for you, and we'll find the next step together."

Your role: **Lead with compassion. Stay grounded in your purpose.**

In every encounter, the GPS gives you a mental map to follow, keeping you calm, clear, and connected to your role.

This isn't just a model. It's a mindset for how to show up, support effectively, and know when to step back.

WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION?

The Mental Health Champions (MHC) network offers a trained peer-to-peer connection and confidential support, through active and empathetic listening, while establishing a trusting relationship, creating a safe space to speak up and provide a listening ear.

Champions are empowered to provide additional guidance through directing employees to relevant support resources. You must be willing to engage people, as well as be a champion and ambassador for health and wellbeing in your everyday life.

This is a voluntary role.



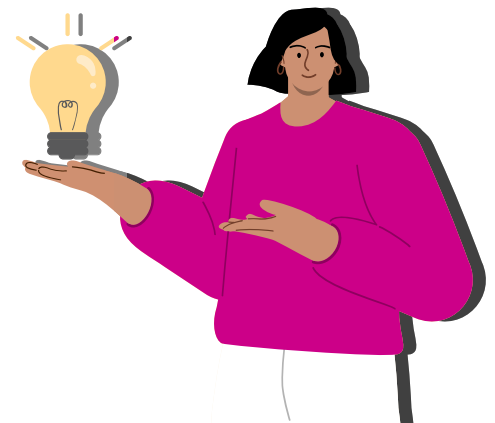
NOTE: This programme is NOT intended to provide professional mental health services, but rather establishes a trained and engaged support network

WHO DO THE CHAMPIONS SUPPORT

We support **anyone** who reaches out and may be experiencing mental health challenges or simply needs a “go to” person as a confidential sounding board.

WHAT TRAINING IS PROVIDED?

Champions participate in a virtual 10-hour training programme, with the option to join the community and receive regular skills update sessions and monthly check-in sessions and support meetings throughout the year.



COURSE STRUCTURE



THE 9.00AM EXERCISE

It is 9 am on a Monday morning, the phone is ringing and you happen to answer it. A colleague is calling to inform you that they are “Fine but have a two-week medical exemption for stress.”

Usually, they are the ‘fun person’ in the workplace, but over the last three or four weeks they have been showing signs of distress. They have been coming to work late, their productivity has decreased, and their mood is low. They have been acting out of character, withdrawn, and unapproachable.

There have been rumours of ‘something going on’ in their private life, but nobody has wanted to ask because talking to this person isn’t as enjoyable as it normally is, and they don’t want to pry.

This morning, this colleague sounds a little ‘strange’, just enough for you to notice, but you’re not sure. How would you respond?

WHAT DO YOU DO?



MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION EXERCISE

Before we begin looking at mental health, it may be helpful for you to think about your own, how it affects your life and to share this with a partner.

1. WHAT DOES MENTAL HEALTH MEAN TO YOU?

.....

2. WHEN YOU HAVE POOR MENTAL HEALTH, WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

.....

3. HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU:

- A. Mentally? (How you think)
- B. Emotionally? (How you feel)
- C. Physically?

4. HOW OFTEN DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

.....

5. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN DEALING WITH IT UNTIL NOW?

.....

6. HOW COULD YOU DEAL WITH IT?

.....

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Why do people not seek help or ask for support when they are struggling with their Mental Health? What is your experience?

WHAT HAS STOPPED YOU FROM ASKING FOR ANY KIND OF HELP?

Large empty rounded rectangular box with a blue dotted border for reflection.

WHAT WERE THE BARRIERS?

Large empty rounded rectangular box with a purple dotted border for reflection.

THE COST OF MENTAL ILLNESS

727,000

PEOPLE DIE GLOBALLY BY SUICIDE EACH YEAR,
(WHO, 2024)

People with mental disorders experience

10-15 YEARS

shorter life expectancy on average

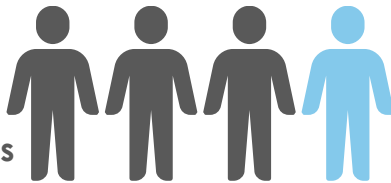
Nature Publishing Group, Nature Mental Health, 2024 systematic analysis

Suicide is among
the leading
causes of death
worldwide for
ages 15–29
(WHO 2024)

IN THE UK, SUICIDE
IS THE SINGLE
LEADING CAUSE OF
DEATH FOR MEN

UNDER 50

With
Three in four suicides
are among men



London Assembly report 2025

OVER 1 BILLION

worldwide are
living with a mental
disorder

(WHO 2024)

82%

OF EMPLOYEES ARE AT RISK OF BURNOUT

(Global Talent Trends, 2024)

All-cause mortality risk is
**2–3 TIMES
HIGHER**

for people with
mental disorders

The Lancet Psychiatry, 2023

THE FINANCIAL COST OF MENTAL ILLNESS

\$300 BILLION
PER YEAR

(AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY)

€600 BILLION
IN EUROPE: 4% GDP

(OECD)

£110 BILLION
ECONOMIC COSTS

E.G. SICKNESS, PRESENTEEISM
STAFF TURNOVER,
UNEMPLOYMENT)

(CENTRE FOR MENTAL HEALTH)



DEATHS FROM MH &
SUBSTANCE MISUSE

IN CHINA HAVE MORE THAN
DOUBLED IN 10 YEARS

\$1 TRILLION

GLOBAL COSTS

(WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION)

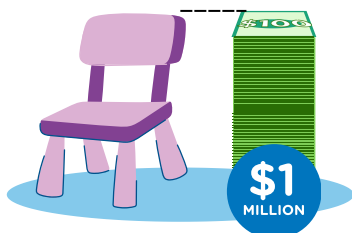


But how big is
1 Trillion?

A **Trillion** Dollars - how
\$100 bills would stack up

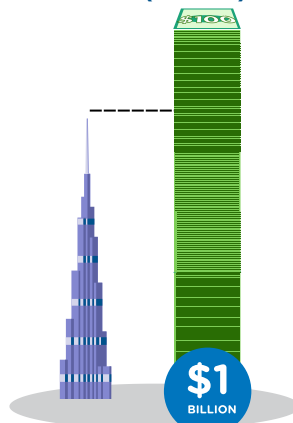
The height of a chair

3.3 feet (1m)



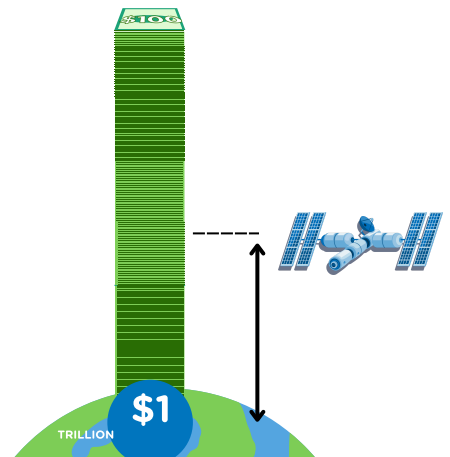
Higher than the
"Worlds tallest building"

0.63 miles (1.01km)



Two and a half times as high as the
International Space Station

631 miles (1015.4km)



UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is more important than ever and very much in the zeitgeist. Many of us feel under pressure to meet demands, perform life duties and maintain a certain lifestyle.

It is essential at both a personal and organisational level to promote and support wellbeing and mental wellness. Providing the right foundations for the Mental Health Champions will help create a more engaged, happy and high performing culture.

MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

- Mental health problems are a growing public health concern. The likelihood is that we all know someone who is affected by mental ill health – this could be a family member, friend or colleague
- Working conditions and working environment can have a huge impact on mental health and equally, someone's mental health can have a significant impact to perform well in their job
- Mental ill health in the workplace: 1 in 6 of us will experience depression, anxiety or problems relating to stress
- As part of an annual Gallup Poll the 2020 was officially the most stressful year in recent history, with a record-high 40% of adults worldwide saying they have experienced lots of stress
- In the US, almost half of adults will experience a mental illness during their lifetime – Source: MHFA
- Although work is good for mental health, a negative environment can lead to physical and mental health problems
- Prevalent not just in the US, but around the world
- According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), mental illness is the leading cause of disability in the United States. Moreover, untreated mental health conditions cost the economy \$200 billion every year.
- Mental ill-health naturally leads to absence, but Presenteeism (turning up to work whilst either physically or mentally unfit) accounts for double the losses of absences

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

Why it matters - and why your role matters.

Mental health is about how we think, feel, and behave, how we relate to others, make decisions, and cope with life's challenges. Just like physical health, our mental health exists on a spectrum and can change over time.

Poor mental health doesn't always mean mental illness, but if left unacknowledged or unsupported, it can develop into more serious conditions, and the impact can be profound.

As a Mental Health Champion, it's vital to understand the scale, impact, and urgency of the mental health challenge facing workplaces globally, and the opportunity we have to respond.

Global Impact of Poor Mental Health

- 1 in 8 people worldwide live with a diagnosed mental health condition each year (approx. 970 million people)¹
- Mental health conditions account for 5 of the top 10 causes of years lived with disability (YLDs) globally²
- Over 700,000 people die by suicide every year, that's one person every 40 seconds³
- The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a 25% increase in anxiety and depression worldwide⁴

Mental Health at Work

- 76% of workers say they've experienced at least one symptom of a mental health condition in the past year⁵
- 60% of workers report experiencing stress on a daily basis globally⁶
- Mental health-related productivity losses cost the global economy an estimated \$1 trillion USD per year⁷
- By 2030, this cost is projected to rise to \$6 trillion USD, unless urgent action is taken⁷
- Despite this, only 2% of global health budgets are allocated to mental health⁸

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

So what does this mean for you as a Mental Health Champion?

You're not expected to solve these statistics. But you can make a real difference one conversation at a time. Your role helps:

- Spot early warning signs in colleagues who may be struggling
- Hold safe and compassionate conversations without judgement
- Signpost to appropriate support, both internal and external
- Break the stigma that still surrounds mental health in many workplaces

By showing up with empathy, presence, and care, you become part of the cultural shift, making it safer for others to do the same. Mental health is everyone's business, but it's people like you who lead the way.

Key Takeaways for Champions

- Mental health is a global concern, with widespread personal and economic impact
- Most people will experience mental health challenges at some point in their lives
- Your role is to notice, support, and signpost, not diagnose or treat
- Champions like you are at the front-line of early intervention, connection, and culture change
- Small actions, a check-in, a listening ear, a kind word, make a big difference

1. World Health Organization (2022). World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All
2. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2023). Global Burden of Disease Study
3. WHO (2023). Suicide Worldwide Data
4. WHO (2022). COVID-19 and Mental Health: Scientific Brief
5. Mind Share Partners (2021). Global Mental Health at Work Report
6. Gallup (2023). State of the Global Workplace Report
7. World Economic Forum (2020). The Global Economic Burden of Mental Health Problems
8. WHO (2021). Mental Health Financing: Investment Case Summary

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

WHO HAS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is just like physical health. We **all** have it, and we all need to take care of it. Some days we feel great, other days we might struggle. We can move between thriving, coping, feeling unwell, or even needing time off work.

It's interesting, isn't it? Physical health is often associated with positive, aspirational terms, while mental health tends to bring up challenges and struggles. But the truth is, mental health includes thriving, resilience, clarity, and wellbeing, not just illness.

In today's world, mental health is more important than ever. Many of us feel constant pressure to meet demands, balance life responsibilities, and keep up with societal expectations.

That's why it's essential, both personally and organisationally, to actively promote mental wellness. When we lay the right foundations, we create more engaged, happier, and higher-performing environments, for ourselves, our teams, and our communities.



GUILT VS SHAME

Can you think of a time when you felt guilt? And a time when you felt shame? They may feel similar, but they are different emotions.

Guilt

Guilt is the emotional response that arises when we believe we have done something wrong, failed to act, or fallen short of our own or others' expectations. Unlike shame, which targets the whole self ("I am bad"), guilt focuses on behaviour ("I did something bad"). Guilt can be constructive when it prompts us to take responsibility, repair harm, or make better choices in the future. But when it becomes excessive or misplaced, it can weigh us down with self-criticism and prevent us from moving forward.



Shame

Shame is the painful emotion that arises when we feel fundamentally flawed, unworthy, or "not enough." Unlike guilt, which relates to a specific action ("I did something bad"), shame attaches to the self ("I am bad"). It often drives secrecy, silence, and disconnection, making it harder to seek support. Left unacknowledged, shame can fuel burnout, perfectionism, and isolation. When met with compassion, from ourselves and others, shame loses its power, and healing becomes possible.

- **Guilt** = about what we did or didn't do.
- **Shame** = about who we think we are.

Guilt usually comes from something you did or think you did wrong, it's tied to a specific action or behaviour. You might describe it as "I did something wrong." Shame, on the other hand, goes deeper. It's the belief that you are wrong at your core, not just that you made a mistake. It isn't always linked to a particular event or behaviour, but rather to a painful sense of personal inadequacy: "I am wrong."

The important difference is that guilt can often be resolved, you can take action to make amends, learn from the situation, and move forward. Shame, however, doesn't offer such a clear way back. It can leave people feeling stuck, overwhelmed, and defined by negative self-beliefs. While both emotions feel heavy and can be barriers to good mental health, shame carries an especially strong stigma and is harder to shift. Many people experiencing mental health challenges struggle with shame, which can make recovery more difficult.

DE-STIGMATISATION

A simple and widely used definition of stigma is: **A mark of disgrace or disapproval associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person.** In the context of mental health, stigma involves holding negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes toward individuals who experience mental health conditions. There is still often a stigma attached to mental illness, often resulting from the stereotypes and prejudice that result from misconceptions about mental illness. Stigma is two-fold:

PUBLIC STIGMA

The reaction that the general population has people with mental ill-health

SELF-STIGMA

The prejudice which people with mental ill-health turn against themselves

	PUBLIC STIGMA	SELF STIGMA
STEREOTYPE	Negative belief about a group. i.e. incompetence	Negative belief about self. i.e. incompetence
PREJUDICE	Agreement with belief and/or negative emotional reaction. i.e. anger, fear	Agreement with belief and/or negative emotional reaction. i.e. low self-esteem
DISCRIMINATION	Behaviour response to prejudice. i.e. avoidance, withholding employment/housing opportunities or generally just withholding help	Behaviour response to prejudice (fails to pursue work/housing opportunities)

It may be helpful for you to think and reflect on your own experience of self and public-stigma.

It's about breaking the silence. Challenge the assumptions and the cultural norms, listen with compassion. Remember: every conversation is an opportunity to make a difference

PUBLIC-STIGMA:

For example: men are often more likely not to reach out for help with their mental health. Why do you think this is?

What ideas can you think of to help drive people to start reaching out for help?

SELF-STIGMA:

What has stopped you from asking for help?

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health can be defined: *“as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”*

That's a bit wordy though, isn't it? Our approach is a little simpler:

“How we **THINK**, **FEEL** and **BEHAVE**”.

- **Think** – thoughts about ourselves, others and the world
- **Feel** – emotional state, ability to process emotions
- **Behave** – how we act and respond to situations

So as we mentioned earlier, everyone has mental health, but what do we mean by mental ill health? According to WHO, a mental disorder = *“compromise a broad range of problems, with different symptoms. ... generally characterised by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.*

While we can't always control our mental health, we can learn to navigate it with the right tools, support and environment.



