

Wellness Tip Sheet

Building supportive relationships at work

When colleagues work well together, everyone benefits. A supportive working environment provides each team member with the best opportunities to thrive and be successful. Read our top tips for supporting colleagues at work.



Social support

“Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.”

– Helen Keller

Top tips

- Find other people who you can turn to for a chat, for instance when you are unsure how you should handle a tricky situation
- Develop some reciprocity in terms of helping one another
- Ask for feedback on your communication style and offer it to others honestly but in a sensitive way (e.g. Using terms like “you might try...” or “it couldn’t hurt to...” rather than “you’ll never get anywhere with that approach”)
- If a colleague seems upset you might take them for a walk or a coffee, getting out of the workplace can help
- Be honest in your dealings with people, avoid backstabbing and gossip, it does nothing to improve workplace morale
- If you see a staff member at any level putting the organisation at risk through their behaviour, make a plan to let them know – this could be through initiating an assertive conversation or through a gradual series of responses that give the message that change is needed (it’s okay to be subtle, unless it’s an urgent issue)
- Help people normalise their problems – often people can feel alone with all the different issues you have to juggle; just saying to a colleague “yes i have experienced that many times” is supportive
- Remember that often people just want to blow off some steam – they don’t want you to do anything more than listen; if in doubt just say “are you wanting me to act on this?” (nodding, asking questions and just being there can be effective as people often talk themselves around to their own solutions, whereas jumping in to problem solve for someone else rarely works)
- If you don’t particularly want to help a colleague, have a good think about why – try to connect them with someone else who can help rather than just giving them the brush off
- Encourage your colleagues to put themselves in their team member’s shoes – a good listener can help by suggesting another perspective (a good general question is: “what do you think they are feeling/thinking about this?”)

- If someone is struggling, make an effort to approach them, rather than isolate them further; you don't have to solve their problems – sometimes support will be enough to motivate someone to take a fresh approach.

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