



Mental Health and Wellbeing

Manager's Guide to Mental Wellbeing



We know that mental health issues are very common — the **World Health Organisation** predicts that one in four people globally will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. However, we also know that mental health challenges range from serious long-term conditions to the worries we all experience as part of everyday life. We all experience mental health and need to do what we can to look after it, in the same way we take care of our physical health.



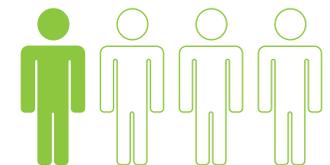
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In the workplace, we must recognise that no-one is immune to mental health issues. They can be experienced by our employees at all levels and can affect anyone irrespective of experience and age. However, research tells us that employer awareness of mental health issues at work is generally low, with only a small proportion of managers being able to spot the signs and symptoms of potential issues amongst their people.

I want us to challenge this statistic within our business and shift our culture to a preventative approach to mental wellbeing.

This **Manager Guide to Mental Wellbeing** has been developed to encourage our managers to openly talk about the subject of mental health with their teams, and to provide them with the help and support they need to confidently approach a situation if they are concerned about the mental wellbeing of an employee.

We want everyone at AECOM to talk about mental health positively and encourage an environment where mental health is recognised as an everyday part of being human. This Manager Guide is a key step in reducing the stigma and stereotypes often associated with this very important topic, and I encourage you to use this resource to help us on our journey of creating a supportive and caring culture at work.



Introduction

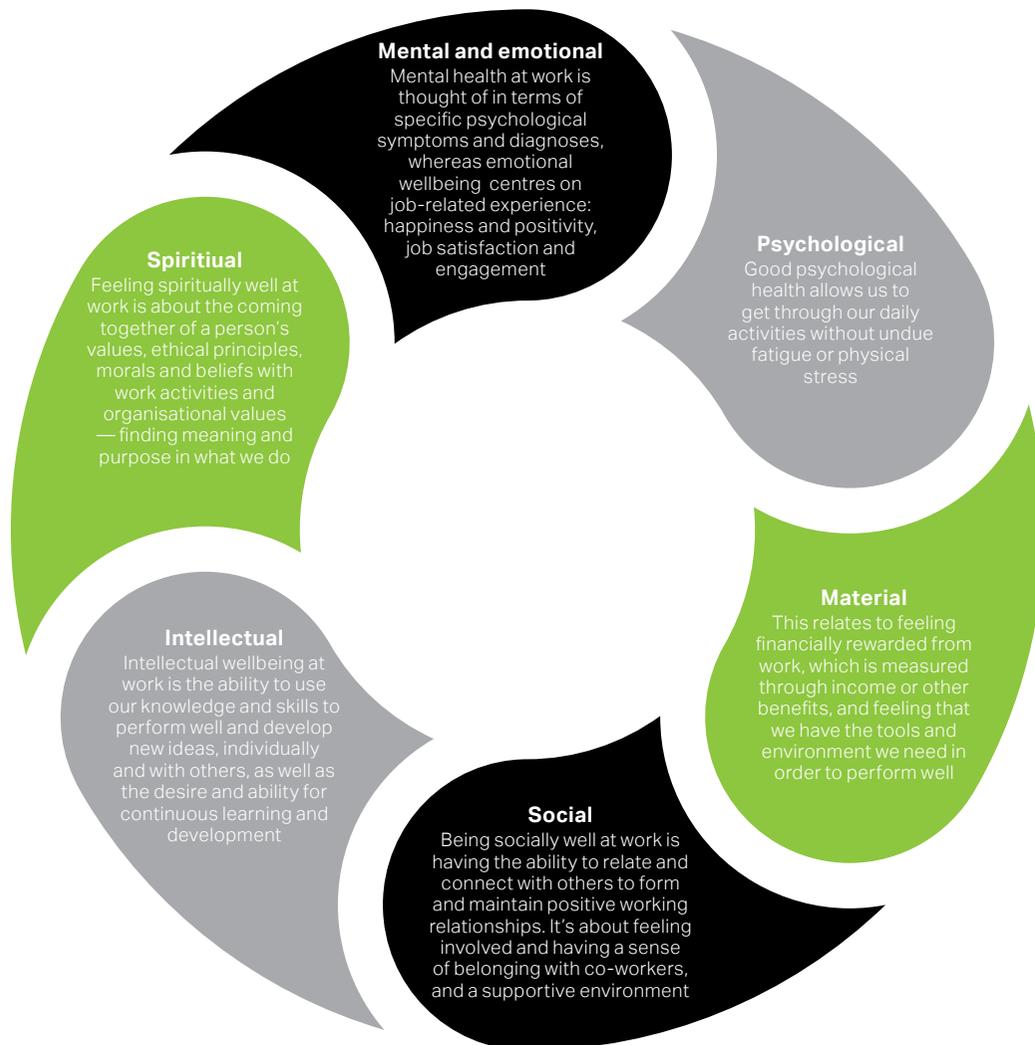
As a manager at AECOM you play a key role in promoting and supporting the positive mental wellbeing of your people. Being able to spot the signs and symptoms of potential mental health issues in your teams at an early stage, and supporting your staff in talking about their concerns, will help to create an environment where issues are responded to and managed, before they become more significant problems that could lead to ill health.

