

Employee wellbeing check-in

Everyday conversations – healthy minds | June 2020

The Employee wellbeing check-in is designed to assist team members and leaders in creating a supportive culture of wellbeing. This tool recognises the importance of all staff at every level taking a role in providing appropriate support to others. Importantly, each leader (executive, senior or middle, program and team leader) plays a critical role in:

- conducting a wellbeing pulse check with their teams
- ensuring wellbeing is front and centre and embedded into day-to-day conversations and operations.

The Employee wellbeing check-in will:

- provide leaders and staff with a simple tool to assist with a brief wellbeing scan of their team, and potential issues that may impact on wellbeing
- ensure leaders are regularly checking in with their staff, ‘virtually’ and in person, and are equipped to respond confidently and proactively
- encourage all staff, including leaders to think about their own wellbeing and the importance of self-care and role modelling positive coping strategies
- provide a common language that is used to assess individual wellbeing regardless of level and classification of role
- keep mental health and wellbeing as a regular agenda item and at the forefront, especially during times of significant change and uncertainty.

Considerations

We have identified some potential issues that may arise, particularly during periods of significant change and uncertainty. Despite difficult times, there are many protective factors in peoples’ lives that act as a buffer to the potential impacts of events. When our normal protective factors such as our social support or relationships with family, friends, partner, our hobbies, our exercise and diet routines are depleted, the events occurring around us are more likely to impact on our wellbeing.

When assessing the needs of your staff or team, it is beneficial to consider the potential impacts for each individual. It is important to note that an individual’s **wellbeing is not static** and therefore ongoing communication is essential. As a team manager or peer, **you are often in the best position to identify changes and promote positive mental health.**

Some factors you might want to consider are:

Factors

Do you have any team members or their direct family who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 illness or considered vulnerable to infection of coronavirus?

Are you aware of any circumstances for your staff away from the workplace that may be causing them distress?

Are you aware of any work-related issues that may be causing distress?



Do you have staff who you are preparing for deployment to another role?
Are you managing staff who are working away from home?
Are you aware of any pre-existing mental health concerns with any of your team members?
Are you aware of any changes to existing protective factors (i.e. relationships, isolated or away from home etc)?
Have you noticed any changes in behaviour, mood, or thinking?
Are you concerned about any of your team member's ability to function?

Wellbeing check-in

In order to understand a team member or colleague's current wellbeing or functioning, it is important to consider the above factors, particularly during these uncertain times in conjunction with:

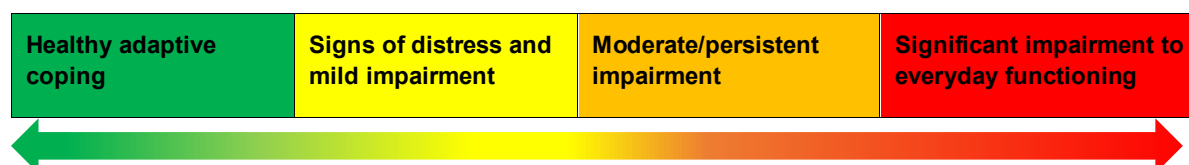
- **observed changes** (behaviour, performance, mood, thinking, physical presentation) that have impacted on their wellbeing)
- **presence or depletion of their normal protective factors** (social supports, breakdown in relationships, health and wellbeing routines, for example diet and exercise).

The wellbeing continuum scale (see below) can assist with gaining a better understanding of a team member's wellbeing and therefore the support they may require.

Wellbeing continuum

People's wellbeing is fluid and changes overtime in relationship to their context. One week someone may be healthy and coping well (in the green zone) and the next week or month find they have faced a series of demands/issues/events that shifts them in a mild, moderate or significantly stressed (yellow, orange or red zone) state where they are not functioning as well.

Noting each week or day where your staff are on the continuum is a first step in identifying the appropriate level of support they may require from you.



Indicators

Healthy adaptive coping	Signs of distress and mild impairment	Moderate/persistent impairment	Significant impairment to everyday functioning
Coping well with demands.	Increase in impacts and demands (either work or personal).	Demands having an impact on ability to cope effectively.	Marked changes to individuals' ability to function (at work/home).
Proactive and positive coping strategies.	Some early warning signs or changes to mood, behaviour, thinking, physical.	Significant changes to behaviour, mood, thinking, physical signs.	Significant changes to behaviour, mood, thinking, physical signs.
Presence of protective factors.	Potential depletion of some protective factors.	Depletion or absence of protective factors.	Depletion or absence of protective factors.

Support actions required

The level of care and support required will vary for each individual and what is right for one may not be what's appropriate for another. Below is a guide to help leaders think about the kinds of actions that can appropriately support people at different points along the Wellbeing continuum.