THINK

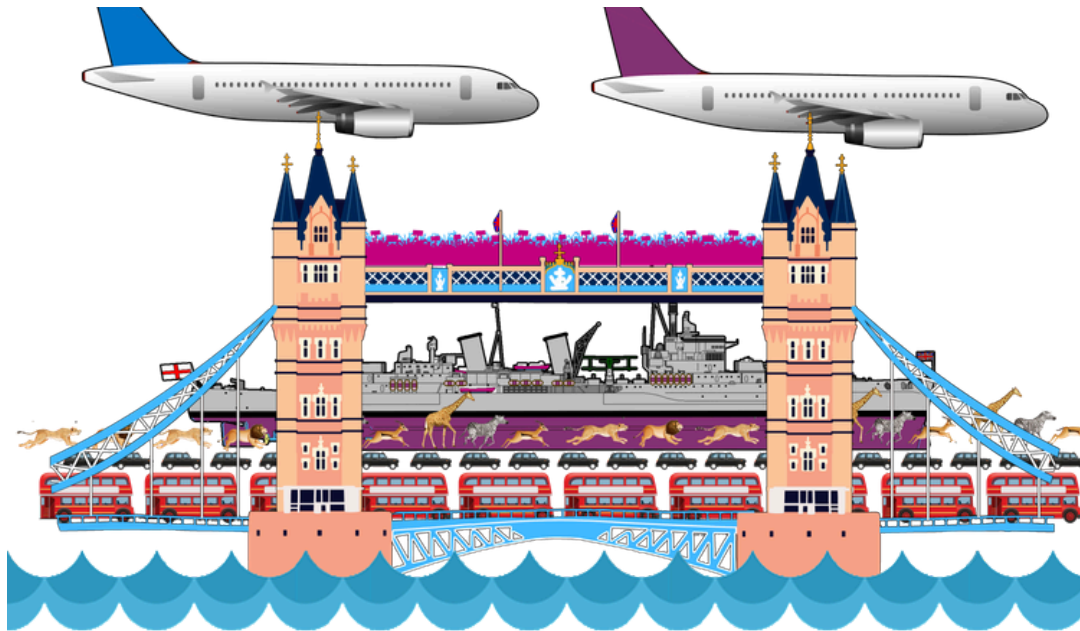


FEEL



BEHAVE

THE BRIDGE ANALOGY



The Health & Safety Executive defines stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them’. This links very closely to one of our definitions of stress and poor wellbeing; a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that:

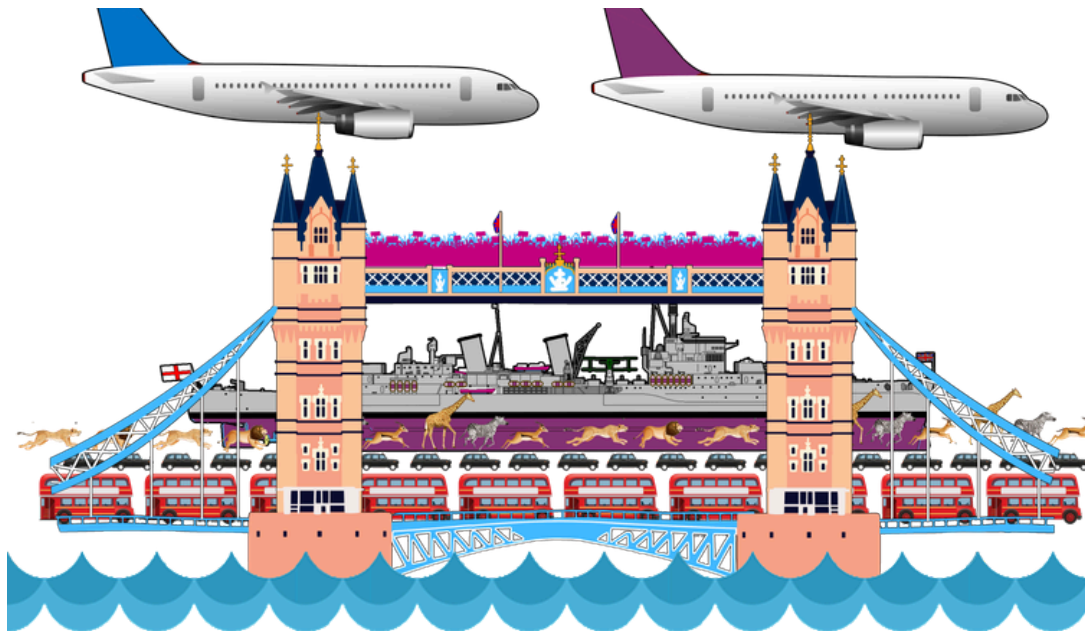
“DEMANDS EXCEED THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES THE INDIVIDUAL IS ABLE TO MOBILISE.”

International Wellbeing Insights uses ‘The Bridge’ analogy to approach the topic of mental health, wellbeing and stress. When a Bridge is carrying too much weight, it will eventually collapse. It is possible to see the warning signs before this happens, ‘The Bridge’ would bow, buckle and creak.

The same principle can be applied to human beings, with excessive demands and challenges placed on our bridges. There may be early warning signs. However stress can creep up on some of us, resulting in an unexpected breakdown.

‘The Bridge’ analogy can also be applied to a team or organisation as a whole by looking for more general signs such as team deadlines not being met or a decrease in team morale.

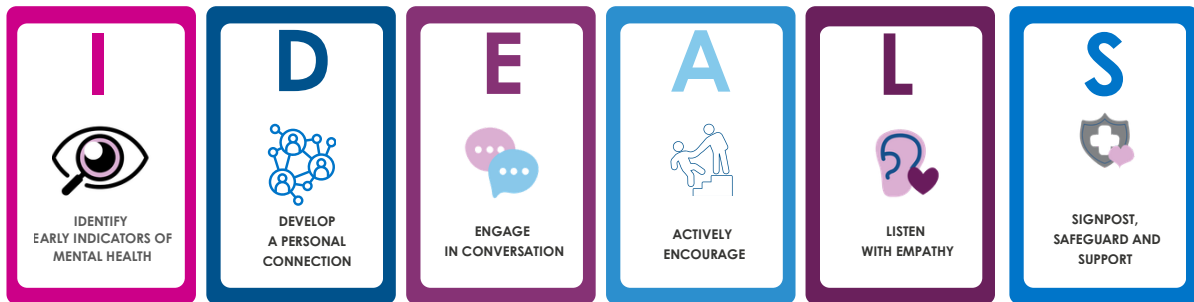
WHAT'S ON YOUR BRIDGE?



1. We don't have a work bridge and personal bridge, it all goes to the same place and we tend to carry it around with us. Take a moment to think about what is on your bridge.

2. What are the signs and symptoms that you display when your bridge is bowing and buckling? Take a moment to think about what that means for your bridge.

I.D.E.A.L.S. HOW TO APPROACH



IDENTIFY THE EARLY INDICATORS OF RISK OR MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

- Signs and Symptoms

Develop a connection

- Authenticity
- Connection
- Topic

Engage in Conversation

- Asking the right questions

Actively encourage

- To be open about how they are feeling
- It's ok to not be ok

Listen empathetically and without judgement

- It's good to be ideal, but let's make it plural... follow-ups!

Signpost, Safeguarding and Support

- Duty of care: keeping everyone safe
- Relevant professional help and support resources,
- Encouraging ways to take personal responsibility for self-help

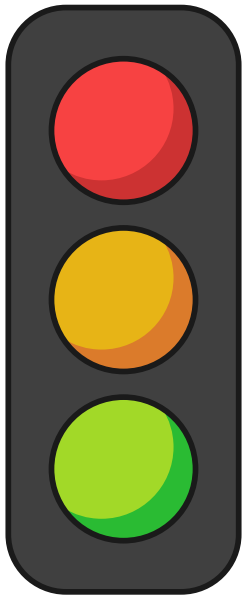
IDENTIFYING EARLY INDICATORS



IDENTIFYING EARLY INDICATORS

IDENTIFY EARLY INDICATORS OF MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

LEVELS OF MENTAL ILLNESS:



SEVERE

MODERATE

MILD

HOW MANY OF YOU THINK YOU COULD SPOT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH?

WHAT COULD THEY BE?



RECOGNISING MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

COMMON MENTAL ILLNESS

People often feel isolated and believe they are the only ones experiencing a mental health problem. In reality, conditions such as depression, anxiety and stress are very common.

The signs and symptoms of mental ill-health can vary depending on the condition, but they generally affect behaviours, emotions and thoughts. These symptoms may also present as physical problems, such as headaches, back pain, nausea or muscle tension.

It is also possible to experience more than one mental health problem at the same time. For example, it is not uncommon for someone with an anxiety disorder to also experience depression, and vice versa. In fact, almost half of individuals diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

According to NICE, mental health problems can be experienced at three different levels: mild, moderate and severe.

MILD	When a person has a small number of symptoms with a limited effect on daily life
MODERATE	When a person has more symptoms that can make their daily life a lot more difficult than what it normally is
SEVERE	When a person has many symptoms, making their life extremely difficult

Source: NICE, ADAA

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Low energy
- Excessive worrying
- Changes in eating habits
- Extreme mood changes
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Avoiding certain situations
- Feeling irritated
- Reduced concentration
- Depressed mood
- Disturbances in sleep
- Difficulty dealing with daily problems
- Headaches, sweating, nausea

Foundation, Mayo clinic

COMMON MENTAL ILLNESS

MILD SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POOR WELLBEING INCLUDE:

- Low energy
- Excessive worrying
- Changes in eating habits
- Extreme mood changes
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Avoiding certain situations
- Feeling irritated
- Reduced concentration
- Depressed mood
- Disturbances in sleep
- Difficulty dealing with daily problems
- Headaches, sweating, nausea



Source: WHO, Mental Health Foundation,
Mental Health America

DEPRESSION

EARLY IDENTIFICATION

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines depression as:

“a common mental health disorder that is characterised by persistent sadness and a loss of interest and a loss of interest in activities that you normally enjoy, accompanied by an inability to carry out daily activities, for at least 2 weeks”

- Globally, it is estimated that 264 million people suffer from depression.
- Many people who suffer from depression also experience symptoms of anxiety.
- Depression is cited as the leading cause of disability worldwide.
- In the U.S., depression costs over \$51 billion in absenteeism and lost productivity, making it one of the most costly illnesses.
- Depression ranks among the top three workplace problems for employee assistance professionals.

MILD SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POOR WELLBEING INCLUDE:

- A loss of energy
- A change in appetite
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Anxiety
- Reduced or poor concentration
- Being indecisive
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Negative thoughts
- Guilt or hopelessness
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Depressed mood
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling low or tearful
- Losing pleasure and interest in things that were once enjoyable
- Problems with memory
- Being restless
- Often lacking confidence
- Self-critical thoughts
- Lasting feelings of unhappiness

Source: WHO, Mental Health Foundation,
Mental Health America

BURNOUT

The 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases 11 (ICD-11) defines burnout as:

“a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”

Moreover, according to the ICD-11's definition, burn-out is characterised into three dimensions:

FEELINGS OF ENERGY DEPLETION OR EXHAUSTION

INCREASED MENTAL DISTANCE FROM ONE'S JOB, OR FEELING OF NEGATIVISM OR CYNICISM

REDUCED PROFESSIONAL EFFICACY

Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Compulsion to prove oneself; push to work harder
- Neglecting personal needs
- Increased perception of conflict
- Withdrawal from social situations
- A revision of your value system, with self-worth based on your job
- Denial of problems and/or belief that others are lazy
- Obvious behavioural changes noticed by others
- Loss of contact with self
- Feelings of inner emptiness
- Low mood or depression
- Distorted sense of time
- Mental, emotional, or physical collapse

ANXIETY

EARLY IDENTIFICATION

The American Psychological Association defines anxiety as:

“an emotion characterised by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure”

It is normal for everyone to have feelings of anxiety, but it becomes a problem when it becomes difficult to control. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the US, affecting 40 million adults in the US aged 18 and older, which is 18.1% of the population every year.

The recent study conducted during the pandemic shows that 1 in 3 adults are depressed or anxious due to COVID-19.

Anxiety disorder is an umbrella term with there being different types of anxiety disorder, including

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Panic Disorder

Health Anxiety

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Specific Phobias

Social Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety disorders share some common signs and symptoms, but these along with the treatment method and severity of the anxiety disorder may vary

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant feelings of panic and fear • A feeling of being “on edge” • Actively avoiding certain situations • Feeling irritable • Reduced concentration • Difficulty sleeping • Feeling restless • Heart palpitations (strong, faster, irregular heartbeat) • Shortness of breath • Headaches • Tense muscles • Excessive worries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears and worries that are out of proportion and overwhelming • Difficulty controlling your worries • Feeling self-conscious about everyday social situations • Fixating on others judging you or being embarrassed • Feeling dizzy or nauseous • Difficulty going about everyday life • Sweating • Feeling panicked, panic attacks • Not doing the things you once enjoyed |
|--|---|

Source: American Psychological Association, NHS, Mental Health Foundation, WebMD, ADAA

STRESS

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF STRESS AND STRESS-RELATED PROBLEMS

It isn't always possible to prevent stress, so a key action in order to minimise risk is to identify stress-related problems as early as possible, so that action can be taken before serious stress-related illness occurs (thus preventing a costly outcome for all concerned).

One of the difficulties with stress is that people experience it in different ways. It would be unwise to overgeneralise when advising on how to identify stress in others. However, because stress can have adverse effects it will usually present in forms that are out of the ordinary for the individual.

There will be changes in the stressed person; emotional, physical, behavioural, or a combination of all three.

The key thing is to look out for negative changes of any kind. Bear in mind that the negative changes are also likely to have knock-on effects e.g. reduced performance at work.

Of course, we all experience 'bad days', so we are really talking about situations where people display these negative changes for a period of time (e.g. 5 days in a row).

CERTAIN FACTORS AT WORK MAY INDICATE A POTENTIAL PROBLEM

- More accident prone
- Forgetting things
- Showing a negative change in mood or fluctuations in mood
- Avoiding certain situations or people
- Becoming withdrawn
- Looking haggard or exhausted all the time
- Inability to think creatively
- Arguments and disputes between people
- A tendency to suffer from headaches, nausea, aches and pains, tiredness, and poor sleeping patterns
- Indecisiveness and poor judgement
- Using very negative or cynical language
- Showing a prolonged loss of sense of humour
- Becoming increasingly irritable or short-tempered
- Self-harming
- Problems with drinking or drug use

SETTING THE ROLE & ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

As a Champion, setting and maintaining clear boundaries is essential to make the role safe and sustainable. Boundaries help define what this relationship is, and just as importantly, what it is not. They clarify what is acceptable for both you and the individual you're supporting, protecting your wellbeing as well as theirs.

By keeping these limits in place, you'll prevent overwhelm, reinforce that you are not acting as a therapist, and ensure you can offer safe, effective and sustainable support. To guide you in this, there are three key boundaries we want you to explore.

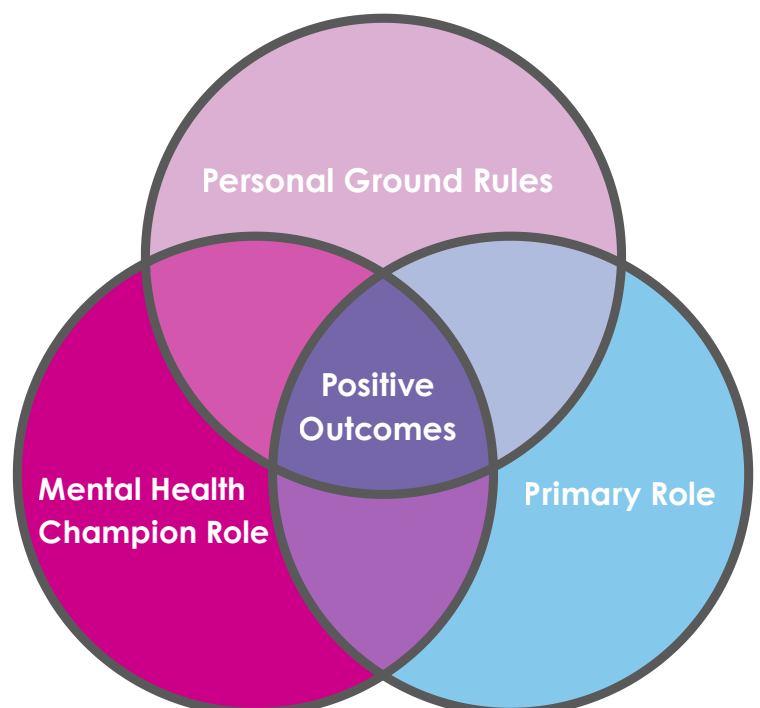
ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES – check that they are aligned with your place of work's values, company policies, etc.