We want you to feel confident in managing and supporting the emotional wellbeing of your team, so this Guide has been designed to help you understand how you can identify issues around mental wellbeing in your team, and to support you in effectively addressing these with your employees.

Don't worry — you are not expected to become an expert in mental health or to be a counsellor to solve all of your team members' problems. As a person in a position of trust at AECOM, your role is simple — to listen, guide and help your staff recognise any mental health related issues, and try to help them find solutions, ideally at an early stage.



What is wellbeing?



Wellbeing can be thought of as having the psychological, social and physical resources needed to face challenges in life; workplace health and wellbeing can also be affected by intellectual, spiritual and material factors.

All of these factors working together can inspire and support people, and create a healthy and resilient workforce.

What affects our wellbeing at work?

How we feel at work is influenced by both universal and organisational factors:

Universal factors — things that happen outside of a person's work life, such as family life or bereavement, which affect a person's health and wellbeing, and in turn affect their work and the organisation.

Organisational factors — events that relate directly to work, which can be broken down into organisational and contextual content:

Organisational context

- Physical workplace
- Cultural norms
- Leadership style

Organisational content

- Job content, e.g. repetitiveness, meaningfulness
- Job demands, e.g. complexity, quantity, pace
- Job resources

Creating awareness of mental health and wellbeing

Mental health is defined by the World Health Organisation as 'a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'.

Just like our physical health, our mental health can change throughout our lives, and like our bodies, our minds can become unwell.

Mental ill health exists on a broad spectrum, and whether a person is experiencing a period of anxiety or depression following a life event, or suffering from a severe mental illness such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, mental health problems can affect the way people think, feel or behave. In some cases this can seriously limit a person's ability to cope with day-to-day life.

It is estimated that globally one in four people will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives (World Health Organisation).

What about stress?

Stress is defined as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'. A certain level of pressure in a business environment is desirable, however when the pressure exceeds a person's ability to cope for a sustained period, it can become a negative rather than a positive force.

Although stress in itself is not a medical condition, research shows that prolonged exposure to unmanageable stress can be linked to psychological conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Effectively managing stress therefore is a crucial part of supporting mental health and wellbeing within your teams.

work related stress is the **second most common health problem** in Europe's workplaces

stress is considered the **biggest health risk** for workers in the Middle East



1 in 3 people will experience a mental illness in their lifetime in South Africa

46% of the workforce suffer from some form of stress in India

How to promote positive mental wellbeing in your team



As a manager, promoting and supporting your employee's mental wellbeing should be considered a key part of your role.

Everyday activities, such as informal chats and feedback sessions, are an opportunity for employees to talk to you about any problems they might be experiencing. Getting to know your staff better and developing a strong relationship with them will make them feel able to open up and talk to you about more sensitive matters.

If you are not based at the same office location as your team members, embrace the technology available within the business and encourage the use of tools such as Jabber and Web Ex for team meetings and one to one catch ups to encourage more personal working relationships.

The following actions will also help you to encourage positive mental wellbeing across your team:

Lead by example

Send a clear message to your staff that their mental wellbeing matters. Actively encourage your team to adopt healthier working habits by working sensible hours, taking full lunch breaks and using their annual leave. The best way to deliver this message is to model these behaviours yourself, and empowering your colleagues to do the same, by letting them know that they can and should follow your lead.

