



CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR CONVERSATIONS

**A playbook on
WORKPLACE
MENTAL
WELL-BEING**

Why create safe spaces for conversations?

Safe spaces for conversations around mental well-being are important because they signal to employees that it is normal and acceptable to talk about mental well-being.

This removes the fear of being judged or disenfranchised. Such fears may make it harder for employees to seek help, resulting in their concerns being unaddressed or adversely affecting their mental well-being.

An example of such an initiative is provided here:

<http://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/blog/the-importance-of-time-to-talk-day/>



Steps to implementation

1

Pick the right occasion

Decide on the modality and frequency of the activity.



Example: A single space for the whole firm

Conversations on mental well-being can be done together with other events or town halls on company culture or welfare. This primes senior management and employees to discuss topics related to mental well-being.

Example: Many small spaces de-centralised to accommodate work schedules

For larger organisations with employees working across time zones or shifts, conversations on mental well-being can be done in smaller groups that they are familiar with. This can be done via weekly check-ins.

For example, your organisation can consider designating the last hour of every work week for employees and supervisors to gather for such conversations.

De-centralising such conversations allow teams to be more accommodating of different personal schedules and work demands.



2

Have top management lead the way

Organisations may wish to look for champions amongst senior management to start such conversations, so that employees feel safer doing likewise.

- Having a member in senior management walk-the-talk and attend mental well-being events signal the organisation's priority in this area.
- This senior management representative can share personal anecdotes such as how the initiative has positively impacted his/her life, or how he/she copes and sets clear boundaries between work and personal life.



Potential programme and activities:

- For a start, organisations may wish to discuss existing efforts and suggestions to improve mental well-being.
- Over time, organisations may also wish to utilise these time slots for mental well-being related activities such as talks, or even family days.



3

Provide a sense of safety

Make clear that anything shared during the sessions will be kept confidential, and will not have any bearing on employees' appraisals.

Employees should not be pressured to share beyond what they are prepared to.



“How do you get your employees to trust you? Senior managers may need to be nudged, to have the capacity and commitment to walk the talk, as this may not come as second nature to them. It's the small things like these that matter.”

– Regional HR Leader

HOW SOME HAVE DONE IT

SECTOR: Finance

What they did:

Created online and physical safe spaces for employees to talk about mental well-being and to de-stress

How they did it:

- Rolled out a “mental health pledge” campaign to communicate the organisation’s support for employees’ mental well-being
- Created an online well-being hub to communicate information on mental well-being such as stories from leaders sharing vulnerabilities and personal stories relating to mental well-being, such as personal loss
- Set aside time at the end of every work week for employees to socialise over snacks and beverages

Key ingredients for success:

- Management’s participation and walking the talk gives employees confidence to take part in activities and discussions
- Employees who shared that they needed a break were supported by line managers, who allowed up to two days of special leave without the need for medical certificates. Awareness of such support has helped more employees to feel safe stepping forward

“I think with all these leaders stepping up and admitting that they have vulnerabilities and they are not super, they help to create the tone that it is okay for employees to say that they need help.”

– HR Director, Manufacturing Company



This booklet is part of the series
of initiatives from

A playbook on WORKPLACE MENTAL WELL-BEING

Contact Us

For more information and support on workplace mental well-being initiatives, you can visit Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council's website at **www.wshc.sg/mentalwellbeing**.

The resources in this playbook are not exhaustive. Should you wish to feature or share your company's mental well-being practices and learnings, please contact WSH Council through the above website.

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