

Support One Another

How to Talk to Your Coworkers About Mental Health



Are you feeling the effects of workplace stress or worried about your coworkers? Are you looking for ways to support one another? Here are some tips:

1. Be respectful.

Check on your coworkers. A simple “How’s it going?” could start a meaningful conversation. If someone does not want to talk, be respectful and say that you are available to listen at another time. Other questions you can ask to get the conversation going:

- How are you feeling?
- Are you keeping in touch with your support system (e.g., family and friends)?
- How can I help?

2. Listen compassionately.

If someone wants to talk, give them your undivided attention. Put away devices, make eye contact, and have an open body position (look at them and do not cross your arms or legs). Then listen without judgement.

3. Determine if more assistance is needed.

A coworker might just need to talk about what is bothering them. However, if someone mentions or shows any of the following signs or symptoms, they might need additional support:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people
- Having low or no energy
- Having unexplained aches and pains, such as constant stomachaches or headaches
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Excessive smoking, drinking, or using drugs, including prescription medications
- Worrying a lot of the time
- Feeling guilty but not sure why
- Thinking of self-harm or suicide

It may not be appropriate for you to offer advice, but do share resources or information about how to get help (e.g., refer to your human resources department or an employee assistance program).

4. Check back later.

It can be hard to strike a balance between checking in and giving space. If your concern comes from a sincere place, your coworkers will likely appreciate that you care enough to check in, listen, and provide reassurance when they need it.