Normalise the topic of mental health

Regularly talking about mental health with your staff demonstrates that it's ok to talk about it in the workplace. For example, when starting meetings with a safety moment, these can focus on mental health. If possible, you could also act as a role model by sharing your own knowledge and experiences of the subject.

Create a psychologically safe environment

Promote an environment where your team members feel safe to openly talk about themselves and their experiences without embarrassment or fear of negative consequences from yourself or others. Simple actions, such as encouraging your staff to speak up, actively and openly listening to them, demonstrating your own vulnerability by sharing personal experiences and addressing any negativity in your team, will help you achieve this safe environment.

Be available for your staff

An effective way of maintaining good relationships and building trust with your staff is to hold regular catch-ups with them, which will promote and encourage open dialogue between the two of you, and encourage your staff to come to you for support at an early stage if they are experiencing a concern.

Build your confidence on mental health

Familiarise yourself with your local policies and procedures, as well as the various tools and support that are available to employees e.g. the Employee Assistance Programme. See page 20 of this Manager Guide for more details.

Mental wellbeing matters



Poor mental health isn't always obvious or visible

How to recognise the signs and symptoms which could indicate poor mental health

No matter how effectively you manage your employees, some people will experience poor mental health in the workplace.

Spotting the signs of poor mental health at an early stage provides you with the opportunity to try and help your employee before a situation worsens. The more you interact with your staff members and get to know them, the easier it is for you to spot when they are struggling or behaving uncharacteristically.

Signs of poor mental health can be difficult to identify, as each person's experience of mental health is different. The information on the right provides some indicators that could suggest someone may be struggling with their mental health at work.

If you see one or more of these signs, it does not automatically mean there is an underlying mental health issue, but you should still consider checking in with your staff member. Keep in mind that every employee is different.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS INDICATING POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Physical



- Constant tiredness
- Increased sickness absence
- Frequent minor illnesses
- Difficulty sleeping
- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Lack of care over personal appearance and/or hygiene
- Nervous or trembling speech

Emotional



- Appearing anxious or distressed
- Tearful
- Loss of sense of humour
- Sensitive to criticism
- Indecisiveness
- Lack of concentration
- Inability to remember things
- Loss of motivation
- Lack of confidence

Behavioural



- Acting out of character
- More introverted or extroverted than usual
- Consistently arriving late at work or leaving early
- Working excessively longer hours
- Withdrawal
- Irritability, anger or aggression
- Restlessness
- Disruptive or anti-social behaviour
- Increased alcohol, caffeine or cigarette consumption
- Uncharacteristic errors in work
- Unexplained drops in performance

What should you do if you are concerned about your employees mental health?



As a manager you may need to approach an employee if you are concerned about their mental wellbeing. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it shows that you care. You may also be approached by an employee who is seeking your help and support.

Each situation will be different and should be managed on a case-by-case basis. More complicated situations may need specialist support, as outlined on page 18 of this guide.

Remember your support and understanding is the most important thing you can bring to the discussion.

The following general principles will help you to take this first step in engaging with your employee to have an open, honest and practical conversation with them.

When and where to have the conversation

- Ask for a private meeting at a mutually convenient time. To avoid creating further anxiety for the individual you may wish to tell them in advance why you are looking to catch up with them e.g. I can see that you are under pressure at the moment etc.
- Select a location for the conversation that you think would put the employee at most ease. Meeting outside the office, in a coffee shop for example, might feel more private and less intimidating. You may wish to ask the employee where they would prefer to meet.
- Give yourself plenty of time so you do not rush the conversation.
- Turn your phone onto silent to avoid any disturbances.





Making the conversation as effective as possible

Keep in mind that the more relaxed that both the employee and you feel, the more effective the outcome of the conversation will be. Avoid making notes during your meeting to help keep the conversation flowing and the discussion as open, honest and informal as possible. You may find it helpful to make a note of any actions and next steps agreed by both you and your employee after the meeting, to help you both remember what was said and agreed upon and aid in any future discussions.