ROLE BOUNDARIES – what is the role of the champions. No diagnosing or counselling.

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES – what your own boundaries are

What exactly are you expected to do?

- You can only listen and signpost
- Time commitment - You will have to put a lot of time in to become active roles in the company
- Safeguarding - who can be it be reported to and taken up the chain to HR
- 'What to do if' flowcharts - these can be implemented locally



SETTING THE ROLE & ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES	ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES	ROLE BOUNDARIES
DO	DO	DO
Keep an open dialogue with the wider Mental Health Champions Team	Work within time available: support champions in balancing role & day job.	Be friendly, listen without judgement
Be aware of your own mental health & take steps to keep mental wellbeing in check	Organisation Policies & Guidelines: Protect Champion & employees	Make sure you have the right resources (training, correct contacts for signposting, etc.) to provide support
Be open-minded	Line Managers to be involved in what champions role involves & are clear with how they can support & facilitate	Be clear about your personal boundaries and what you can and can't do; manage expectations
Talk to someone if needed – without breaking confidentiality (i.e. partner, friend, champion, EAP)	What champions can expect from the business support from senior leaders & buy-in. Plus leader from H&W	Be clear about our role boundaries and when we must break confidentiality if they are putting themselves or others in danger of harm
Keep to working hours only	Provide Training that is adequate & timely	Speak to other Champions/Safeguarding Officer if you need support
Avoid sharing personal information unless relevant and comfortable to do so	Function proactively- within organisation, talk to peers & promote role.	Align with your line manager to make sure you have the time and resources to support
Accept sometimes it's ok to say "not right now"	Give access to Communication channels: Town Halls, BU Meetings etc.	Let people know you're a mental health champion, and there as a resource!
Be able to say no	Share ideas of areas of improvement	DON'T
Be able to assert boundaries within an interaction if needed – restrictions on amount of time. Control depth of issues (identify where to signpost early on).	Be aware of confidentiality requirements	Try to fix
Establish a buddy within the Champions Team	DON'T	Promise (i.e. solution or confidentiality) – overcommit; be realistic
DON'T	Take on Organisation's responsibilities.	Try to be a professional: Avoiding counselling, advice or opinions
Take it home with you or over-analyse	Go against the organisations procedures	Encourage bad behaviours/thinking
Take it personally or make it personal		Discuss private conversations with anyone else, and if we need to break confidentiality make sure we speak to the right person and only the person
Allow their experiences to trigger yours		
Feel responsible for colleagues or feel guilty if we weren't able to help them or resolve their issues personally		

YOUR OWN PERSONAL GROUND RULES

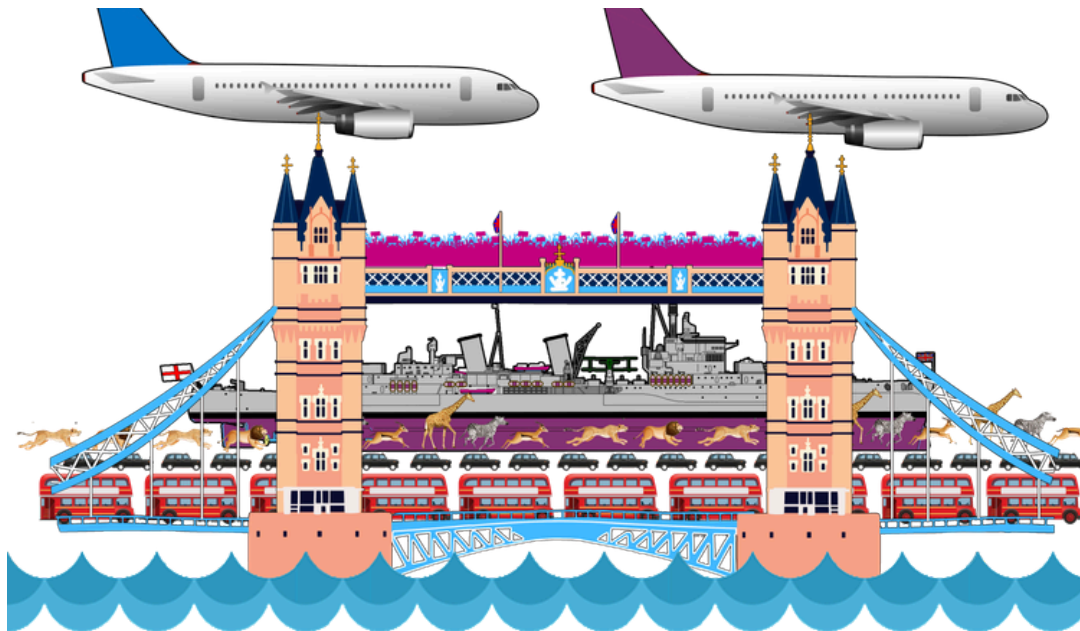
You have been asked to think about your own personal ground rules and boundaries that you will live by and communicate to the person in need in this role. Think about confidentiality, safeguarding, duty of care, creating trust and a safe environment – for yourself and the person in need.

What do you regard as good practice? What are your ground rules and boundaries? Why are these important to you?



Remember: Knowledge is power... only if you take action!

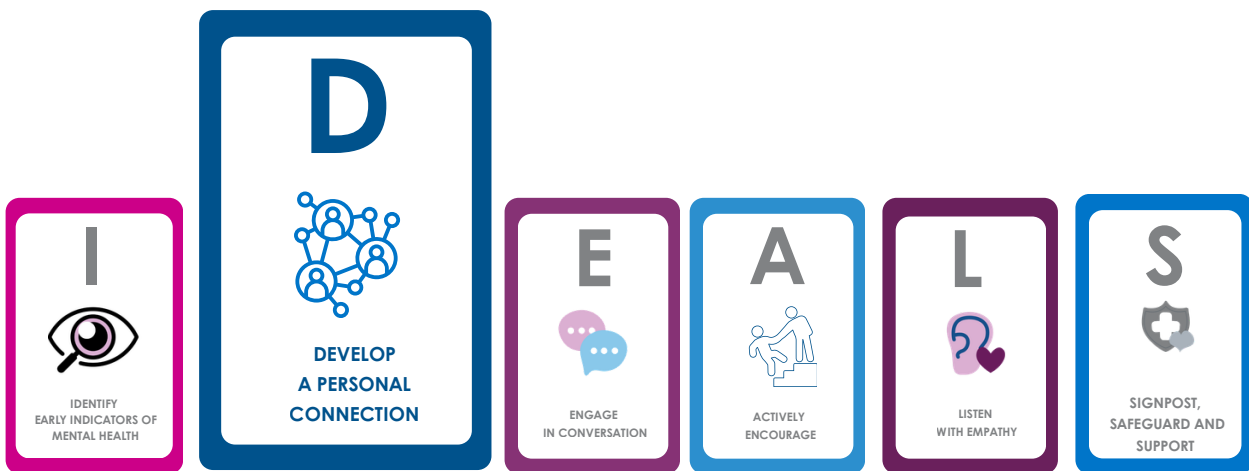
RECAP: WHAT'S ON YOUR BRIDGE?



1. We don't have a work bridge and personal bridge, it all goes to the same place and we tend to carry it around with us. Take a moment to think about what is on your bridge.

2. What are the signs and symptoms that you display when your bridge is bowing and buckling? Take a moment to think about what that means for your bridge.

DEVELOP A PERSONAL CONNECTION



I.D.E.A.L.S. DEVELOP A CONNECTION: A.C.T.

ACT

Most interactions start with small talk. When was the last time you were in a meeting that didn't start this way? It's a natural way for people to connect. Start with a question that will build up to a conversation that meets the A.C.T. criteria:

A There's **authenticity**.
What does authenticity mean to you?

C There's **connection**.
What does connection mean to you?

T There's a **topic** that will give them a taste of who you are.
What are your go-to subjects?

You'll now be split into pairs or small groups using breakout rooms. Take a few minutes to reflect and share your thoughts with each other on the following questions:

- What does authenticity mean to you?
- What does connection mean to you?
- What are your go-to topics or subjects when starting a conversation?



DEVELOP A CONNECTION: A.C.T. MODEL



A uthenticity

Be honest, genuine, patient and empathetic

What helps you show up as your authentic self in conversations?

Share an open story or small vulnerability.

C onnection

Be mindful of location, tone, boundaries - keep trying

What are some barriers to connection you've experienced?"

Acknowledge what they've said, build on it.

T opic

What can you use to open conversation and put them
at ease?

"What light or neutral topics help you break the ice?"

What are your "go-to" conversation starters.

ANSWER ON THE MICROPHONE

DEVELOP A CONNECTION: A.C.T. MODEL



HOW COULD WE USE A.C.T. TO DEVELOP A CONNECTION?

Key points to explore:

1. What does meaningful connection look like?

Being emotionally open and vulnerable.

Offering support and consistency.

Creating a safe space where people can share without judgement.

2. Believing everyone is worthy of connection

Connection begins with mindset: assuming others are capable of meaningful interaction encourages us to reach out.

Encourage champions to notice people on the fringes, those who may need connection the most.

3. Vulnerability as a strength

Talk about the power of being vulnerable first to model safety and trust.

Examples: Being prepared to share things that might be uncomfortable and sharing discomfort, confronting and talking about those things that make us feel shame, or showing emotional honesty, showing trust and being brave

4. Patience and consistency

Studies indicate that friendship doesn't just happen overnight. Even in marriage, increasing connection and authenticity is a multi-year process. Reinforce that real connection takes time. Encourage champions to keep showing up, even when connection isn't instant.

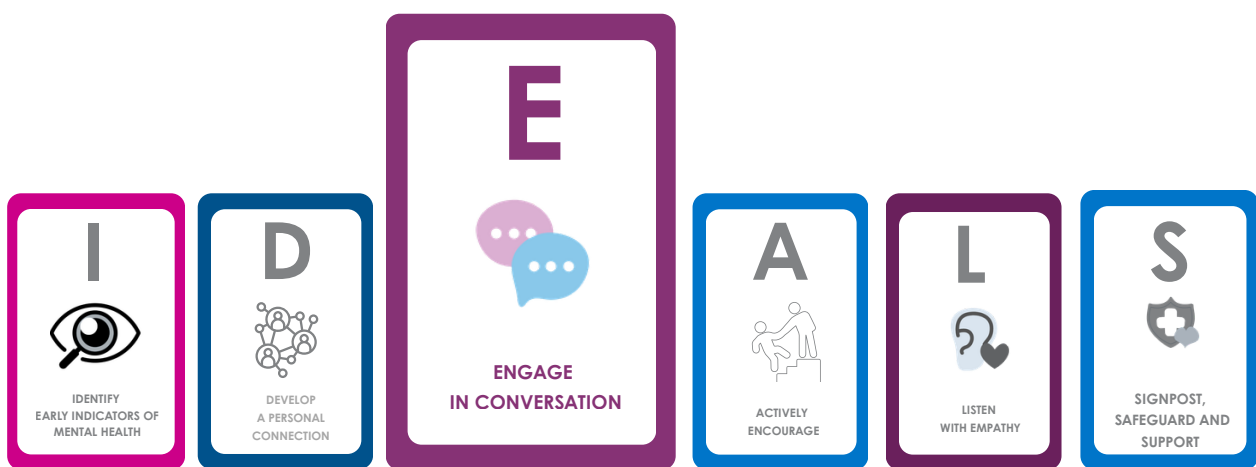
5. Asking good, intentional questions

If you start asking simple questions and truly be present for the answers, people will know that you care about them and that you're creating space for them to open up. Highlight the importance of listening just as much as asking.

6. Being mindful of how tech shapes relationships

Remind them that digital tools can be useful, but in-person or voice-based interactions often build stronger trust. Stay open and curious, even across differences in beliefs or communication styles.

I.D.E.A.L.S. FRAMEWORK: ENGAGE



WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON QUESTION ASKED ON THE PLANET EARTH?



I.D.E.A.L.S. ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION

HOW ARE YOU...GOING TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

Why bother asking a question that is almost guaranteed to generate no new information? That's why the question, "How are you?," is in need of a drastic makeover.

When asking "How are you?", 99% of the time, what is the response? "...alright." Sometimes, the respondent doesn't even answer, they simply bounce the question back.

Let's think about asking better questions, particularly in a way that shows you are genuinely asking about the person's life. Or better yet, in a way that shows genuine care and leads to new information that can inspire positive action.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF A MORE PRODUCTIVE QUESTION THAN 'HOW ARE YOU?'

AS CHAMPIONS, HOW COULD WE USE THIS?

I.D.E.A.L.S. ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION

HOW ARE YOU... ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Examples of better questions:

- Have you got anything on this week?
- How's your day going?
- How do you feel today?
- What has been your highlight today?
- What are your plans for the weekend?
- What are you dreading today?

- What is new with you?
- How do you enjoy spending your free time?
- How's your [insert dogs/kids/family]?
- What shows are you enjoying lately?
- What's on your mind?
- Is there anyone you enjoy talking to?

- How was your drive in?
- How are you feeling today?
- What could you use more help with?
- How did you sleep?
- What could be going better in life right now?
- How is your family?



- What did you have for breakfast?
- Have you read any good books?
- How's work been recently?
- Are you working on any new projects?
- How is the team feeling?

- What else could you do?
- If you did know the answer, what would it be?
- How would you advise someone else in the same position?
- On a scale from 4–19, how would you rate your mood/day/week? How do we get you to 19?
- Over the last two weeks, if you were a movie character, who would you be and why?

- How's life treating you?
- What are your plans for the next [period of time]?
- What are you happy with?
- What do you need from me?
- What would you do if [XYZ] happened?

I.D.E.A.L.S. ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION

PATTERN INTERRUPT

WHAT IS A PATTERN INTERRUPT?

ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO NOT RELY ON THEIR GO-TO RESPONSES

THE KEY TO DISRUPTING THE AUTO-PILOT



A pattern interrupt is anything that gently breaks someone out of automatic behaviours, **a question, an action, a shift in tone or pace**, and creates space for something real.

As Mental Health Champions, this helps us **create meaningful connection**, especially when someone seems shut down, distracted, or defaulting to “I’m fine.”

A few examples:

- Ask: “What’s been the highlight of your week?”
- “What’s on your bridge?”
- “How’s your bridge doing?”
- Begin a meeting with a deep breath.
- Invite someone to place a hand on their heart.
- Say: “Can we pause for a moment before we continue?”

W.A.I.T MODEL

The W.A.I.T. model is designed to encourage **self-awareness** and **intentionality** in communication.

It prompts individuals to **pause** and **reflect** before speaking, ensuring their **words have purpose** and **add value** to the conversation.

Why

The WAIT model (Why Am I Talking) is a mindfulness-based communication tool that can transform how individuals interact by cultivating greater self-awareness and intentional speech.

Am

It encourages people to pause before speaking and evaluate their motivations, ensuring their contributions are meaningful and appropriate for the situation. This approach can improve the quality of conversations, minimise misunderstandings, and foster active listening.

