

TOOL 07.

HAVING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

01

CREATING A SAFE SPACE TO HEAR ABOUT HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR

Sometimes a leader may need to be the person to open a conversation about possible harmful behaviour that the person may be experiencing.

Don't assume harmful behaviour is not happening because no one has reported it.

As a leader, you have a duty of care towards your team members, and this may mean you need to instigate the conversation.

Here is some guidance about getting that conversation started.

Much of the content on this and the following page has been adapted from the R U OK website, here: <https://www.ruok.org.au/work>

SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MIGHT NOT BE OK

Encourage reporting - just like you would with physical safety hazards. The hazards we can't see are just as important to identify and act on as the ones that may be more visible.

You have observed harmful behaviour directed toward them (ie. as described in **Tool #1**)

You have noticed a change in them over recent week/s.

For example: two or more of the following:

- more tired, flat, run down than usual;
- eating more or less;
- more alcohol than usual;
- sleeping less or waking at night;
- seemingly more nervous, irritable, overwhelmed or withdrawn than usual;
- difficulty concentrating;
- a decline in performance; or
- avoidance of certain peers or general social interactions compared to usual.

TIME FOR A LEADER TO START A CONVERSATION...

TOOL 07. HAVING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (CONT.)

SIMPLE STEPS TO TALK TO A STAFF MEMBER WHO'S NOT OK.

GET READY TO ASK

- BE READY
 - BE PREPARED
 - PICK YOUR MOMENT
-

STARTING A CONVERSATION

- ASK ARE YOU OK?
- LISTEN
- ENCOURAGE ACTION
- CHECK IN



Are you ok?



TOOL 07. HAVING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (CONT.)

GETTING READY TO ASK

BE READY

Be in the headspace to listen and allow enough time

BE PREPARED

Be prepared for the possibility that:

- the person may become emotional or embarrassed
- that you might not have all the answers (that's ok)
- the chat may reveal harmful behaviour you will need to act on, or it might be an entirely personal matter

Know that listening is the most important thing you can do at that moment

PICK YOUR MOMENT

Choose somewhere reasonably private and casual, see if they have time to talk and if they don't, ask when you can come back

STARTING A CONVERSATION

ASK ARE YOU OK?

Be relaxed

Start with an open question "How you going?" or "What's been happening?" or "I've noticed that you're not quite yourself lately. How are you travelling?"

Make an observation. Mention specific things that have made you concerned for them, like "I saw an interaction between you and John where...." or "You seem less chatty than usual. How are you going?"

LISTEN

Take what they say seriously

Don't interrupt or rush the conversation

If they need time to think, try and sit patiently with the silence

Encourage them to explain

If they get angry or upset, stay calm and don't take it personally

Let them know you're asking because you're concerned

DISCUSS POSSIBLE ACTION/S

If there is harmful behaviour which needs addressing, follow the step by step guide on **Tool #3** which includes checking in among other actions.

If there is no workplace harmful behaviour but the person is not okay for other (personal) reasons, you will have still provided an important role by being there to listen.

Be sure to check in with them a few days later:

- Ask if they've found a better way to manage their situation
- If they haven't done anything, keep encouraging them and remind them you're always here if they need a chat
- Understand that sometimes it can take a long time for someone to be ready to see a professional and reinforce the benefits of doing so. You could ask, "Do you think it would be useful if we looked into finding some professional or other support?"

TOOL 07. HAVING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION (CONT.)

02

HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH THE PERSON WHO BEHAVED HARMFULLY

As a leader, you may be faced with the following situations:

- You see someone behaving in a harmful (or potentially harmful) way
- You are advised that one of your team members behaved in a harmful (or potentially harmful) way

A person approaches you and asks for advice about how to have a conversation with someone who has behaved in a harmful (or potentially) harmful way.

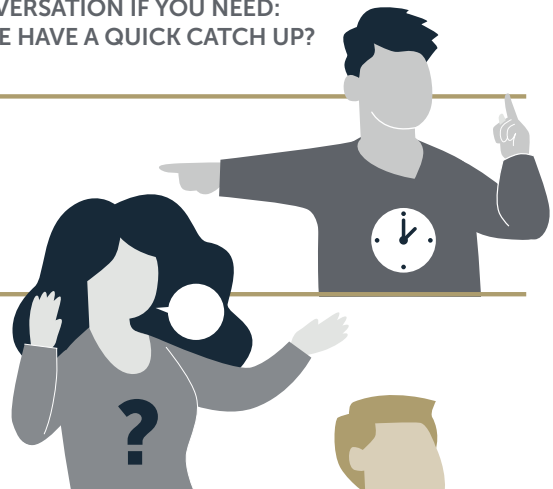
USE THE FOLLOWING GUIDE TO SPEAK TO THE PERSON ABOUT THEIR BEHAVIOUR, OR TO COACH YOUR TEAM MEMBERS HOW TO RAISE IT:

START WITH A MICRO YES

TO GET INTO THE CONVERSATION IF YOU NEED:
E.G. DO YOU MIND IF WE HAVE A QUICK CATCH UP?

SITUATION

EXPLAIN WHEN AND WHERE



BEHAVIOUR

EXPLAIN WHAT THE BEHAVIOUR WAS



IMPACT

EXPLAIN THE IMPACT OF THE BEHAVIOUR ON YOU



ACTION

EXPLAIN WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE THE OTHER PERSON TO DO

REMEMBER: A PERSON WON'T CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOUR IF IT'S NEVER BROUGHT TO THEIR ATTENTION THAT WHAT THEY ARE DOING IS "NOT OK".