The following steps will help your initial conversation flow in the right direction:

- Ask open questions (ie. avoid yes/no questions by using “how do you...” or “can you describe”).
- Do not be judgemental of your employee’s situation.
- Listen to your employee — this simple action in itself will help your employee.
- Try to be positive and supportive in your discussion.
- Avoid making assumptions.
- Be mindful of your language (eg. say “I” not “we” to avoid giving the impression that everyone is talking about them).
- Be prepared for silences, and be patient.
- Reassure them that you are there to help them.
- Ensure you are familiar with the help and support available through the business (outlined on page 20 of this guide).

Opening the conversation

To open the conversation, try setting the scene using one of the below conversation starters:

- Acknowledge how busy things may have been lately.
- Explain that you appreciate that the team / people have been under pressure recently.
- Ask them how they've been finding work recently?
- Ask them how they are feeling.

Remember that the aim of the discussion with your employee is to encourage them to open up to you, so that you can understand their situation and guide them to the help and support they need.





Helping your employee to identify the source and cause of their stress

Once you have opened up the conversation with your staff member, you should then try to identify and understand the bigger picture of what is troubling them.

A **source of stress** can be any external event, person, situation or a number of these combined, that troubles an individual enough to generate significant pressure, resulting in stress.

Sources of stress can be workplace related, or stem from situations in an employee's personal life.

WORKPLACE SOURCES OF STRESS

- Job insecurity
- Lack of control over work
- Unrealistic expectations or deadlines
- Negative working relationships
- High pressure environments
- Poor working environment
- Lone working

PERSONAL SOURCES OF STRESS

- Bereavement
- Relationship stresses/breakdown
- Financial concerns
- Moving home/living a distance from family
- Physical illness/health scares
- Key life events
- Caring for relatives

Consider asking some of the below questions to help identify and understand the source of your employee's concern:

- You don't seem to be yourself at the moment. Is there anything that's causing you to feel different?
- I've noticed a change in your behaviour (provide example e.g. missing deadlines, arriving late), which is out of character. How are you doing?
- I've noticed you've been missing deadlines which is unusual for you. How are you doing?
- Are there any problems outside work that it would be helpful for me to know about?
- What makes the situation worse?
- How long have you felt like this?
- What have you done so far to try and address the situation?
- What can I do to help?

Remember to actively listen to your employee, and where appropriate clarify and repeat back information to show you have a clear understanding of their concern.



A **cause of stress** is a reason why a person reacts the way they do to a situation, for example:

- Lack of confidence
- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of failure
- Low self esteem.

When addressing their causes of concern, encourage your employee to ask themselves the following questions, to help them think about how serious the problem is and give them alternative perspectives on it:

- Are they worrying about things beyond their control?
- Are they able to concentrate on just those things that they can influence?
- Have they ever felt like this before?
- What did they do in that situation?
- Are their negative thoughts helping them?
- What would happen if they thought more positively about themselves?
- Can they do anything positive to reduce the impact that the stress is having on them?



Taking this first step, and opening up to you, is likely to be difficult for your employee. Be sensitive in your discussions with them and avoid using questions or comments which could cause them to become defensive, or impact the openness of your discussion

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO AVOID

You're clearly struggling. What's up?

Your performance is unacceptable right now. What's going on?

Everyone else in the team is in the same boat and they are ok. Why aren't you?

Who do you expect to pick up all the work that you can't manage?

Why can't you just get your act together?

What do you expect me to do about it?

Do you think you have a mental health problem?

How do you support an employee who becomes tearful or upset?

If an employee becomes upset during a conversation, this does not necessarily mean the conversation is going poorly.

- Reassure them that it's ok to be upset and that you are listening to them.
- Let them take their time.
- Try to be sensitive to the level of information and support the individual can cope with at a given time.
- Ask them whether they would like anyone with them at your discussion or if they would like you to contact anyone for them.
- If the employee finds it too difficult to talk at that point in time, reassure them that you are available to talk whenever they are ready or feel comfortable.
- Once they have recovered their composure they may want to continue working; in order to give them time to process things, suggest that they take a break or go home.

Responding to a mental health disclosure

Handling mental health disclosures is often viewed with fear by line managers, but it need not be awkward. The following steps will support you in having this conversation with an employee.

