

MINDMATTERS SPOTLIGHTS

# STAFF WELLBEING ACTIVITIES

Talking



# Staff wellbeing activities: Talking

## What's it about?

How you talk about mental health with others can have a huge impact. It's not always easy to know what to say when you are asking after the health of a friend or colleague, and quite often we don't respond thoughtfully and honestly when others ask how we are.

One of the foundations of a mentally healthy workplace is culture where giving and receiving support is seen as part of positive staff interaction. Building your confidence in having these kinds of conversations is the first step, as is developing an appropriate, positive and shared language around mental health.

## The activities

The activities in this focus area can be undertaken by individual or with other staff members. The activities are to be seen as examples only and it is important to note that there are particular cultural and contextual considerations to take into account when discussing mental health and wellbeing.

School leadership and wellbeing staff planning to run group activities with the whole staff will benefit from careful consideration the context and needs of the school.

For this reason, schools are recommended to review the [How to Facilitate MindMatters Modules Facilitator Guide](#) when preparing for delivery of staff professional learning relating to mental health. The guide contains practical information on creating safe adult learning environments e.g. How to: Develop an agreement for working together (page 8).


Further guidance on introducing staff wellbeing conversations to staff groups is included in the [Staff wellbeing Spotlight: Sharing](#) document.


- 1. Activity – Connecting with colleagues** Explore the benefit of recognising the emotional component of working and socialising with your colleagues.
- 2. Activity – Talking about mental health** Explore information, resources and tools available to safely discuss mental health in the workplace.



 **TIME:** As required

 **TARGET:** School staff group

 **PURPOSE:** Groups and organisations can benefit from recognising the emotional component of working and socialising together.

 **MATERIALS:**

- Online device
- Time to connect with colleagues

## 1. Connecting with colleagues

Many staff don't have opportunities for conversations with each another. Try to set aside some time for a real conversation this week with other members of your group and try to talk beyond work worries or issues.

### Instructions:

1. Try these three conversation topics on a one-to-one basis. You can limit the conversation to less than five minutes.
  - If you weren't here at the moment, where would you rather be?
  - Who is the most resilient person you know?
  - When were you last excited about your job?

These questions can be used with people who don't know one another that well and the conversations will ensure more links across the school community.

2. Brainstorm innovative opportunities for all staff to connect, build positive working relationships and build workplace morale. Consider the range of current meeting times you have and other opportunities you have to build collaboration and relationships at a personal and professional level.
3. Plan to implement and monitor strategies to improve staff collaboration and connectedness.

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### Related resources:

- **TED Talk – Dr Brené Brown on empathy.** Build awareness of effective language for building connections with others. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw>



 **TIME:** As required

 **TARGET:** School staff group (or individuals)

 **PURPOSE:** To explore information, resources and tools available to safely discuss mental health in the workplace.

 **MATERIALS:**

- Online device

## 2. Talking about mental health

### Instructions:


1. Talking about mental health in the workplace can be challenging but there are real benefits when staff have open and supportive conversations about mental health and wellbeing.
2. For individual staff who may be experiencing a mental health difficulty, choosing whether to tell your employer or colleagues is a very personal decision. There is useful information and tools for weighing up your decision on the [Heads Up website](#).
  - For staff concerned about a colleague there are some great resources to help plan out how to approach the conversation on the following websites:
    - [Mindhealthconnect](#)
    - [RUOK? At work](#)
    - [beyondblue \[Having the conversation\]](#) for more on how to plan a conversation with someone you are concerned about.
3. Read the article '[How are you? Why don't we respond honestly?](#)' by Mel Schwartz and consider opportunities you might have for building honest, authentic communication with colleagues.

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### Related resources

- **Talking about a mental health condition at work** Resources to help you discuss a mental health condition with your colleagues or employer. <https://www.headsup.org.au/taking-care-of-myself-at-work/talking-about-a-mental-health-condition-at-work>
- **Dos and don'ts of discussing mental health** You may find it difficult talking to someone with a mental health issue. This online resource provides useful tips and FAQs about the do's and don'ts when discussing mental health. <http://www.mindhealthconnect.org.au/dos-and-donts-discussing-mental-health-issues>
- **R U OK? at Work** Download the free communication kits to help get your staff talking. <https://www.ruok.org.au/inspire-conversations/ruok-at-work>
- **Having the conversation** Resources to help you have a conversation about depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts. <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/have-the-conversation>

MindMatters is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools developed by *beyondblue* with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

See more MindMatters resources at [www.mindmatters.edu.au](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au)

This information is to be used as a guide only and is not intended as a substitute to formal training or professional medical advice on mental health or suicide prevention. Staff are advised to always refer to school policies and procedures in the first instance. This information is provided by Beyond Blue Limited in good faith and on an 'as is' basis. While every care has been taken in preparing this information, Beyond Blue Limited makes no representation or warranty as to the reliability or completeness of the information contained in this document. You must make your own assessment of the information contained in this document and if you choose to rely on it, it is wholly at your own risk. To the extent permitted by law, Beyond Blue Limited will not be liable to you or anyone else for any loss or damage, however caused, which may be directly or indirectly suffered arising from the use of, or reliance upon this information.