Proactive support	Informal support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the person using compassion (try to understand how they are feeling). Continue to maintain regular and open communication (this is more important during periods of change). Encourage work/life balance and use of positive health strategies. Lead by example – role model proactive coping. Talk openly about challenges with teams and individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be understanding and mindful of potential challenges the individual is facing. Pay attention to changes or signs of distress. Regularly check-in. Identify and openly discuss any challenges/areas of concern. Adopt a collaborative problem-solving approach to concerns. Encourage use of positive coping strategies. Follow-up. Discuss internal and external support options available, if needed. Seek manager or HR support, if required.
Formal support	Escalated support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify concerns and changes to mood, thinking or behaviour. Initiate an open conversation. Listen and understand before jumping to problem solving. Demonstrate care and concern. Ask what the person needs rather than assume. Link individual in with formal support options. Encourage continued use of coping strategies and social support networks. Regularly check-in and follow-up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on needs of individual, escalate to ensure that the individual is referred to or receives the appropriate treatment or support options. Continue to lead with care and concern. Continue to regularly check-in and follow-up. Ensure a healthy relationship is maintained. Focus on individual regaining mental and physical wellbeing. Follow their health care provider recommendations. Seek HR advice or support.



Self-reflection

How you manage your own wellbeing as a leader or colleague plays an important part in how you manage others. Your role modelling of positive coping strategies speaks volumes to others. This includes being open and honest and vulnerable during difficult times.

Consider the following:

- Are you aware of your current functioning?
- Do you know your own early warning signs of when you may be distressed?
- Do you have strategies in place that you use to manage your own wellbeing?
- Do you have strategies to get you back on track when you aren't at your best?
- Do you openly communicate with your team about wellbeing on a regular basis?

Explore Queensland Health's resource on [building blocks for your mental wellbeing](#).



Wellbeing check-in is adapted from the Queensland Police Service Team Wellbeing Pulse



Everyday conversations

Healthy minds

To provide support to people you will need to establish trusting working relationships. One of the best ways to do that is engage in everyday conversations that demonstrate your care and concern for the employee as a whole person, not just the time they spend at work as a worker.

A good practice guide for any wellbeing conversation is to: **Recognise – Prepare – Engage – Follow-up**

1. Recognise the early warning signs of impairment to normal functioning

- Recognise the current impacts on the individual (work or personal).
- Note changes to thinking, mood, behaviour.
- Be mindful of a person's normal coping strategies and if these have been depleted.
- Where is the person situated in terms of their wellbeing on the continuum (Green, Yellow, Orange, Red)?
- Do I need to get additional support on how best to approach the situation?

2. Prepare for discussions

- Prepare and establish a routine for regular conversations.
- Prepare to talk and not just type (e.g. phone, teams).
- If you are concerned about wellbeing take note of the behaviours, patterns and changes you have noticed.
- Prepare a script with some questions ready, if needed.
- Notice your own emotions (Am I calm and relaxed? Or do I need to take time out, to be in an appropriate place to have the discussion?).
- Are you able to be present, composed and compassionate in your approach?
- Identify a suitable time and place to talk with the employee.

3. Engage (regularly, with active listening and in joint planning)

- Build trust and maintain confidentiality.
- Ask open questions to get an understanding of where the employee is at (e.g. how have things been going for you recently).
- Use I messages (e.g. 'I am aware that as a team we are all less connected, how is that going for you?').
- Try to remain focused on what the other person is saying rather than your own thoughts or thinking ahead to how you might respond.
- Take time to listen without interrupting and show interest in what they are saying.
- Validate their concerns.
- Summarise or paraphrase what they have said.
- Engage them in planning next steps by asking questions ('What would help this situation?' or 'What is important for you?' or 'How can I assist or support you?').

4. Follow-up with the person. Review how things are progressing



- Make a time to meet again and stick to it.
- Consider using a written plan, if needed.
- Put agreed steps into place even if they seem small.
- Follow through on any steps you have agreed to do.
- Check-in with the employee regularly.

Tips for everyday check-ins

- Establish a routine for regular check-ins with employees as a proactive measure.
- Prioritise these conversations and aim to talk rather than type.
- If members are working from home, consider using Microsoft Teams.
- Be mindful of changes and uncertainty and acknowledge that this impacts people in different ways.
- Use the time to discuss operational needs, but also check-in on how they are travelling.
- Talk openly about managing wellbeing and role model a proactive approach (e.g. 'I made sure I went for a run last night after work, it was a tough day').
- Create a safe and confidential space for members to raise concerns if they do arise.
- Tips for everyday conversations where you are concerned about someone's mental health
- If you are concerned about an employee's wellbeing take note of their behaviours, patterns and changes you have noticed.
- Let the employee know you have noticed they don't seem themselves and that you are concerned.
 - 'I have noticed you don't seem yourself lately... are you ok?'
 - If they respond by saying 'I'm fine' however you are still concerned then you might need to be specific, use behavioural observations 'I have noticed you have seemed really tired and not been as open or talkative at work'.
- Try to listen and understand before jumping to fix it mode.
- Validate their concerns 'That sounds like it was really difficult'.
- Ask 'What would be helpful right now' or 'What can I do to assist?' rather than assume.
- Problem solve together, 'How can we put that into place?'
- Offer suggestions if they seem stuck 'Can I suggest this might be helpful'.
- Remain calm and aware of your own emotions.
- Remember you don't need to have all the answers or know the exact right thing to say, genuine concern and being present is often what is needed.
- Encourage help seeking by suggesting a range of support options. You can offer to make initial contact with their support option.
- Often it takes courage for people to share information – acknowledge this and thank the employee for sharing.
- Ensure you follow-up 'How have things been going since we last talked', 'Were you able to access that appointment ok?', 'How can we support you moving forward?'



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