- Encourage the employee to talk.
- Embed confidentiality by reassuring the employee that you will treat anything that they say in confidence, except where there are issues that pose a health and safety risk to themselves or others, if they disclose certain illegal acts or if you need to seek further advice from HR.
- Once aware of health or disability information, AECOM may have a legal duty to consider making reasonable adjustments as well as a general duty of care and responsibility for employee health and safety.
- Seek advice from your local HR representative.



How you can help your employee to address their concern?

Once the problem is out in the open and better understood, you and your employee can look at the best way to address the issue and identify a way forward.

Each region offers a range of local assistance to promote and support staff emotional wellbeing. Being familiar with the tools available will enable you to signpost your employee to the help and support they need, particularly if you feel the severity of an issue is outside your abilities.

It may be useful to consider asking your employee the below questions when determining the most appropriate help and support for them:

- Can the situation be adapted in any way, to allow you to change how something is currently done?
- Can they avoid the situation or any aspect of it?
- Is there anything they can do to adjust the severity of the situation?

What should you do if you think an employee is not fit for duty

You cannot force an employee to take time away from work on sick or annual leave. If you are worried about the mental wellbeing of an employee, and feel that being at work is having an adverse impact on their issue, you should suggest they have a conversation with their General Practitioner to find out whether they are fit to be in work and undertake their full range of duties. It is recommended that you also speak with your local HR representative before suggesting this course of action, to better understand what possible recommendations the General Practitioner could make for example signing the employee off from work for a period.

In cases where you have serious concerns about your employee's mental wellbeing and they are reluctant to visit their General Practitioner or seek external help, speak to your local HR representative for appropriate guidance.

Managing the situation with your wider team

Some employees are very private about their mental and physical health, while others prefer to be more open about their personal situation, so you should manage this on a case by case basis with your employee. Have a conversation with them to understand what level of information they wish you to share with their colleagues. If they wish to keep their situation private from others in the team, it is recommended that you simply tell the team that their colleague is unwell or needs time off for personal reasons, keeping your messaging very general.

The wellbeing of your whole team is paramount therefore you should also be mindful of the effect that an employee's condition could have on the rest of the team, for example an increased workload if an employee is not well enough to work. In such instances it is recommended that you consider identifying any working conditions that may have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of your wider team, and change them where necessary.



Support available

Workplace adjustments should be considered when supporting your employee to address their issue. They can be simple, low cost and generally involve changes in workplace practice or requirements.

The following provides some practical examples of potential workplace adjustments that could be considered, whilst keeping in mind operational requirements and local policies and procedures.

In regions where staff work with Government organisations or clients with defined working particulars, you should speak to your local HR representative to understand whether the following workplace adjustments accompanied by the following symbol (**) can be considered.

- Changes to start and finish times e.g. arriving later at the office in the morning's to avoid rush hour traffic or congested public transport
- Flexible working arrangements e.g. working from home a number of days each week **
- Change of workspace e.g. finding a quieter space in the office to sit
- Changes to role (temporary or permanent) e.g. reallocation of some tasks **
- Extra training or coaching (during work hours) **
- Increased supervision or support to help manage workload e.g. daily check-ins with your employee
- Mentor or 'buddy' systems (formal or informal)
- Phased return to work e.g. initial reduced working hours gradually building back up over time **



Employee Assistance Programme

AECOM's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free, independent service providing confidential support to employees on a range of issues.

