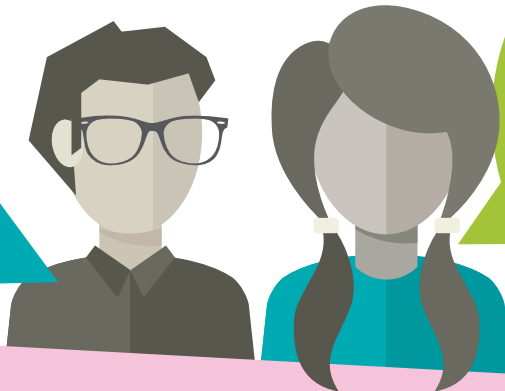




Starting the conversation

We believe talking about mental health can help you and those around you to be happier and healthier. This World Mental Health Day, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Ireland is calling on everyone to have a meaningful 10 minute conversation — with a friend, a family member, a colleague or student about their mental health.

Mental Health First Aid teaches people the skills and confidence to recognize the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right support. Having a 10 minute chat is the first step on that journey.



We don't often talk about our mental health so it might seem a little daunting to start a conversation about it but it's important to remember you don't have to be an expert. MHFA Ireland has put together some ideas for how you can start the conversation.

Most common ways in which poor mental health in the workplace affects performance



Find it difficult to concentrate



Take longer to do tasks



Have difficulty making decisions



Find it difficult juggling a number of tasks



Less patient with customers / clients

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2016) Employee Outlook: Focus on mental health in the workplace 2016 [online]. London: CIPD.



Choosing a setting



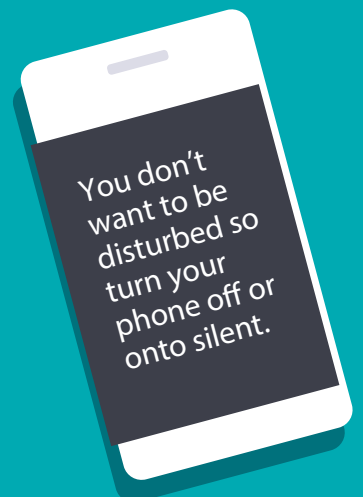
Make a hot drink or grab a glass of water. It's a great way to ask someone a quick 'how are you' and ask for a private meeting



Meeting outside the workplace in a neutral space such as a café might feel less intimidating



Give yourself plenty of time so you don't appear to be in a hurry—10 minutes may be enough but if you need longer then go ahead





Talking Tips



Keep the chat positive and supportive, exploring the issues and how you may be able to help



Keep your body language open and non-confrontational



Be empathetic and take them seriously



Do not offer glib advice such as "pull yourself together" or "cheer up"



Take into account cultural differences in communication styles e.g. how much eye contact is appropriate



Useful questions to ask

How are you feeling at the moment?

How long have you felt like this – is it an ongoing issue?

Who do you feel you can go to for support?

Are there any work related factors which are contributing to how you are feeling?

Is there anything we can do to help?



How to listen



Give the person your full focus and listen without interrupting.

Listen to their words, tone of voice and body language – all will give clues to how they are feeling.

Accept them as they are

Respect the person's feelings, experiences and values although they may be different from yours. Do not judge or criticise because of your own beliefs and attitudes

Get on their wavelength

Place yourself in the other person's shoes and demonstrate to them that you hear and understand what they are saying and feeling.

Listen non judgementally

Be genuine — show that you accept the person and their values by what you say and do.



What happens next?



Keep the conversation going – follow up and ask them how they are doing. Reassure them that your door is always open, and really mean it. It's particularly essential to keep in touch with an employee who is off sick.



Give reassurance that there are lots of sources of support and some of these might be available through their workplace, such as the HR or Occupational Health department, Employee Assisted Programmes or onsite counselling.



If you work in a company with limited support services it's also appropriate to encourage the person to visit their GP for further assessment or referral to mental health services



#mhfaireland this World Mental Health Day

To find out more about how employers can support mental wellbeing and supportive behaviours, visit www.mhfaireland.ie

