



How do I talk to my boss about my mental health?

All too often, people don't speak up when they're struggling with pressures at work. Many may even consider it a weakness when they are unable to cope. However, workplace mental health is so important - and it starts by having a conversation with your boss.

More than 11 million days a year are lost at work due to stress. Employers have a legal duty to protect you from stress at work, by carrying out and following through with a risk assessment.

Here we outline approaches for raising mental health issues at work. You may be surprised at the positive response you get by taking action.



10 things to remember when talking to your boss about mental health

1. Remember that reporting a mental health issue is no different to physical health. Depression can create strong feelings of shame, which can lead us to hide away. However, attempting to bury your feelings can severely impact your working life
2. If you're struggling to ask for the help you may need from your employer, write it down first in an email or letter... run it past someone close to you for their support
3. Focus on the impact your mental health is having on your work and productivity; and how you can work together to improve the situation. Your employer will want to help you feel able enough to perform well at work, to benefit the overall business

4. It's entirely up to you how much you want to disclose. You don't have to name your condition, but be careful around using words like 'stress', which can often be misinterpreted. If you have seen your doctor and have a diagnosis, then let your employer know you are ill

5. Don't worry about a perceived stigma - discrimination against mental health is not allowed to exist in the workplace. Most responsible employers recognise that and should take steps to help, by educating employees about mental, as well as physical, wellbeing

6. If you really can't face talking to your boss, you can seek help in the form of a mediator - you don't have to do this alone. You may find support on this from HR, an occupational health officer or a representative from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas)

7. Recognise that your boss may be more receptive than you think, as poor mental health is the most common reason for sickness absence. More than 1 in 6 people will seek help for depression at some point, so it is likely that someone at work will have experience of it

8. Find out whether your employer offers mental health support - many companies across the UK do invest in their employee wellbeing. This might include free phone counselling and short-term, face-to-face counselling (typically 6-8 sessions)

9. Once you're in recovery, let your employer know how they did. What was helpful for you when you were struggling? Help your organisation to learn from your experience

10. By speaking up, you are not only helping yourself, but others too. When our mental health suffers, we lose sight of that. Your company may value you even more for raising awareness



Contact us

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