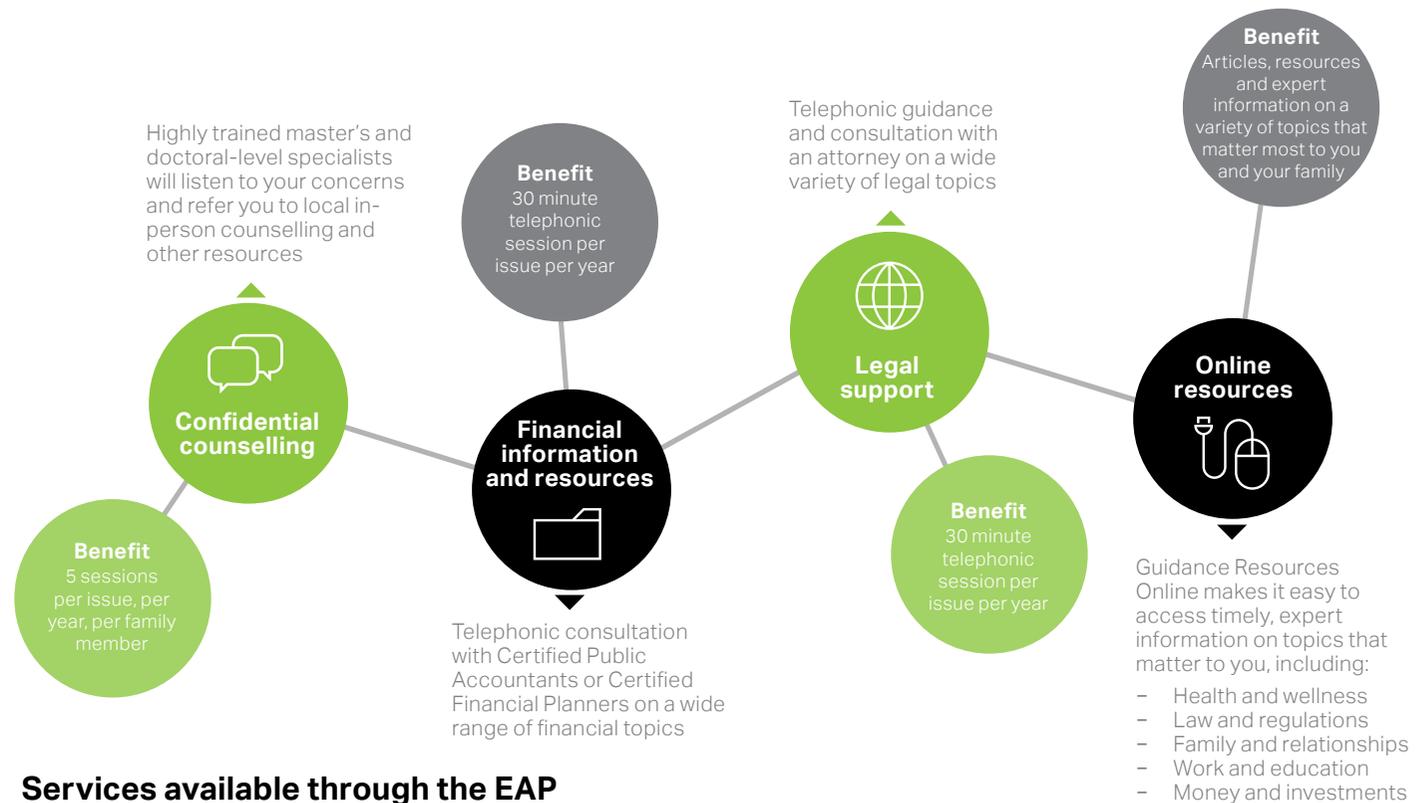
The programme can help with almost any life situation an employee might be facing, from financial difficulties, legal matters, and medical concerns to providing confidential counselling on relationships and family management.

Who is eligible to use the EAP service?

AECOM employees, immediate dependents and family members living in the same household are eligible

How is the EAP service accessed?

The service can be accessed online at www.guidanceresources.com (using the following Company Wed ID: AECOM) or by phone **24 hours a day, seven days a week**. Your local EAP contact number can be found within the Wellbeing page of the Ecosystem.



Local HR representative

Contact your local HR team should you require any guidance or support in managing a situation with an employee, where you feel that the severity of their condition is outside your capabilities. Your local HR representative will help to signpost you to appropriate support which may include talking you through relevant policies, arranging a local occupational health referral, sourcing appropriate training or signposting to external organisations.

Wellbeing centre on Ecosystem

The Wellbeing page located within the Ecosystem, provides managers and employees with a range of tools to help promote positive wellbeing, as well as advice and guidance on support available should they be personally experiencing or have a team member/colleague who is experiencing an emotional wellbeing concern.

External support from doctor/ general practitioner

Encourage your employee to seek help from their own Doctor or General Practitioner if you feel that they require expert medical advice and support.

Following up with your employee: Your support role should not end, once you have guided your employee to the appropriate help and support.

Continue to check in with your employee on a regular basis, engaging in ongoing and meaningful dialogue to prevent problems from reoccurring in the future.





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