I

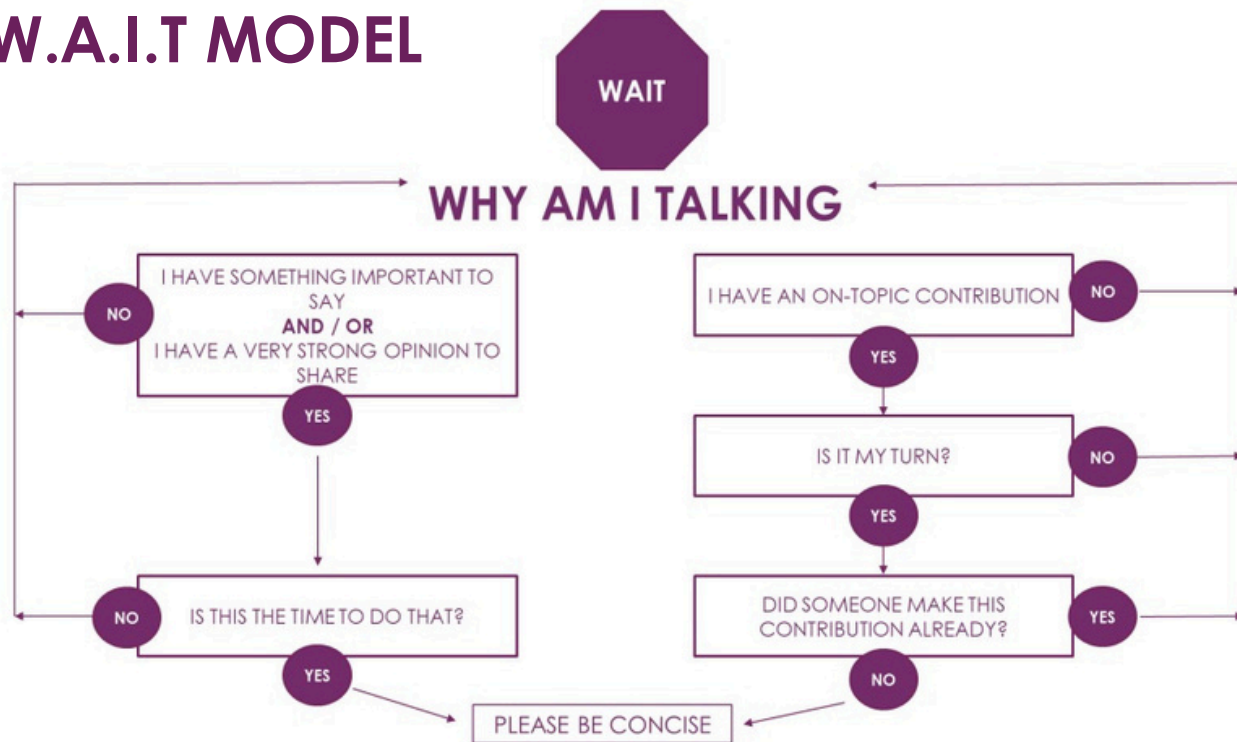
Talking



Key Aspects of the WAIT Model:

- 1 Purpose:** Ask yourself: *What do I want to achieve by speaking?* This ensures your communication has a clear goal, whether it's to inform, clarify, support, or express an opinion.
- 2 Relevance:** Consider: *Is my contribution relevant to the topic or helpful to the discussion?* This helps keep conversations focused and avoids unnecessary tangents.
- 3 Value:** Reflect: Does my input add value, or am I speaking out of habit, ego, or discomfort with silence? This promotes meaningful exchanges instead of filler or redundant comments.

W.A.I.T MODEL



EXAMPLE IN SCENARIO: A TEAM MEETING AT WORK

The manager is discussing strategies to improve productivity. A colleague begins explaining an idea that they've clearly thought through but may not yet be fully formed. You feel the urge to interject with your thoughts. Instead of immediately speaking, you apply the WAIT model:

1 Why am I Talking?

- Am I clarifying what the speaker has said?
- Am I contributing something new or building on their idea?
- Or am I interrupting because I feel the need to assert my opinion?

2 Purpose

You realise your primary purpose should be to add value to the discussion rather than competing to share your viewpoint.

3 Relevance and Value:

You decide to wait for the speaker to finish and, if appropriate, frame your response as a constructive addition, such as: "I really like your point about improving processes. Building on that, what if we also streamlined how we handle task delegation? That might save us additional time." By pausing and reflecting, you ensure your comment aligns with the discussion and moves it forward. The WAIT model prevented you from interrupting or derailing the conversation.

I.D.E.A.L.S. MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

As a Mental Health Champion, you're not just having casual chats, you're creating a space where people can feel seen, heard and safe. This exercise is designed to help you think practically about how to build that kind of meaningful connection. It's about listening with intent, showing up with empathy, and supporting people on their terms.

In what kind of setting should you meet with your colleague? Why?

What kind of seating arrangement would you use? Why?

How will you start the conversation? Why?

How could you develop a connection?

If anyone feels uncomfortable; what could you do? Why?

I.D.E.A.L.S. MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

This exercise is about more than just what you say, it's about how and where you say it, and how you can support someone if the conversation becomes difficult.

Key points to keep in mind:

1. **Setting matters:** Choose a relaxed, informal space. Comfort helps people open up, avoid anything that feels like a formal interview.
2. **Seating arrangement:** Reduce power dynamics. Sitting side-by-side or even going for a walk can feel less intimidating than sitting across a desk.
3. **Starting the conversation:** Avoid rushing in. Ease in gently, be mindful of your tone and pace, and create a sense of psychological safety.
4. **Use A.C.T.** to build trust
 - **Authenticity** – Be honest, patient and empathetic.
 - **Connection** – Pay attention to location, tone and boundaries.
 - **Topic** – Choose an entry point that feels natural and non-threatening.
5. **If someone feels uncomfortable:** Pause and acknowledge it without judgement. Offer a break, change the setting, or reassure them that it's okay to stop. Be clear about what you can and can't do, and focus on listening rather than problem-solving.

Empathetic listening techniques

- Maintain gentle eye contact and avoid distractions.
- Use open, positive body language.
- Reflect or paraphrase: "So what I hear is..."
- Avoid clichés like "Cheer up" or "You'll get over it."



I.D.E.A.L.S. MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Better questions to ask

Instead of “How are you?”, try:

- “How are you feeling today, really?”
- “What’s been on your mind lately?”
- “What’s something that’s been difficult or meaningful for you recently?”
- “How do you usually take care of yourself when things are tough?”

These questions are open, caring, and allow the person to share at their pace.

Encourage Empowerment and Signposting

- Ask: “What would you like to happen?” to help them explore next steps.
- Reassure them: “It’s great you’re opening up” or “I’m here to listen.”
- Be prepared to signpost support options and respect their choices.

Top Tips

- If someone is emotional, don’t rush. Just sit quietly and let them settle.
- Simple affirmations like “You’re not alone” or “Whatever it is, we can face it” can go a long way.
- Focus on being present. Listening is more powerful than advice-giving.



UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) is the core mindset you'll use as a Mental Health Champion. Simply put, it means showing complete support and acceptance toward someone, regardless of what they say, think, or do. It's built on the understanding that most people are acting from a place of doing the best they can, given their unique circumstances and history.

Crucially, practicing UPR does not mean agreeing with everything the person says or does. Instead, it means approaching every individual with compassion instead of judgment. You accept them as a person while reserving judgment about their specific choices or circumstances.

Why UPR Matters in Your Role

Adopting this unconditional perspective is vital for the effectiveness of your role:

- **Maintains Neutrality:** UPR helps you stay grounded and non-judgmental even when someone shares deeply upsetting or challenging information. This keeps the focus on their well-being, not your personal reaction.
- **Builds Trust and Safety:** Showing consistent acceptance builds a deep sense of trust and psychological safety. This is essential, especially when conversations are difficult or highly personal, as it encourages them to open up further.
- **Models Empathy:** By offering UPR, you actively model empathy and set a powerful, positive tone for connection, showing them what healthy, non-judgmental support looks like.

Mind vs. Heart Approach

- **Mind-Centred:** Fixing problems, logic-driven, judgemental, can create distance.
- **Heart-Centred:** Accepting wholeness, presence, intuition, creates connection and safety.

Research shows the heart generates the strongest electromagnetic field in the body, influencing those around us. When coherent, it creates clarity, calm, and stability, qualities essential for Mental Health Champions.

Love as a State of Being

According to David R. Hawkins' Map of Consciousness, Love (Level 500) is:

- **Unconditional** – not dependent on circumstances.
- **Transformative** – uplifts and heals others.
- **Self-sustaining** – doesn't require reciprocation.
- **Intuitive** – beyond linear reasoning.

Operating from this state radiates safety, trust, and transformation.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

1. Presence over Performance

True love in practice means:

- Being present, not “fixing.”
- Speaking truth with compassion.
- Holding boundaries with care.
- Offering detached compassion.



2. Compassionate Support Framework

- Acknowledge: “I can see this is difficult for you.”
- Validate: “Your feelings make sense.”
- Offer Presence: “You don’t have to go through this alone.”
- Maintain Boundaries: Care without overextending.

3. Forgiveness as a Tool

Unresolved resentment blocks compassion. Use:

- Letting Go Technique (feel, welcome, release).
- Forgiveness Ladder (acknowledge → feel → understand → release → bless).
- Ho’oponopono Practice (“I’m sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you.”).

Daily Practices for Champions

- **Morning Intention:** “Today I lead with love and see the person beyond behaviours.”
- **Heart Meditation** (10 min): Hand on heart, breathe, recall love, radiate it through your day.
- **Loving-Kindness Practice:** “May I/my colleagues/all beings be happy and at peace.”
- **Silent Blessings:** Internally affirm, “I see the light within you.”
- **Radiating Presence:** Anchor calmness instead of mirroring others' distress.



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Responding from Level 500

- **Criticism/Hostility:** Stay centred, respond with curiosity and compassion.
- **Crisis Support:** Ground yourself, ensure safety, validate, and refer when needed.
- **Resistance:** Allow choice, build trust over time.
- **Boundaries with Love:** Protect energy, prevent burnout, and model healthy dynamics.

Trauma-Informed Love

When supporting trauma survivors:

- Prioritise safety.
- Respect choice and agency.
- Be consistent and transparent.
- Approach with cultural humility.
- Collaborate, not control.

Looking After Yourself

You are not responsible for fixing or healing everyone. Maintain:

- **Supervision/peer support**
- **Therapy or spiritual practice**
- **Healthy boundaries & self-care**
- **Ongoing education**

Be mindful of pitfalls:

- Saviour complex, codependency, people-pleasing, or bypassing hard truths

Self-check: Am I helping for them, or to meet my own needs?

The Ripple Effect

When you consistently operate from a place of love:

- Others feel safe to be authentic.
- Stress and conflict reduce.
- Teams become more creative and resilient.
- Workplace culture transforms.

Love, at its highest level, is not performance, it is presence.



I.D.E.A.L.S. ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE

THE FEELINGS WHEEL BY DR GLORIA WILCOX

As Mental Health Champions, one of the most powerful tools we can use in supporting ourselves and others is the language of emotion. Often, people say they feel “fine,” “stressed,” or “upset”, but these words only scratch the surface. **The Feelings Wheel**, developed by psychologist Dr Gloria Willcox, gives us a way to explore emotions with more depth, clarity, and compassion.

What is the Feelings Wheel?

The Feelings Wheel is a simple yet powerful visual tool that organises emotions into layers:

- Centre: Broad, core emotions (e.g. happy, sad, angry, fearful, powerful, peaceful).
- Middle Ring: Expands these into more specific feelings (e.g. happy → proud, optimistic, playful).
- Outer Ring: Describes even more precise emotional states (e.g. proud → respected, valued, confident).

This layered approach helps us move from vague or surface-level expressions to a more nuanced and accurate description of what we are truly feeling.

Why It Matters

- Naming emotions reduces their intensity. Neuroscience shows that putting words to feelings can calm the nervous system.
- Creates deeper self-awareness. When we know exactly how we feel, we can better understand what we need.
- Improves empathy. It helps us tune into others' experiences with greater precision and compassion.
- Guides meaningful conversations. Instead of “I feel bad,” someone might say, “I feel overwhelmed and unsupported”, which opens the door to real support.

I.D.E.A.L.S. ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE

THE FEELINGS WHEEL BY DR GLORIA WILCOX

How to Use It as a Champion

1. **With Yourself:** Pause and check in, “Where am I on the wheel right now?” This supports your own wellbeing and models emotional literacy.
2. **With Colleagues:** If someone is struggling, gently invite them to explore their feelings:
 - “Can you find a word on here that describes how you’re feeling right now?”
 - “Does this word feel close, or would you choose another?”
3. **In Conversations:** Use the wheel to move from general to specific:
 - “I feel stressed” → “I feel anxious” → “I feel excluded and unheard.”
 - This shift makes the underlying need clearer and easier to address.
4. **In Groups:** Use the wheel as part of check-ins or wellbeing discussions to normalise talking about emotions openly.

Practical Tips

- Remember: The wheel is not about labelling someone, but empowering them to articulate their experience.
- People may move around the wheel quickly, emotions shift and change. That’s natural.
- Be curious and non-judgemental. Every feeling is valid.

Reflection Prompt

- How easy or difficult do you find it to name your emotions?
- What happens in your conversations when you move from “broad” feelings to more specific ones?
- How might you use the Feelings Wheel in your role as a Mental Health Champion?

I.D.E.A.L.S. ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION – WHY IT MATTERS

Assertive communication is the foundation of Non-violent Communication (NVC) and is often misunderstood. People sometimes think assertiveness means being pushy, while others confuse it with being “nice.” In truth, it is neither. Assertive communication is about expressing your needs, feelings, and requests clearly and compassionately, without diminishing yourself or dismissing others.

As Champions, your role involves listening and supporting others, but also being clear about what you can and cannot do. Assertiveness helps you do both.”

When we avoid assertiveness, we risk sliding into:

- Passive communication (holding back, being apologetic, building resentment).
- Aggressive communication (dominating, blaming, creating conflict).
- Passive-aggressive communication (indirect, sarcastic, undermining).

Each of these creates distance, distrust, and frustration. Assertive communication creates connection, because it is:

- **H**onest – grounded in truth and your real experience.
- **A**ppropriate – taking into account the time, place, and relationship.
- **R**espectful – honouring both your needs and the other person’s.
- **D**irect – clear, specific, and unambiguous.

Think of H.A.R.D. as the balance point between silence and shouting.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLES

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION CAN BE **H.A.R.D.**

HONEST
APPROPRIATE
RESPECTFUL
DIRECT

Communication can take many forms, passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, or assertive. Each style has a different impact on how we relate to others.

- **Passive** – Avoids expressing needs or feelings, often apologetic, leading to frustration and being overlooked.
- **Aggressive** – Expresses needs in a way that is forceful or disrespectful, often causing conflict and damaging trust.
- **Passive-Aggressive** – Indirect, sarcastic, or withholding, creating confusion and resentment.
- **Assertive** – The balance point: Honest, Appropriate, Respectful, and Direct (H.A.R.D.).

Assertive communication allows you to express your feelings and needs clearly while also respecting others. It creates healthier relationships, clearer boundaries, and greater mutual understanding.

In short: Assertiveness is about standing up for yourself without putting others down.

Why this matters for Champions: Your role is to model healthy communication, by being assertive, you create safer spaces for others to speak openly, be heard, and feel respected.

I.D.E.A.L.S. ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE

ABC REQUEST FORMULA – Rooted in NVC

The ABC Request Formula is a simple but powerful way to structure a conversation when you want to give feedback or make a request. It keeps the conversation constructive, respectful, and grounded in specific behaviour, not in assumptions or judgements. The goal of the ABC Request formula is to express the way you feel (internal world) in response to other's behaviour (external world) in specific situations.

Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication (NVC) framework provides four essential elements:

- **Observation** – Describe what happened, without judgement.
- **Feeling** – Express how it made you feel.
- **Need** – Clarify the underlying need or value.
- **Request** – Ask for a specific action that would help.

The **ABC Request Formula** in the MHC programme is a simplified version of this, designed for everyday workplace conversations:

- **A (Acknowledge your feeling)** – “I feel...”
- **B (Name the behaviour)** – “...when you...”
- **C (Give a concrete example)** – “...for example, yesterday when...”
- **REQUEST** – “...and I would like it if...”

Why This Works

The formula helps because it:

- Keeps the focus on your experience rather than accusing the other.
- Reduces defensiveness (because it avoids blame).
- Clarifies exactly what behaviour is problematic or helpful.
- Offers a constructive next step rather than leaving the other person guessing.

Instead of:

- “You’re so unreliable, you never keep me updated.”

Try:

- “I feel anxious when I don't get an update about the project, like yesterday afternoon when I had no visibility. I'd like to agree a daily check-in so I can stay on track.”

I.D.E.A.L.S. ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION – WHY IT MATTERS

Practical Guidance for Champions

- Check in with yourself first. Take a breath, notice what you're feeling, and ask: What do I really need here?
- Keep it simple. One feeling + one behaviour + one request.
- Be specific. Avoid “always/never.” Anchor your example in something observable.
- Make requests, not demands. Use language like “I would like” instead of “You must.”
- Stay open. The other person may not meet your request exactly, but it can open the door to a solution that works for both of you.

Practice Exercise

Think of a recent moment at work where you felt frustrated, unappreciated, or left out. Write it in the form of an ABC request.

- Step 1: Write the “raw” version (what you actually wanted to say in the heat of the moment).
- Step 2: Reframe it using the formula.
- Step 3: Notice how the tone changes, and how it feels different in your body.

Reflection Questions

- Which part of assertive communication do I find most difficult, being honest, being direct, or being respectful?
- When I avoid being assertive, what usually happens in the long run?
- What would improve in my relationships at work if I used ABC Requests more often?

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION CAN BE **H.A.R.D.**

HONEST
APPROPRIATE
RESPECTFUL
DIRECT

PASSIVE		PASSIVE/AGGRESSIVE		AGGRESSIVE	
✗	Honest	✗	Honest	✓	Honest
✓	Appropriate	✗	Appropriate	✗	Appropriate
✓	Respectful	✗	Respectful	✗	Respectful
✗	Direct	✗	Direct	✓	Direct

PASSIVE (NON-ASSERTIVE)

- Avoid expressing their ideas or feelings
- Over-asking for permission or clearance
- More listening than talking
- Deflated tone and body language
- Apologetic, over self-deprecating, could even start a sentence with "Sorry...", "I'm probably wrong..."
- Fail to express their feelings, needs, or opinions
- Tend to speak softly or apologetically
- Exhibit poor eye contact and slumped body posture

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE (INDIRECT RUDENESS)

- Indirectly express their ideas or feelings
- Resents or outright opposes the instructions of others, though they may still do what they're told
- Delays finishing a task that someone else requested or makes intentional mistakes
- Has a sarcastic or argumentative attitude
- Routinely complains about feeling underappreciated to the wrong people
- Withholds information
- Criticises/Gossips about others
- Can play 'the victim'
- Pretending not to know about a work deadline where a co-worker is counting on them and not getting the work done
- Backing out commitments last minute
- Social or Professional exclusion - intentionally leaving people out events or meetings

AGGRESSIVE (RUDE)

- One-upmanship, point scoring and put-downs
- Pursue their own wants and needs in a fashion detrimental to others.
- Verbally (and/or physically) abusive
- Try to dominate, can invade personal space or encroach boundaries
- Use humiliation to control
- Criticise, blame, or attack
- Be very impulsive
- Have low frustration tolerance
- Speak in a loud, demanding, and overbearing voice
- Act threateningly and rudely
- Do not listen well
- Interrupt frequently
- Use "you" statements



ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION CAN BE **H.A.R.D.**

HONEST
APPROPRIATE
RESPECTFUL
DIRECT

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLE	
✓	HONEST
✓	APPROPRIATE
✓	RESPECTFUL
✓	DIRECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens without interruption • Stands up for their rights by clearly stating needs and wants in a factual manner • Keeps a good degree of eye contact • Uses the appropriate speaking volume • Uses confident body language • Uses "I..." statements • Communicates respect for others • Feels in control of self • Speaks in a calm and clear tone of voice • Has a relaxed body posture • Feels connected to others • Is accountable for their own mistakes • Takes responsibility to make amends • Does not allow others to abuse or manipulate them • Can give an opinion or say how they feel • Can ask for what they want or need • Can disagree respectfully • Can offer ideas and suggestions • Can say no without feeling guilty • Can speak up for someone else when appropriate 	

A-B-C-REQUEST FORMULA

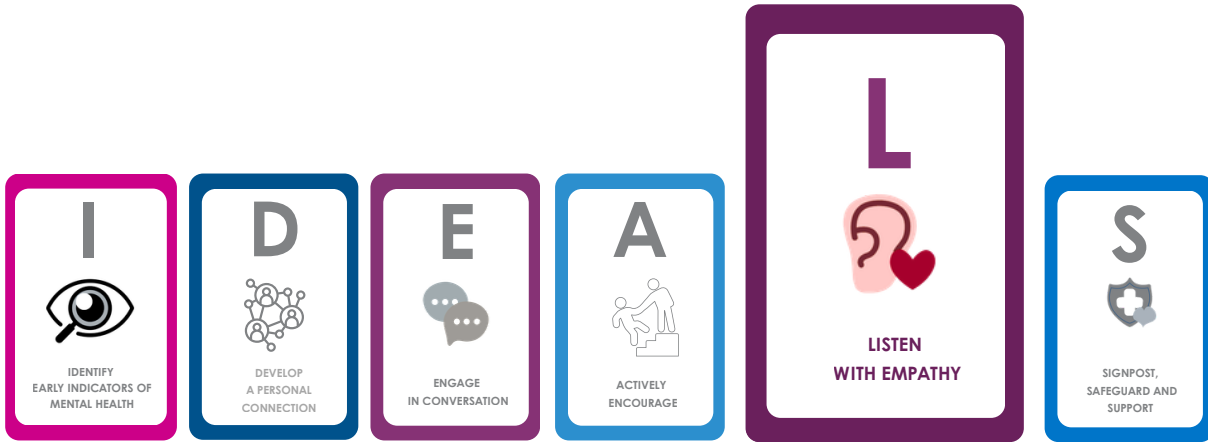
It can be difficult communicating and expressing your own thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a way that makes you understood by others, whilst not dismissing the other person's thoughts, feelings, or opinions.

Easier said than done? It's OK, we have a formula: **A - B - C - REQUEST!**

A	B	C	REQUEST
'I...' STATEMENT	NAME THE BEHAVIOUR	SPECIFIC EXAMPLE	PROPOSE AN OUTCOME
I felt supported and acknowledged	when you recognised my effort whilst giving me feedback	yesterday morning	and I would like you to use that approach with me again in the future
I feel worried	if you don't call me	when you work away	and I would like you to call or text to let me know you arrived safely
I was late and felt disappointed	because you used all of the petrol	after you used my car on Wednesday	and I would like you to leave enough for me from now on
I feel unappreciated and demotivated	if you don't say thank you	when I help you	I would like you to do this because it is important to me and I want to keep helping you
I feel loved	when you hug me	when you come home	...let's do more of that!

A	B	C	REQUEST
I...statement	Name the behaviour	Specific Example	Propose and outcome

I.D.E.A.L.S. LISTEN WITH EMPATHY



WHAT IS EMPATHY?

EMPATHY

THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND SHARE THE FEELINGS OF ANOTHER "That must be really difficult. I'm here with you."

SYMPATHY

FEELINGS OF PITY AND SORROW FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S MISFORTUNE "Oh no, that sounds awful. I hope it gets better."

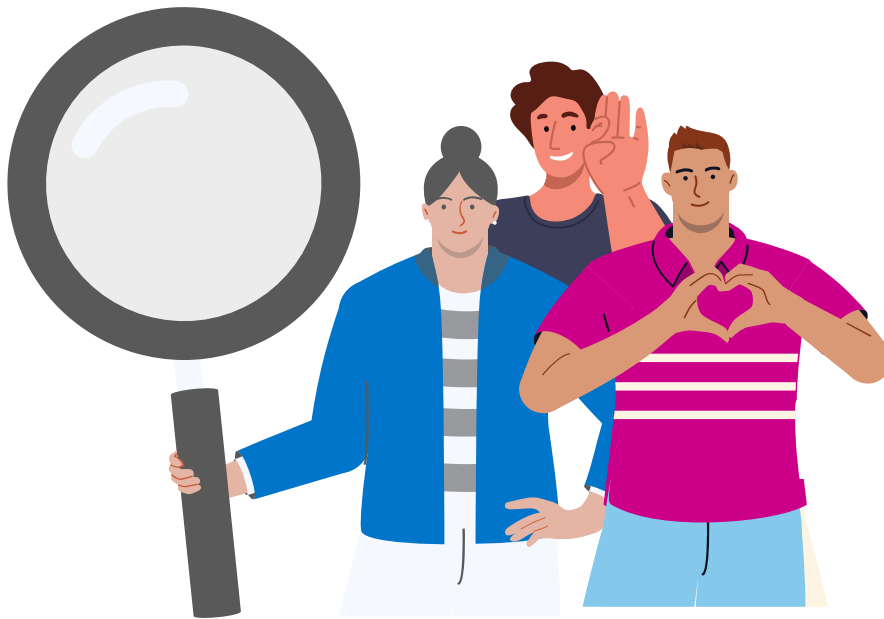


TOXIC EMPATHY

JUMPING INTO THE MISFORTUNE WITH THEM, MAKING IT ABOUT YOU AND WORSENING OR ADDING TO THE PROBLEM.

"I know, it's awful! I can't cope either. We're both falling apart!"

LISTENING WITH OUR EARS, EYES AND HEART



HOW DO WE HEAR WITH OUR EARS, EYES AND HEART?

So often, we listen only to respond, not to truly understand. This exercise helps you slow down and tune in fully: not just with your ears, but also by noticing body language and connecting emotionally. It's a simple yet powerful way to deepen empathy and be more present in conversations.

I.D.E.A.L.S. LISTENING EMPATHETICALLY

EMPATHY MAPPING

Empathy mapping is a practical tool that helps us move beyond assumptions and surface-level impressions. By exploring what someone is thinking, feeling, seeing, and doing, we begin to step into their world and understand their lived experience more deeply. This process strengthens our empathetic listening skills and allows us to respond with greater sensitivity, build stronger connections, and tailor our support to what a person truly needs.

THINKING:

What are their concerns, goals, and priorities? By delving into their cognitive processes, we can gain insights into the rational aspects of their decision-making and understand the logic behind their actions.

FEELING:

Emotions play a crucial role in shaping human behaviour. Empathy mapping encourages us to explore the emotional landscape of others. What are their fears, joys, frustrations, and aspirations?

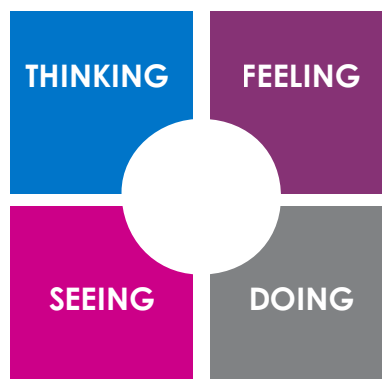
SEEING:

The "seeing" dimension revolves around the external environment and how individuals perceive the world around them. What are the physical spaces, social interactions, and cultural influences that shape their experiences? By considering their point of view, we can better grasp the external factors influencing their thoughts and emotions.

DOING:

Actions speak louder than words. Understanding the behaviours and actions of individuals is a key component of empathy mapping. What are their habits, routines, and responses to different situations? By examining their observable behaviours, we can uncover valuable insights into the motivations behind their actions.

"If I ask for help, will people think I'm weak?"



Overwhelmed by competing deadlines

Colleagues staying late and skipping breaks

Drinking lots of coffee instead of resting

I.D.E.A.L.S. LISTENING EMPATHETICALLY

SYMPATHY: Feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.

EMPATHY: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

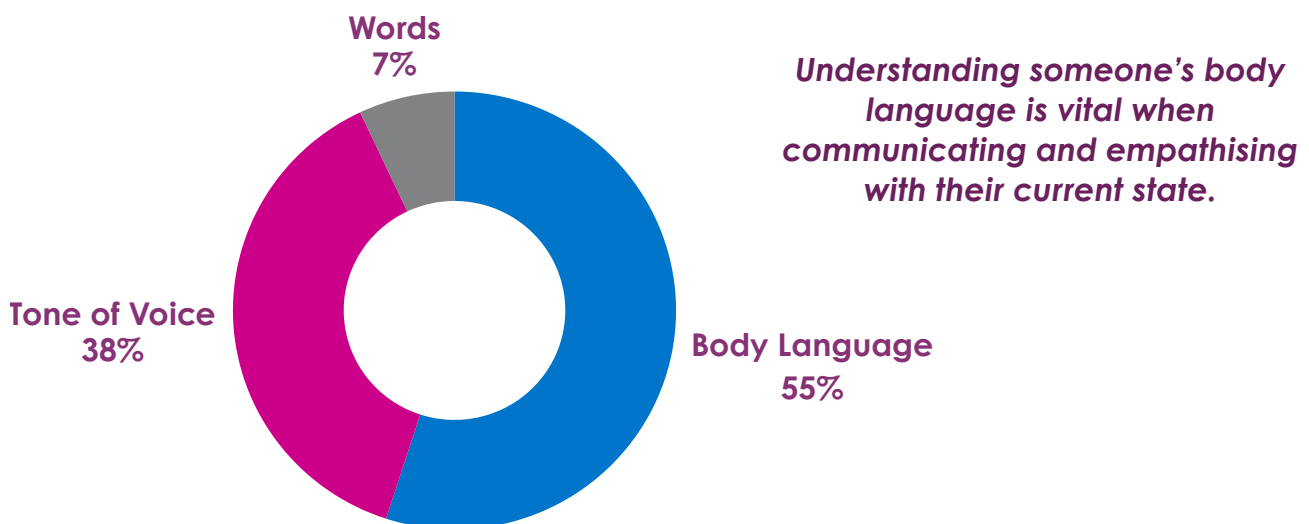
How many times have you been amazed at how communication can go badly wrong?

How easy it is for the slightest gesture or tone of voice to be taken the wrong way?

Empathy mapping helps us go beyond assumptions by exploring what someone is thinking, feeling, seeing, and doing. It strengthens our ability to listen with empathy and respond to their real lived experience.

As you will know as a champion it is important to put yourself in other people's shoes and provide emotional support. When engaging with your person, consider Professor Albert Mehrabian's communication model, which states the following percentages when communicating feelings or attitudes:

According to Mehrabian's Communication Model, only 7% of meaning comes from words, the rest is conveyed through tone of voice (38%) and body language (55%). By paying attention to these non-verbal signals, we can pick up on what isn't said, offering support with greater sensitivity and presence.



REMEMBE

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT DOESN'T MEAN ACTING AS A COUNSELLOR OR THERAPIST, BUT AS A CHAMPION/AMBASSADOR YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND A PRODUCTIVE WORKPLACE,

EMPATHY MAPPING

Choose a scenario. With a partner/small group discuss and map out the potential thoughts, feelings, sights, and actions that the individuals in these scenarios might experience, offering a deeper understanding and empathy for the challenges faced by many in conflict zones.

