



Effective Strategies for Well-Being Conversations at Work



IMPORTANCE OF WELL-BEING CONVERSATIONS

Regular check-ins on employees' well-being are essential for fostering psychological safety, enhancing diversity, and creating a supportive work environment. To ensure these conversations are effective, it's crucial to carefully consider their structure and purpose.

Regular well-being conversations are a proactive way to address mental health in the workplace. They take into account employees' individual needs and improve psychological safety. A well-rounded well-being conversation considers various aspects of an employee's life, including mental and physical health, personal circumstances, lifestyle, and financial well-being.

These conversations are typically facilitated by line managers or supervisors, with a coaching approach recommended to help leaders feel more comfortable and effective in this area.

Preparing for and Conducting Well-Being Conversations

Before the Conversation

PREPARATION STEPS

Self-Assessment

Ensure you're in the right headspace for this conversation. Can it be held confidentially? Do you have enough time to dedicate to it?

Consider Individual Factors

Reflect on any recent life events or cultural background that might affect the employee.

Comfort and Reassurance

Understand that not everyone feels comfortable sharing personal details. Offer reassurance without pressuring the employee to disclose.

Support Information

Have details of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other relevant support ready if needed.

Preparing for and Conducting Well-Being Conversations

During the Conversation

KEY QUESTIONS AND APPROACH

Start Simple

Begin with a straightforward question like "Are you okay?" or "How are you?" and confirm if it's a good time to talk.

Clarify Needs

Seek clarification on any concerns raised without jumping to solutions.

Discuss Support Options

Explore what support is needed. This may include flexible work arrangements, time off, or access to EAP services.

Agree on Next Steps

For some, just having the opportunity to express themselves is enough. Agree on any necessary next steps.

Documentation

Generally, these conversations don't need to be documented unless a formal request for flexible working arrangements or a grievance is raised, which should be managed per organisational processes.

Key Skills for Effective Well-Being Conversations

ACTIVE LISTENING

Be fully present, noting both verbal and non-verbal cues from the employee.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Recognise and understand both your emotions and those of the employee.

AUTHENTICITY

Communicate genuinely to build trust.

VALIDATION

Acknowledge the employee's feelings and experiences without rushing to provide solutions.

NON-JUDGMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Use open-ended questions and non-judgmental language to encourage the employee to talk.

EMPATHY

Show genuine care and understanding of the employee's situation, which helps in building a strong connection.

PATIENCE

Give the employee time to express themselves fully without feeling rushed.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

While not rushing to solutions, having the ability to collaboratively explore potential options can be helpful.

DISCRETION

Maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive information with care.

BODY LANGUAGE AWARENESS

Be conscious of your own body language to ensure it is open and non-threatening.

RESILIENCE

Manage your own emotions and stay composed, even in challenging conversations.

ADAPTABILITY

Be flexible and willing to adjust your approach based on the employee's needs and responses.



Guidance

Sometimes, employees might feel more comfortable discussing their well-being with a trusted colleague. It's a good idea for organisations to provide guidance and support as part of a broader well-being program. By standardising well-being conversations and clearly defining their purpose, companies can create a healthier, more supportive work environment.

Checklist for Proactive Well-Being Conversations

Preparation

1. Self Assessment

- Are you in the right headspace for this conversation?
- Can it be held confidentially?
- Do you have sufficient time?

2. Consider Individual Factors

- Recent life events
- Cultural background

3. Comfort and Reassurance

- Understand comfort levels regarding personal disclosure.
- Offer reassurance without pressure.

4. Support Information

- Have details of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other support ready.

During the Conversation

1. Start Simple

- Begin with "Are you okay?" or "How are you?"
- Confirm if it's a good time to talk.

2. Clarify Needs

- Ask for clarification on concerns raised.
- Avoid jumping to solutions immediately.

3. Discuss Support Options

- Explore support needs such as flexible work arrangements, time off, or EAP services.

4. Agree on Next Steps

- Determine if further action is needed.
- Agree on specific follow-up actions if required.

5. Documentation

- Document only if there's a formal request or grievance.

Checklist for Proactive Well-Being Conversations

Follow-Up

1. Prompt Action

- Address agreed actions quickly.
- Provide the necessary support and tackle any concerns.

2. Determine Next Steps

- Assess the need for a follow-up check-in.
- Schedule follow-ups based on the situation (next day, next week, etc.).

Best Practices

1. Environment

- Conduct conversations in a private, comfortable setting.
- Ensure focus and confidentiality.

2. Regular Check-Ins

- Schedule regular well-being conversations.
- Be flexible to accommodate changes in well-being.

3. Employee-Led Discussions

- Allow employees to lead the conversation.
- Managers provide structure but avoid dominating the discussion.

4. Maintain Boundaries

- Keep well-being conversations separate from performance reviews.
- Refer concerning issues to professional help.

3. Support Leaders' Mental Health

- Encourage self-care for managers.
- Recognise the potential challenges in these conversations.

Further information

Beyond Blue

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Black Dog Institute

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/creating-mentally-healthy-workplaces.pdf>

Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mhfa.org.au/>

Safe Work Australia

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>



Need more detailed advice?

Schedule a call to explore how we can work together.

m. 0422 841 203

e. kath@unscriptedhr.com.au

DISCLAIMER: The content contained in this document is provided to You for general information purposes only and is not a substitute for legal, business or financial advice. Unscripted Human Resources recommends that you seek independent advice before relying on any information, tools, case examples, or guidance in this document. Unscripted Human Resources will not be liable in any way for your use of, or reliance upon, the information provided.