

## What this fact sheet covers

- Ways to support your colleagues
- What might alert you to the need to have a conversation about someone's mental health?
- Five simple steps to an effective conversation
- Help Seeking
- What if someone talks about suicide?

## Ways to support your colleagues

- Support colleagues by staying connected and noticing changes in mood and/or behaviour
- Access online resources and information for tips on how you can help
- Offer support through [Staywell](https://www.stayinformed.com.au/staywell-hub) resources <https://www.stayinformed.com.au/staywell-hub>
- Listen and talk to anyone struggling with a mental health issue
- Refer to the '[10 ways to be there for someone](https://www.beyondblue.org.au)' resource on the Beyond Blue website <https://www.beyondblue.org.au> for simple practical strategies you can draw on to support your peers

## What might alert you to the need to have a conversation about someone's mental health?

Changes in behaviour like:

- a change in usual posture, for example, head lowered, slouching
- not smiling as much as usual
- aggression and irritability towards others
- talking about unusual/disturbing thoughts
- excessive worrying and procrastination
- increased absenteeism
- reduced productivity
- decreased personal care
- use of drugs or alcohol
- reduced activity and energy
- being more negative and critical of others and the workplace
- social withdrawal or isolation seen by becoming more unavailable, not answering phone or getting back to colleagues or clients, not contributing in meetings

## Five simple steps to an effective conversation

1. Choose a private and comfortable place to have the conversation and make sure you have enough time. Avoid leaving it until late in the day when you both may be tired.
2. Mention the change in behaviour you've noticed and add something positive, for example, 'You're usually so...' Encourage the person to talk by using open-ended questions, for example, 'What can you tell me about it?' if the person is reluctant to talk, ask more questions, don't give up.
3. Listen actively, giving the person time to talk without interrupting or giving advice. Avoid the temptation to fill the silences. Reflect back some of the things you've heard, to show you understand.
4. Encourage the person to seek help by asking what they plan to do about it and helping them to decide on the first step(s) towards a solution, if appropriate.
5. Follow up by speaking to the person again, for example, a week later. Ask them how they are, what steps they've managed to take since you last met.

In a conversation with someone you are concerned about, focus on encouraging them to talk while you listen supportively. Make sure they are aware of the types of help available and if appropriate help them to take steps towards a solution.

Remember that disclosure can bring benefits although it needs to be respected that this is an individual choice.

Visit the [R U OK?](http://www.ruok.org.au) website [www.ruok.org.au](http://www.ruok.org.au) for more tips on starting a conversation.

## Help Seeking

Types of help available:

### Employee Assistance Program

Contact details:

- TfNSW, Sydney Metro & Roads and Maritime: 1300 360 364
- Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink: 1300 364 213
- State Transit: 1300 687 327

### GP

Encourage your colleague to see their GP, who can provide accurate diagnosis, referral to a psychologist or psychiatrist, and a Medicare mental health care plan.

### Phone lines

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978
- Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

## Websites

- [Staywell](https://www.stayinformed.com.au/staywell-hub) resources <https://www.stayinformed.com.au/staywell-hub>
- [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
- [www.SANE.org](http://www.SANE.org)
- [www.mindhealthconnect.org.au](http://www.mindhealthconnect.org.au)
- [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)
- [www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)

## What if someone talks about suicide?

If you are acutely concerned for someone's safety, stay with them.

Get someone to call a family member/friend/carer/their doctor. Ask if they can attend then take the person to see a mental health professional.

In an emergency situation, call 000 and stay with the person until an ambulance arrives.

Alternatively, take the person to a hospital Emergency department if you're very concerned and unable to get anyone out to you.

Other advice is available from:

- Lifeline
- Suicide Call Back Service
- MensLine Australia

This resource has been developed for Transport for NSW as at June 2019. Please go to the Black Dog Institute website for the most up to date information: [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