SCENARIO 1: PROJECT DEADLINE PRESSURE

Owen is leading a critical project at that is approaching its deadline. Despite the team's efforts, they are behind schedule. Owen has been staying late every night, skipping meals, and foregoing sleep to try and catch up.

SCENARIO 2: AFTERMATH OF REDUNDANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sophie recently learned that her department at is facing cuts, with several of her close colleagues being made redundant. She's grateful to keep her job but feels survivor's guilt and fear about the future.

SCENARIO 3: BALANCING WORK AND PERSONAL TRAUMA

Raj is a long-time employee at whose partner has been diagnosed with a serious illness. He's finding it difficult to concentrate at work, worrying about his partner's health and upcoming treatments.

SCENARIO 4: EXPERIENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING

Fiona is a talented but introverted engineer at . She has recently become the target of subtle but persistent workplace bullying by a more dominant colleague, which is starting to affect her mental health and confidence.

SCENARIO 5: NEW ROLE OVERWHELM

Hardeep has recently been promoted to a managerial position within . While he is excited about the opportunity, he feels unprepared for the leadership role and is concerned about making mistakes that could impact the team's performance.

THINKING	FEELING
SEEING	DOING

EMPATHY MAPPING

Choose a scenario. With a partner/small group discuss and map out the potential thoughts, feelings, sights, and actions that the individuals in these scenarios might experience, offering a deeper understanding and empathy for the challenges faced by many in conflict zones.

SCENARIO 6: CHRONIC ILLNESS MANAGEMENT Lisa has been dealing with a chronic illness that affects her daily energy levels. She's a dedicated employee, but her condition is unpredictable, and she's finding it hard to maintain her previous standards of productivity.

SCENARIO 7: WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE

Daniel, a single father working at, is struggling to balance his demanding job and caring for his young children. With the recent increase in work demands, he's finding it hard to leave on time to pick up his kids from childcare.

SCENARIO 8: RETIREMENT TRANSITION

Geoffrey is approaching retirement after a long career at . He's beginning to feel disconnected from his younger colleagues and is unsure about his purpose and identity post retirement.

SCENARIO 9: INTEGRATION POST-LEAVE

Mina has returned to her role at after a six-month sabbatical. The landscape of her department has changed, with new processes in place, and she feels like she's struggling to integrate back into the team.

SCENARIO 10: ACCUSATION OF ERROR

Yigal has been accused of making a significant error in a project report. He's confident it wasn't his mistake, but the accusation has shaken his confidence and made him question his future at .

THINKING	FEELING
SEEING	DOING

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: BUILDING RAPPOR

- What action makes the difference in feeling comfortable and acknowledged by someone, even if they are disagreeing with what you say?
- How is it that some people you meet you instantly like - while others you can't get away from fast enough?
- Why can you talk to some people for hours and it seems like minutes?

The answer to all of these questions is **RAPPOR** - the most important process in any communication.

Rappor is the foundation of all effective communication. It's the ability to step into someone else's world and make them feel heard, understood, and respected. Building rappor doesn't mean you have to agree with everything, it's about recognising another person's perspective, appreciating their feelings, and finding common ground.

In practice, rappor is the difference between a conversation that feels safe and supportive, and one that feels like a power struggle. It creates the emotional bridge that allows genuine connection, trust, and openness, even when there is disagreement.

MIRRORING & MATCHING

An effective technique in establishing rappor quickly is to mirror and match elements of a person's behaviour during communication, such as body language and tone. Paying attention to just these two elements can make you most like the other person without their being aware that this is occurring – that's the key to building empathy.

MIRRORING

Refers to the simultaneous 'copying' of the behaviour of another person, as if reflecting their movements back to them. When done with skill and discretion, mirroring creates a positive feeling and responsiveness in you and others.

MATCHING

Refers to your response over a longer period of time; if the person uncrosses their legs and leans to one side while speaking, you should wait for a few seconds and then discretely adopt the same posture.

BUILDING RAPPORT: PACING & LEADING

It has been suggested that the worst thing you can say to someone who is upset or in an agitated state is “Calm down”, this can be like a red rag to a bull.

Pacing and leading is a technique that involves matching someone's behaviour, speech patterns, and body language. When these change, you continue to match their sequence of events. Once rapport has been established through pacing, you can then lead them in the direction you want them to go.

For example, if a staff member approaches you with a panicked voice and movements, you can initially match their energy and emotion. Once they are aware that you are in tune with them, gradually slow your tone and actions. This should help guide them towards calmer behaviour.



TYPICAL WORK-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH SCENARIOS

Choose one of the scenarios and utilise the Mirror/Matching Technique. Think about Mehrabian's three elements of communication: Body Language, Tone and Words.

Act like a mirror - reflect back what you think the speaker is saying and feeling:

Person 1: "I just feel really annoyed that whatever I say, people never take notice"

Person 2: "So you feel like you're not being listened to..."

Suggestion: Could the Feelings Wheel help you here?

SCENARIO 1: JACK (NEW STARTER)

Jack is a new starter at the company and only joined 2 months ago. He is still in his probationary period. You notice that Jack has had a lot of days off during this time and is isolating himself from the rest of his colleagues, declining social events. He also tends to become extremely anxious when speaking to colleagues.

How would you best approach Jack?

SCENARIO 2 : JULIA (REMOTE WORKER)

Julia is a Sales Manager who works from home and rarely goes into the office. She manages a small team of 4 employees remotely. Julia has worked at the company for 20 years. It has been brought to your attention that recently Julia has not been replying to her emails or getting involved in the monthly social events as she usually does. Julia has also been missing deadlines and has not been keeping in touch with her direct reports as much.

How would you best approach Julia?

SCENARIO 3: TOM (PROLONGED SICKNESS/RETURN TO WORK)

Tom has worked in the Finance Department for 1 year. However, he was recently signed off work with depression. This is his first week back in the office after 2 weeks away. Tom is settling back in, but he is still not quite himself.

How would you best approach Tom?

TYPICAL WORK-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH SCENARIOS

Exercise: Choose one of the scenarios and apply the pacing and leading technique. Be mindful of Mehrabian's three elements of communication: body language, tone, and words.

A: Using one of the scenarios, lead the conversation by choosing a particular exaggerated emotion.

B: Subtly match A's tone of voice and body language.

Notice the quality of the communication: Is the flow of information smooth or difficult? Is there a sense of rapport or not?

B: After a few minutes of smooth conversation, alter your voice so that it is very different in tone and tempo from the other person's. Notice the impact this change has on the quality of communication.

B: Then change back to matching the other person's voice qualities and observe how you are able to regain rapport and enable a smoother flow of conversation.

SCENARIO 4: DAISY (CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR)

Daisy is an Office Assistant who has been working at the company for 3 years. Over the past 2 weeks, Daisy has been very quiet in the office and has not been taking part in social activities inside or outside of work with her colleagues. This is unusual for Daisy, as she usually has an outgoing personality and enjoys getting involved. Colleagues have approached her to ask if something is wrong, and she has said no. However, she still does not seem to be acting like herself. **How would you best approach Daisy?**

SCENARIO 5: PETER (STIGMA)

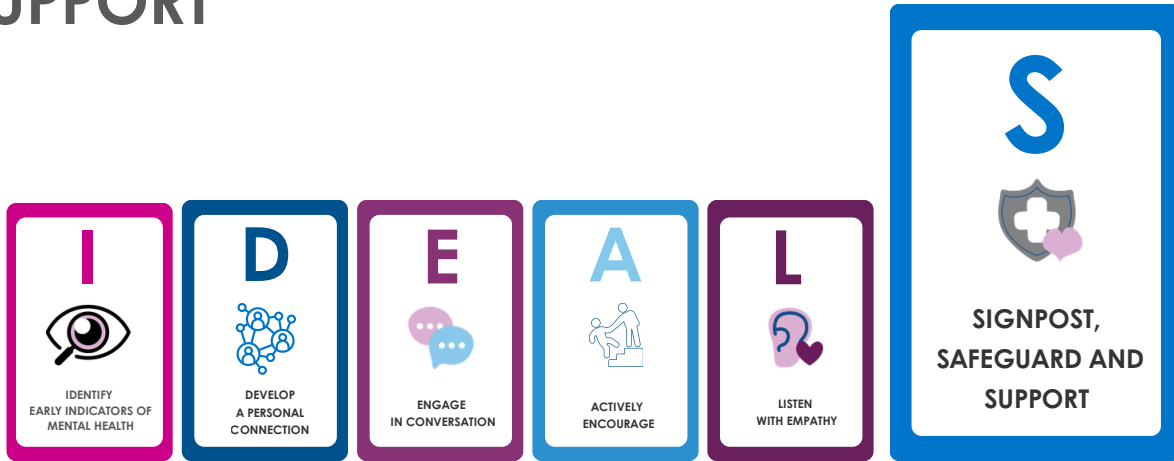
Peter has recently been promoted from the role of HR Administrator to HR Advisor and has now been given line management responsibility. This new role comes with a higher workload and more responsibility. You become aware that Peter has commented that he is finding it difficult and is feeling increasingly stressed. However, Peter is worried about being honest for fear of being demoted or being seen as incompetent in his new role.

How would you best approach Peter?

SCENARIO 6: PAULA (PRESENTEEISM)

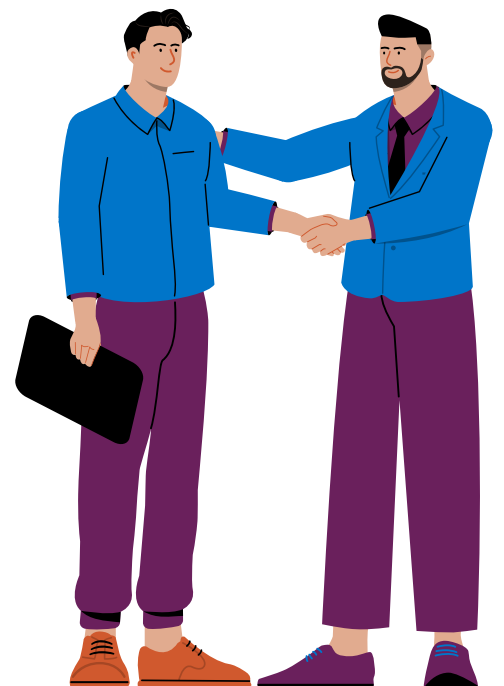
Paula is a Marketing Executive who has been working at the company for 2 years. You have noticed recently that Paula is always the first person in the office and is still working when everyone else has left for the evening. She has been logging into her emails from home and has mentioned that she is finding it difficult to switch off from work. Paula is no longer going to the gym before work or taking part in her usual hobbies, and she rarely takes her lunch breaks. **How would you best approach Paula?**

I.D.E.A.L.S. SIGNPOST, SAFEGUARD & SUPPORT



SUPPORT:

AVAILABLE TO HELP AND BE A SOURCE OF COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT



PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

... 'IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK'

- **“Acknowledgement is powerful.”** One of the most important ways we can support someone is simply to let them know that what they're feeling is valid. Often, people aren't looking for solutions, they want to feel seen.
- **“You don't have to fix it.”** As Champions, it's not your job to solve their problem. It's your role to create space for someone to be honest, without fear of judgement.
- **“It's OK not to be OK.”** This phrase has become more common, and for good reason. It reminds us that struggling doesn't mean someone is weak or failing; it means they're human.
- **“Silence is better than minimising.”** Saying things like “you'll be fine” or “it could be worse” can feel dismissive. A simple “that sounds really hard” or “I'm here for you” goes a lot further.
- **“This is about meeting people where they are.”** Acknowledging someone's pain or struggle allows them to feel safe enough to open up, and from that place, real connection and support can begin.

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Applying What You've Learned

Knowledge only becomes powerful when you put it into practice. The tools we've explored are most valuable when used in real conversations, team dynamics, and moments of support.

Between now and the next session, choose a few techniques to practise in your daily interactions. For example:

- Use the **Feelings Wheel** to name emotions (yours or others').
- Try the **ABC Request Formula** to express needs clearly.
- **Listen with ears, eyes, and heart** to tune in fully.
- Apply **Empathy Mapping** to shift perspective.
- Practise **Mirroring and Matching** to build rapport.

You don't need to master everything at once.

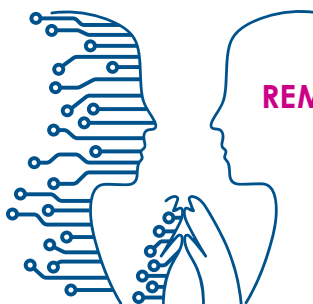
Start small, notice what works, and focus on progress, not perfection.



WAYS TO PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

I D E A L S

- **Recognise differences:** Appreciate individual traits. For example, approach an introvert differently from an extrovert to get the best response.
- **Listen:** Create opportunities for people to share their opinions and feelings without judgment or interruption.
- **Ask questions:** Gain a better understanding of the individual (e.g., “Do you prefer structure or flexibility?”).
- **Inform yourself:** Learn about mental ill-health, such as depression and anxiety, to pre-empt misunderstandings if colleagues approach you.
- **Promote and exemplify:** Role model good practice in personal resilience, including work–life balance.
- **Use a buddy system:** Pair younger, less experienced employees with a more experienced colleague who can support and advise them during the early stages of their career.
- **Establish regular meetings:** Provide a safe space for employees to share and “offload” emotional issues, encouraging peer support as a way to alleviate stress.
- **Encourage open discussion:** Foster honest conversations about mental health, wellbeing, and stress, recognising that these are not weaknesses but part of the human experience.
- **Acknowledge differences in resilience:** Remember that each employee has different coping capacities.



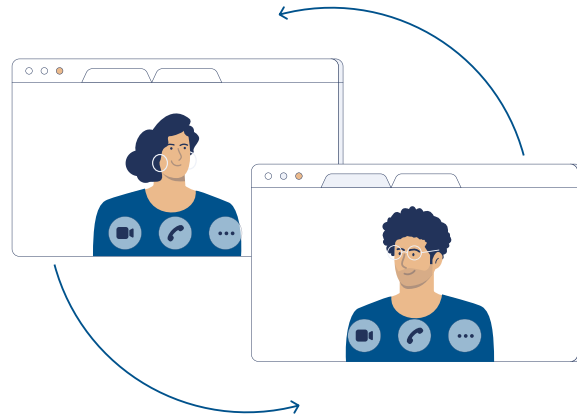
REMEMBER: WE'RE NOT ROBOTS, IT'S OKAY NOT TO BE OKAY.

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT REMOTELY

I D E A L S

WHAT IF YOU ARE NOT IN THE SAME LOCATION?

HOW WOULD YOU SUPPORT SOMEONE REMOTELY.



- **CREATE A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP**
- **ENSURE THE REMOTE WORKER HAS THE TOOLS AND FEELS PART OF THE TEAM**
- **KEEP IN MIND THE WELLBEING OF THE REMOTE WORKER**
- **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS KEY**
- **BE MINDFUL OF FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS**
- **MAINTAIN THE MOTIVATION OF THE REMOTE EMPLOYEES**
- **PAY ATTENTION TO LANGUAGE: BODY, TONE & WORDS**

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR REMOTE WORKERS

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN PROVIDING SUPPORT REMOTELY?

Empty dashed box for notes.

HOW COULD WE OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?

Empty dashed box for notes.



