

Having conversations about mental health



everyone fit
for the future

You don't have to be an expert...

People can often find talking about mental health quite daunting, however if your friend had a broken leg, or he or she had just come out of hospital after an operation, you probably wouldn't think twice about asking how they were. Similarly being able to talk about mental health doesn't require you to be an expert, just doing the little things like asking someone how they are, is all it takes to let someone know you're still thinking about them and can make a big difference to how they're feeling.

Starting a conversation about mental health may be the most difficult part but before you sit down with someone to have a discussion try to think about the following:

- **Atmosphere** – try to keep it relaxed to allow the person to feel comfortable and safe, sitting down in an informal setting.
- **Approach** – you may need to adapt how you approach the subject depending on the individual. Some people prefer to get straight onto the topic at hand whereas others may prefer to discuss everyday things before moving onto more sensitive areas. It is therefore important to know the person you're talking to be able to know what is needed.
- **Focus on them** – remember it is about the individual so try not to jump to conclusions or draw on personal experience as although you may feel you relate they may have a different opinion.

Most importantly when having a conversation with somebody about their mental wellbeing ask them how they are feeling, what they would like to discuss and how you can help them. This provides them with a comfortable environment, allowing them to discuss what they are comfortable sharing with you.

Conversation tips

Every conversation will be different however there a few points to keep in mind when leading a sensitive conversation:

DO

- Ask open questions
- Talk but listen too
- Remind them you are there for support
- Provide information about the Employee Assistance Programme if further support is needed
- Set a time to meet again
- In one to ones, discuss any sources of pressure in the workplace

DON'T

- Think you know everything
- Just talk about mental health
- Try to provide a diagnosis
- Offer a pep talk

Where to find help and support

At Network Rail there are various resources and support mechanisms available to you if you are concerned about your mental wellbeing.

1. Health and Wellbeing Portal:
<http://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing>

2. Employee Assistance Programme:
Call: **0800 358 4858**
or **0330 332 9980**
www.validium.com/vclub

3. Occupational Health:
<https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing/HelpingOthers/Supporting-wellbeing-at-work/Occupational-Health>