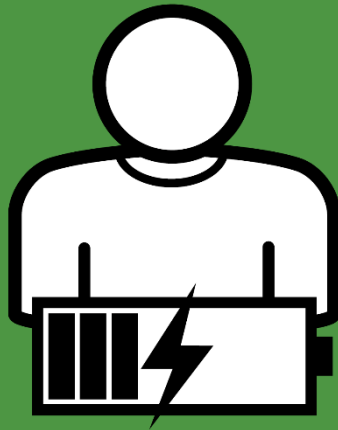


Fatigue Reduction: How to Talk About Fatigue



Fatigue Reduction

What makes a good fatigue conversation?

Good conversations are one of the best weapons to understand and fight against fatigue risk in your team. They demonstrate your commitment to safety and the well-being of your team. They also help you to make good decisions about what to do next.

Fatigue conversations are needed when someone reports that they feel too tired to work or raises a concern about fatigue at work, but you can build a culture that encourages open communication about fatigue by openly discussing it in team meetings or briefings.

It is important to record any actions identified during the conversation and agree a follow-up date. Each route/function has their own templated Fatigue Management Plan you can use to record this information. Get in touch with [your local fatigue lead](#) if you're unsure where to find this.

Here are some tips for one-to-one fatigue conversations:

Golden Rule: Listen and let them do most of the talking

1. Consider in advance how you will approach this type of conversation. Use the worksheet on the next page to help you prepare to have good fatigue conversations, that suit your own style and work situation.
2. Stay calm and positive – If you don't like what you hear, or it creates work or stress for you it can be hard to hide. But showing negative emotions can discourage people from being honest in the conversation and reporting in future, so avoid this.
3. Approach the conversation with an open mind, try not to judge the individual or the situation before you have listened.
4. Demonstrate care for safety e.g. 'I appreciate you reporting this'.
5. Demonstrate care for the individual e.g. 'It must have been difficult coming to work when you felt like this.'
6. Keep asking OPEN questions to fully understand the situation. Open questions start with the words 'What...?', 'How...?', 'When...?', 'Why...?', 'Where...?', 'Who...?'. or phrases like 'Tell me...', 'Describe to me...'
7. Be respectful of the individual's private life.
8. Try to understand the cause of the fatigue and explore solutions together. Ask the individual what they can do themselves to avoid fatigue in future, what you can do to support them, and what Network Rail can learn from the situation. This might need to happen at a later time if someone is unable to carry out their duties due to fatigue and you need to quickly make arrangements to cover them.
9. Manage the individual's expectations about any changes that they suggest. Be realistic about how feasible the changes are and how quickly any changes are likely to be implemented.
10. Reassure the individual that the issue will be treated confidentially within company policy. Let them know that you won't speak to anyone about this without first seeking their permission, but with the understanding that there may be occasions where full disclosure is required for staff safety, welfare, wellbeing support or retraining.

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Objective	Example questions or phrases	Phrases I could use
Show you care about safety	<p>'Thanks for telling me about this.'</p> <p>'I'm relieved to find out about this.'</p> <p>'I want to spend some time talking with you about fatigue.'</p>	
Show you care about the individual	<p>'I'm sorry to hear that you had a bad night.'</p> <p>'How are you feeling now?'</p> <p>'How are you coping with your current shift pattern?'</p>	
Find out about the situation when someone has reported a problem	<p>'What happened?'</p> <p>'Why was that?'</p> <p>'What happened last night?'</p> <p>'What happened since your last shift?'</p> <p>'When did you...?'</p> <p>'How did you...?'</p>	
Find out about the situation in a proactive conversation	<p>'How easy is it to stay alert during this shift?'</p> <p>'What makes it easier/harder to stay alert during your shift?'</p> <p>'Tell me more about...'</p> <p>'What effect does that have?'</p>	
Explore solutions together	<p>'How could it be changed to be less tiring?'</p> <p>'What would help you to get more or better sleep?'</p> <p>'What would improve that situation?'</p> <p>'What could you do to overcome that?'</p> <p>'What can I do to support this?'</p>	
Manage expectations about changes	<p>'These are good suggestions; I will need to talk to senior management/health and safety/HR about how feasible it is to put these into practices and how long it will take.'</p> <p>'Realistically, it is more likely that we can change [more feasible proposed solution] than [less feasible proposed solution].'</p> <p>'It might take x weeks/months before we can put this measure in place.'</p>	
Reassure them it will be treated confidentially	<p>'Everything you tell me will be treated with strict confidentiality; I won't speak to anyone about this without first seeking your permission.'</p>	

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Active Listening

Active listening is a key skill that will help the discussion go well. The aims of active listening are to:

- Build trust and rapport
- Feel and demonstrate concern
- Summarise what they've told you to show understanding
- Avoid judgement, but still provide feedback
- Use non-verbal cues (nodding, eye contact, positive body language)
- Use verbal affirmations ("I see", "I know", "I understand")

By listening carefully, you can read into what the individual is saying to identify issues.

Words spoken	What this might indicate
"Reduced or no energy" "Physically or mentally exhausted" "Lack of motivation"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are suffering fatigue • Consider the person's wellbeing • Could be an indicator of other health and wellbeing issues
"I just cannot get to sleep" "I go to sleep but then wake up an hour later"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They may be stressed, worried or anxious about something (could be work or personal) • Bedtime routine may need some improvement. • Their household is noisy/busy? • They sit in bed looking at their phone/tablet? • They could be experiencing insomnia. They need to talk to their GP about this • They have dozed on the couch earlier in the evening
"I have been told I snore loudly" "I have been told that I sometimes stop breathing during sleep"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could be experiencing sleep apnoea. They need to talk to their GP about this
"I have so many pulls on my time" "I am on the go from the minute I wake to the moment I get to bed"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are a carer • They have children • They have a very busy lifestyle
"I have so much work to do I don't know what to do first" "I get so many interruptions I am unable to do the day job"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their workload is too much? • What is affecting their ability to plan and prioritise effectively? • They are the 'go to' person in the office due to their experience/ knowledge/ approachability?
"I have no time for lunch or dinner" "If it was not for coffee, I would not be able to function"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their workload may be too high. • They may be stressed, worried or anxious about something (work or personal). • Reliance on caffeine may indicate they're not getting enough sleep.
"Yes, I am tired, but you just need to get on with it, don't you?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not recognise that they could be suffering from fatigue.

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<p>“I am tired and have made a few mistakes, but my performance is still good” “I can’t go sick, what would the team do without me”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have the desire to push on and work through it • They have a desire to support the team even at their own health cost • Fatigue may not be taken seriously in the team/business area; a cultural shift is needed.
<p>“I have not been feeling well of late”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a medical condition that could be causing fatigue • Their fatigue may be causing secondary health issues
<p>“My partner/ family does not help/ care. As long as their needs are catered for”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could have relationship issues at home • They have not discussed how they feel with their partner/family • They have or are unable to ask for help at home