HOME-BASED AND REMOTE WORKERS

Some advantages and disadvantages of working from home/remotely

POSITIVES

- Working in a different workplace than your team may entail less travel as you can then be based in the closest workplace to your home.
- Many workers find they can manage the demands of their work and home life better when working from home.
- Accommodation of the needs of staff who are unable to work standard shifts and times.
- Possibility of a more equal sharing of child care responsibilities between all carers.
- Working remotely from other team members may potentially lead to a more focussed working atmosphere.
- Being away from your team as a manager may lead to your staff thinking about how important a question is before making the effort to contact you

NEGATIVES

- Home-based workers and those who work remotely can feel isolated.
- With less face-to-face communication, it is harder to judge someone's emotional reactions.
- Working remotely may lead to non-verbal cues of an individual going unnoticed e.g. a more outgoing individual becoming more introverted.
- Some homeworkers feel they put in more hours without lunch breaks.
- Many find it hard to switch off when there is no spatial divide between home and work.
- As a manager working remotely, you may be less aware of your team's dynamics
- Being based in a different area to your team can mean less inclusion in problem solving processes.

WHAT ABOUT SOME OF YOUR OWN

POSITIVES

NEGATIVES

SUPPORTING AND MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

As a Mental Health Champion, it is critical to understand the unique challenges faced by employees who work remotely. The principle of 'out of sight, out of mind' is a common trap that can lead to feelings of isolation, alienation, and a lack of support, potentially causing issues to develop more frequently than they might for staff working on site. Your approach to managing remote workers must prioritise trust, communication, and intentional inclusion.

1. Building a Foundation of Trust and Autonomy

A trusting relationship is essential for remote working to be successful. Since you will naturally have fewer opportunities for contact, your focus should shift from managing time to managing results.

- **Foster Independence:** Establish a trusting relationship that allows the remote worker the autonomy they need to work sufficiently and independently.
- **Acknowledge Hard Work:** Maintain the employee's motivation by making their efforts and good work visible. Regularly recognise and applaud their accomplishments. Remember, it's the small things that count!

2. Intentional Communication and Inclusion

Effective communication is the single most important factor in preventing alienation. Remote workers often miss out on the casual social interactions and immediate support mechanisms available to office-based staff.

- **Combat Alienation:** Ensure the remote worker feels part of the team. Utilise available technology (like video conferencing) to dial them in to every event, update, and discussion from anywhere.
- **Keep Them in the Loop:** Communicate all aspects of the business often. This includes new updates, business events, and general enquiries.
- **Be Mindful of Flexibility:** Recognise that some remote workers operate on flexible working hours for a reason. They may have commitments, different time zones, or cultural holidays that they need to attend to. Respecting these needs supports their overall wellbeing.



SUPPORTING AND MANAGING REMOTE WORKERS

3. Prioritising Wellbeing and Support

Whilst remote work offers great autonomy, managers must proactively look after the wellbeing of remote workers just as they would any other employee.

- **Encourage Breaks:** Actively encourage and check to ensure the employee is taking a sufficient lunch break each day, as remote workers often find it difficult switching off from work.
- **Watch for Red Flags:** Pay close attention to language used during conversations or in emails. Is there anything out of the ordinary? Could the Feelings Wheel help you to check or identify the real meaning of the language being used here?

By being intentional and empathetic, you can ensure your remote team members feel supported, included, and valued, mitigating the unique challenges of working alone.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR REMOTE WORKING CHAMPIONS

Maintain a Healthy Work/Life Balance

It can be tempting to continue working beyond your scheduled hours, especially when you're in a comfortable home environment with no commute. However, finishing your working day on time is essential to prevent your work-life balance from suffering.

Take Adequate Breaks

Many remote workers skip lunch or necessary short breaks because there is no external pressure to stop. However, taking adequate breaks will allow you to refuel, reduce fatigue, and ultimately work more effectively and sustainably.



Optimise Your Productivity

Research shows that remote workers can be up to 20% more productive than their office counterparts. This is often due to fewer workplace distractions. You must ensure your remote working area is free from personal distractions to maintain this productive advantage.

Build Trust Through Autonomy

Working remotely provides you with greater autonomy over your day. Consistently meeting expectations and delivering as agreed will strengthen your manager's trust in your ability to work remotely, helping to secure this option in the long term.

Establish a Professional Environment

It is essential that you have a proper working environment set up. This includes having appropriate office equipment and furniture to ensure you can work effectively and comfortably while safeguarding your physical wellbeing.



Ensure Visibility and Communication

Make sure your colleagues are aware of your working hours and availability. This ensures they know precisely when they can reach you for updates or enquiries, maintaining smooth communication across the team. It is preferable, but not mandatory, to keep cameras on during video calls. Without visual contact, we miss out on 55% of communication and an opportunity to check if colleagues are safe and well. Aim to reach an agreement on maintaining eye contact at least most of the time.

SAFEGUARDING: REVISITING THE 9.00AM EXERCISE

It is 9.00 am on a Monday morning and a member of your team has just called you to inform you that they are *"Fine but have a two-week medical exemption for stress."*

Usually, they are the 'fun person' in the workplace, but over the last three or four weeks, they have been showing signs of distress. They have been coming to work late, their productivity has decreased, and their mood is low. They have been acting out of character, withdrawn, and unapproachable.

There have been rumours of 'something going on' in their private life, but nobody has wanted to ask because talking to this person isn't as enjoyable as it normally is, and they don't want to pry.

This morning, this member of your team sounds a little 'strange', just enough for you to notice, but you're not sure. What do you do? How would you respond?

IDENTIFY EARLY INDICATORS OF MENTAL ILL-HEALTH (SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS)

DEVELOP A CONNECTION (A.C.T)

ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION (ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS)

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE (FEELINGS WHEEL, ABC REQUEST FORMULA)

LISTEN EMPATHETICALLY (LET THEM FINISH, MIRROR/MATCHING, PACING & LEADING)

SUPPORT AND SIGNPOST (WHERE IS THEIR SUPPORT? WHAT DO THEY NEED FROM YOU? FOLLOW-UP)

SAFEGUARDING

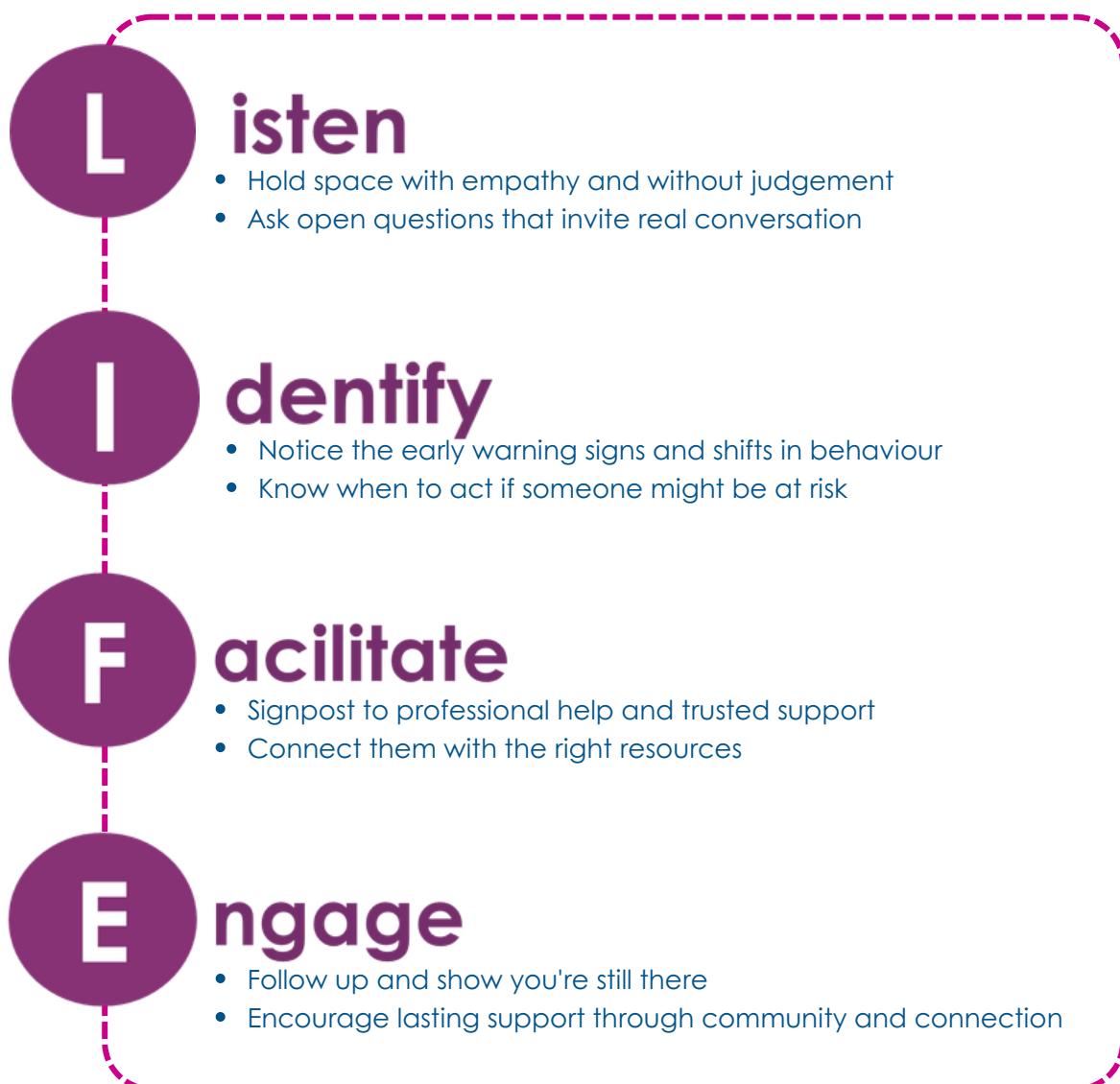
- **Acknowledge** – Start by making the person feel heard and validated: “I’m sorry that you’re feeling that way.”
- **Check for safety** – Gently explore if they are okay, alone, or have support. If unsure, ask.
- **Support** – Help identify what support is needed and where it can come from.
- **Bridge** – Pause other conversations if needed: reassure them they are your priority.
- **Revisit** – Don’t leave things open-ended. Think: do I follow up? Who else could support them? Close the loop.



L.I.F.E FRAMEWORK

The **LIFE Framework** is a clear, actionable guide designed to support you when you are assisting someone who is in emotional distress or at risk.

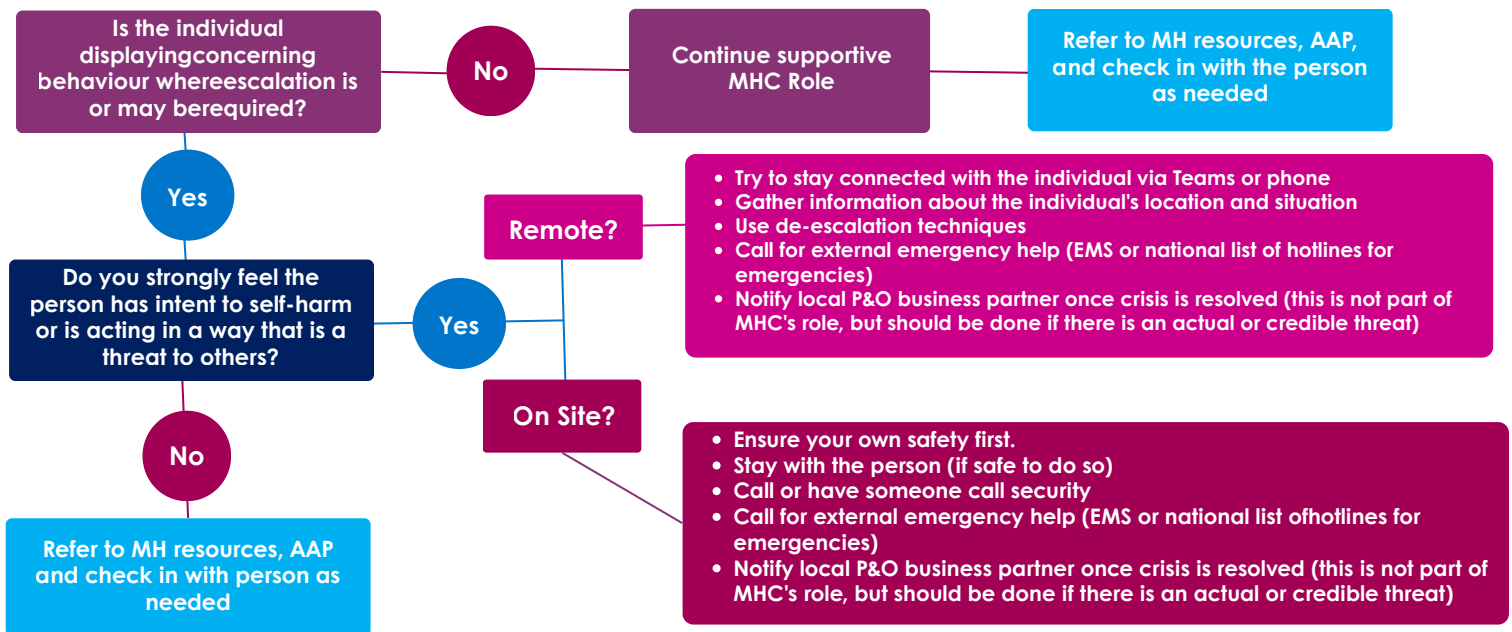
We use this framework to ensure you have a structured approach when conversations feel overwhelming or high-stakes. It simplifies complex situations by giving you a step-by-step process for listening, assessing the situation, and ensuring the person receives the necessary support.



“The L.I.F.E. framework equips us not only to respond in a crisis, but to build a culture where conversations around mental health become normalised. When we actively Listen, Identify, Facilitate, and Engage – we help create a safer, more compassionate world. And sometimes, that one conversation can truly save a life.”

ESCALATION PROCESS

While most situations can be managed through listening, signposting, and ongoing support, there may be times when a colleague's safety or the safety of others is at risk. The escalation process provides clear steps to follow if you believe someone may come to harm. It is designed to keep both you and the colleague safe, ensuring that the right support and emergency services are involved when needed.



ESCALATION PROCESS

Communicating in Crisis



What NOT to Say: Avoid the Negative

Avoid saying phrases like "Don't do it." The human brain doesn't process negatives well; it can register the core command, which may inadvertently register as "do it." Example: If someone says, "Don't think of a red truck," what image pops into your mind?

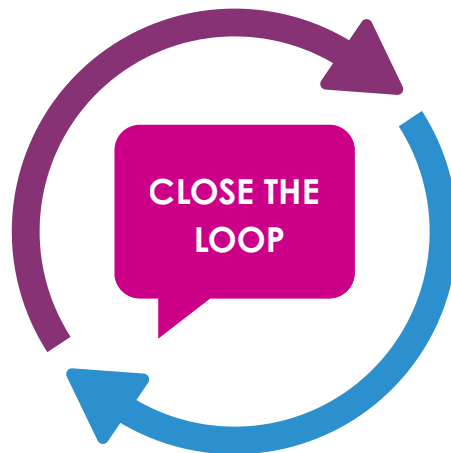
Instead, focus on acknowledging their feelings and gently holding space for them.

How to Keep Someone With You (Safety and Connection)

In high-stakes situations, your goal is to maintain a connection and keep the person grounded.

- **Stay Present:** Remain physically or virtually present (on a call or video chat).
- **Speak Calmly:** Speak slowly, calmly, and reassure them that they are not alone.
- **Ask Open, Grounding Questions:**
 - "Can you stay on the line with me for a little while?"
 - "Where are you right now?"

CLOSE THE LOOP



Closing the loop, or following up, is a crucial final step because it validates the person's experience and shows genuine, sustained care, which significantly helps to build trust and emotional safety.

Why Following Up Matters

A simple check-in (whether a message, email, or a quick coffee) shows the person that your initial conversation wasn't a one-off event. It demonstrates that they were truly heard, seen, valued, and remembered. For someone who is struggling, this consistent follow-up is incredibly powerful and reinforces their sense of worth.

Remember Your Boundaries

Crucially, this must be done with healthy boundaries to prevent emotional burnout. As a Champion, your role is to listen and signpost, not to act as a counsellor or take on responsibility for their entire wellbeing. This is about practising empathy, not toxic empathy, supporting others without losing yourself in their pain. Protect your own mental health; it's perfectly acceptable to set limits on your time and step back when needed. Consistent follow-up shows care, but you must maintain your own boundaries.

But Remember – You Are Not a Counsellor:

- Your role is to listen and signpost, not to “fix” or take on responsibility for their wellbeing.
- Protect your own mental health – it's okay to set limits and step back when needed.
- This is about empathy, not toxic empathy – supporting others without losing yourself in their pain.

RISK ASSESSMENT GOOD PRACTICE

Identify Early Indicators Of Mental Ill-health
Develop A Connection
Engage In Conversation
Actively Encourage
Listen Empathetically
Support And Signpost

International Wellbeing Insights takes duty of care very seriously.

If you feel unsure, feel that your boundaries are being compromised, or that you have come to the end of what you are comfortable handling as a Mental Wellbeing Champion, stop and seek advice.

The colleague in question should be signposted to the crisis team or community mental health services for that country. Human Resources should supply the service's numbers and encourage the colleague to make contact.

Human Resources could phone the support resources for advice, but they would need permission from the colleague to pass on any personal details.

Be clear: you or the employer cannot refer or discuss on the colleague's behalf.

If the colleague is deemed to be at risk of harm to themselves or others, then it is a different situation entirely. Contact the authorities for advice and/or to report. **This is their area of expertise, not yours.**

At least you will be in a position to actually deal with the repercussions of reporting the colleague, rather than do nothing and wish you had.

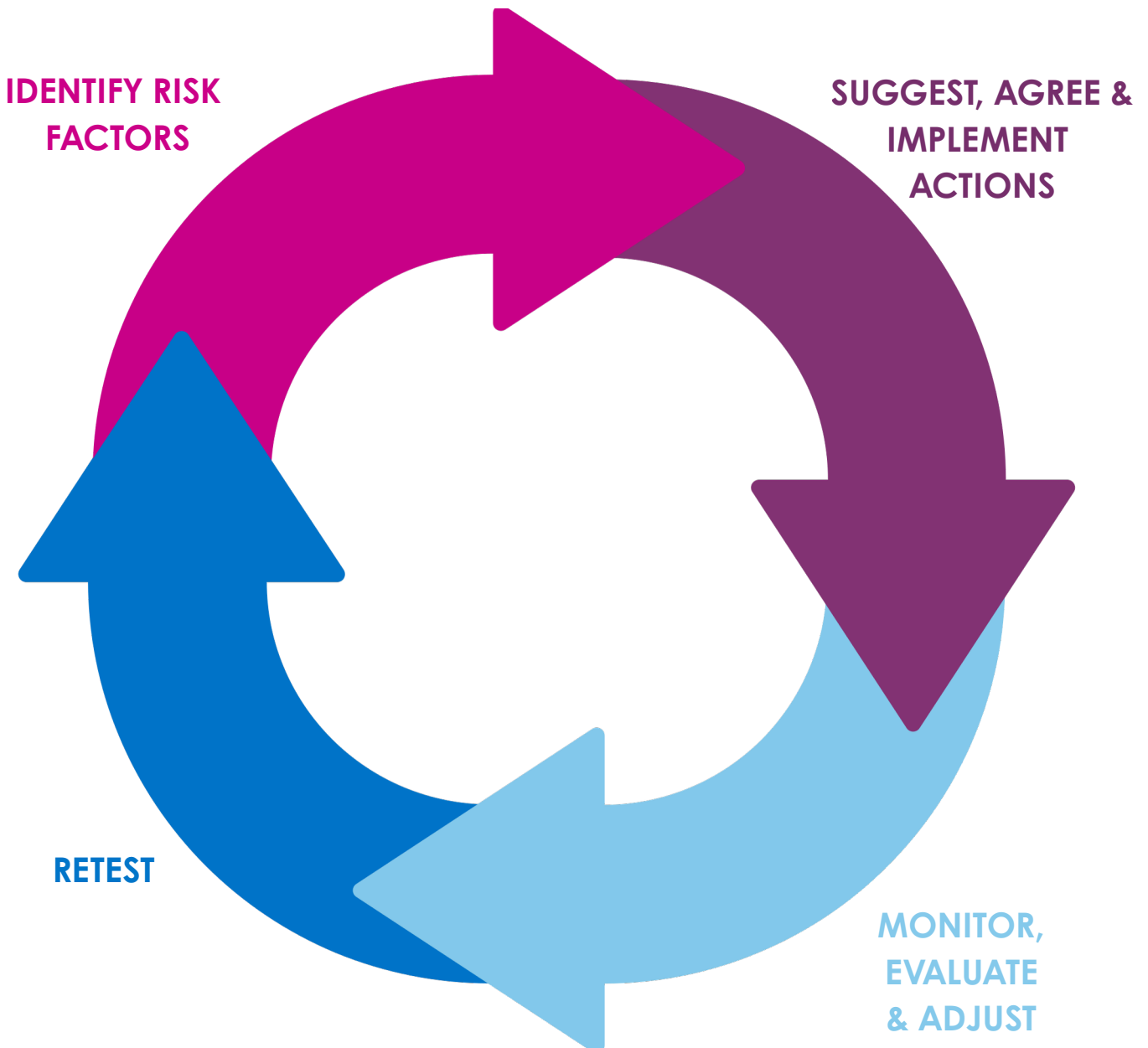
It's better to regret something you did than something you didn't do, especially if this is a risk to someone's safety.

In addition, if at any time you are aware of any illegality, you are duty bound to alert the relevant authorities.

ALWAYS FOLLOW UP AND CLOSE THE LOOP.

RISK ASSESSMENT GOOD PRACTICE

Identify Early Indicators Of Mental Ill-health
Develop A Connection
Engage In Conversation
Actively Encourage
Listen Empathetically
Support And Signpost



MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS ENCOUNTERS FORM

We recommend that you log the support conversations you have with your colleagues to see how much support is being used and spot any organisation-wide patterns. This is an example form of how you can collect information.

Note: All information on this form is confidential and should only be shared in line with organisational policies on mental health support and privacy.

How to handle immediate danger

A reminder that confidentiality does not apply when a person is a danger to themselves or others. Ensure company specific policies indicate who in the organisation to contact in an emergency and the process that follows.

1. Basic information

Date of encounter:

Time of encounter:

Location (if applicable):

Length of encounter:

Encounter method:

- In person
- Phone
- Video Call
- Messaging (Email, chat, etc)
- Other:

2. Individual information:

Unique Identifier:

Age Group:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

Gender (optional):



MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS ENCOUNTERS FORM

3. Encounter Details

Primary Topic(s) Discussed (check all that apply):

- Stress or Burnout
- Work-Life Balance
- Anxiety or Depression
- Conflict with Colleagues
- Personal Issues Affecting Work
- Bereavement or Loss
- Mental Health Education/Resources
- Referral to Professional Help
- Other:



Summary of the Encounter

(Please include a brief, factual summary of the discussion, while avoiding specific personal details to maintain privacy.)

4. Support Provided Support Type:

- Listening and Emotional Support
- Guidance on Mental Health Resources
- Suggested Coping Strategies
- Referral to Mental Health Professional
- Referral to Other Resources (e.g., HR, EAP)
- Follow-Up Scheduled
- Other:

Follow-Up Needed:

- Yes
- No
- If yes, specify follow-up plan:

5. Mental Health Champion's Reflections (Optional)

(For personal reflection and growth as a Mental Health Champion. Not to be shared without explicit consent.)

- How confident did you feel in supporting this individual?
- Very Confident
- Somewhat Confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat Unconfident
- Very Unconfident
- Areas for Improvement or Future Support Needed:

MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS ENCOUNTERS FORM

6. Additional Notes

(Include any relevant notes, observations, or considerations that may help in future encounters, without revealing personal details.)

7. Consent and Confidentiality Confirmation

Did the individual provide consent to log this encounter (in line with organisation's policies)?

- Yes
- No

Confidentiality Guidelines Acknowledged

- Yes, I have logged this encounter in a way that respects the individual's privacy and confidentiality.

MHC Signature (if required):

Date of Submission:

Note: This form should be stored securely in compliance with data protection policies and reviewed only by authorised personnel. If urgent concerns arise, refer immediately to designated mental health professionals or crisis response teams as per organisational guidelines.

This form allows Mental Health Champions to document their encounters while maintaining confidentiality and provides structured prompts for consistent support across encounters.

CREATING A SAFE SPACE: WORKSHOP GROUND RULES

BE HERE NOW: TECH OFF OR ON SILENT

It's hard to engage with this session, and the people in it, if you have other distractions. Please give this session your full attention; use it as an opportunity to shut the outside world off and invest this time in yourself.

PARTICIPATION: WHAT YOU PUT IN IS WHAT YOU GET OUT

Your learning is your responsibility; the more you engage, the more you and everyone else will benefit.

HONESTY AND RESPECT

Be honest with yourself and others. Offer genuine experiences and opinions, as will the facilitator and others in this session. If you don't agree with someone, that's okay, it's just an opinion.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Be non-judgemental and open to new ideas. Think of it like an experiment where you are curious about the outcome.

CONFIDENTIALITY

What is said in this session stays in this session. We are creating a safe and trusted space for people to express themselves within a supportive and encouraging environment.

USING "I..." STATEMENTS

The facilitator might use "I..." statements like "I feel..." or "I have done..." Don't worry, they're not making this session all about them. It is a device they use to share knowledge and experiences whilst protecting people's privacy and the confidentiality of other groups.

SAFEGUARDING

There is an exception to confidentiality, and that is safeguarding. We have a duty of care to you. Due to the safe environment we create, where people might explore things for the first time, and the emotive nature of the subject matter, sometimes this can stir up strong feelings. We always inform the group about support resources available to them during the session.

If at any time the facilitator thinks that anyone is at risk of harm to themselves or others, we will follow our safeguarding procedure to ensure that the individual is okay. We are very discreet and make sure the individual knows exactly where to go for help and support.

International Wellbeing Insights takes its duty of care very seriously. If at any time the facilitator is aware of any illegality, we are duty bound to alert the relevant authorities.

EXAMPLE GROUND RULES

CHAMPIONS AGREEMENT

What your champion expects from you

- Always attend all meetings on time.
- Always be prepared for the session:
 - a) Check what you have achieved against your tasks.
 - b) List what is still outstanding with your explanation for not completing the tasks and email it to your champion 24 hours prior to your next session (if you have booked more than one session).
 - c) Consider what actions may be necessary prior to sessions.
- Be honest at all times.
- Agree that your champion can challenge you if you are deceiving yourself or in any areas they see appropriate.
- Be willing and enthusiastic about trying new methods that your champion may suggest from time to time.
- Accept and willingly work on direct, honest feedback received.
- At all times, work in partnership with your champion.
- Be prepared to work on all areas of your life with your champion.
- Arrange for payment to be made in advance of all sessions. If you require a receipt, request it in advance.
- Send any forms back promptly and fully completed.
- Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone; growth is challenging.

What you can expect from your champion

- Conduct all dealings with you with absolute dignity, respect, honesty, confidentiality, and as an equal.
- Always conduct the session with integrity, responsibility, and accountability.
- Always attend all meetings on time.
- Always be prepared for your session.
- Treat all information discussed with you or written to you with confidentiality. Your champion will not divulge any part thereof to any third party, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1974/1998 amendments (excluding the police or a legal body).
- Be committed to both the spirit and the letter of any agreements made with you.
- Not defraud, misrepresent, deceive, or mislead you.
- Recommend the services of other institutions or professionals if appropriate to your outcomes. These services are offered without liability, obligation, or redress to the company or your champion.
- Share with you their knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise where appropriate and when they deem necessary.
- Challenge any self-deceptions that hinder your progress towards your ultimate outcomes.
- Give you all the assistance, help, support, encouragement, and guidance necessary to fulfil your outcomes.

ACTION PLAN



1. IDENTIFY EARLY INDICATORS OF MENTAL ILL-HEALTH
2. DEVELOP A CONNECTION
3. ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION
4. ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE
5. LISTEN EMPATHETICALLY AND WITHOUT JUDGEMENT
6. SAFEGUARD, SIGNPOST & SUPPORT



KNOWLEDGE is only power, if you **APPLY** it or take

ACTION

BUDDY SUPPORT

- **WHO WILL YOU MAKE YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE TO OVER THE NEXT 30-60 DAYS?**
- **HOW OFTEN WILL YOU MEET AND WHAT METHOD WILL YOU USE?**



MY ACTION PLAN

30/60 DAY CHALLENGE

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER... ONLY IF YOU APPLY IT OR TAKE ACTION

FOCUSING ON THE I.D.E.A.L.S. FRAMEWORK:

- **HOW CAN YOU INCORPORATE THIS INTO YOUR ROLE AS A MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION?**
- **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BE MORE MENTALLY HEALTHY AND SET A GOOD EXAMPLE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU PRACTICE AND APPLY**
- **THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF THE CHAMPIONS COURSE?**

ACTION POINT 1: **IDENTIFY EARLY INDICATORS OF MENTAL ILL-HEALTH.**

ACTION POINT 2: **DEVELOP A CONNECTION.**

ACTION POINT 3: **ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION.**

ACTION POINT 4: **ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE.**

ACTION POINT 5: **LISTEN EMPATHETICALLY AND WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.**

ACTION POINT 6: **SUPPORT AND SIGNPOST.**

BUDDY SYSTEM: WHO WILL YOU MAKE YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE TO OVER THE NEXT 30–60 DAYS?

BUDDY SYSTEM: HOW OFTEN WILL YOU MEET, AND WHAT METHOD WILL YOU USE?

MY ACTION PLAN

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER... ONLY IF YOU APPLY IT OR TAKE ACTION

Write down a plan with points of action, what do you aim to achieve as a result of this workshop?

Thinking back to the 3 boundary areas: personal, organizational, role, Explore these areas are create your own boundaries, what are your own ground rules in this role of a mental health champion?

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES

ROLE BOUNDARIES

RESOURCES

FIND YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PROVIDER

CONNECT WITH THE MARS OMBUDSMAN TEAM

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATE HEALTH & WELLBEING TEAM FOR FURTHER NATIONAL SERVICES

GLOBAL BE WELL TOGETHER SITE

MARS ENERGY MANAGEMENT

ASSOCIATE HEALTH & WELLBEING - MENTAL HEALTH (MARS.COM)

MVH4YOU

MAS HUB (MARS ASSOCIATE SURVEY)

ASK TRAINING

LINKEDIN LEARNING

ONE MIND

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WELLBEING INSIGHTS

Big ideas, inspiring stories, robust ethics and strong principles and a values driven approach have been at the heart of our organisation since our inception.

We believe that wellbeing isn't just a perk, it's the foundation of a thriving, high-performing, and sustainable workplace. Our mission is simple but powerful: to empower organisations and individuals to take control of their wellbeing, creating cultures where people don't just survive but truly thrive.

We've been at the forefront of workplace wellbeing since 2003, helping organisations worldwide build happier, healthier, and more resilient teams. But we're not here to tick boxes or promote one-off initiatives, we're here to drive meaningful, lasting change.

Our mission is to maximise physical, mental, emotional and social health as well as improve relationships, performance, productivity, creativity, morale, recruitment and retention by creating a resilient workforce and equipping them to cope with change and adversity.

For more information or to book a workshop or a free no-obligation consultation, see www.wellbeing.work or call +44 (0) 203 142 8659 or email info@stress.org.uk



NOTES

NOTES

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We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally.
We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

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www.wellbeing.work

We have supported many organisations, including:



The Commonwealth

