

Relationship conversations

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Research has shown a strong link between the quality of personal relationships and productivity at work. A high level of happiness in a person's homelife is often the driving force being their motivation and performance at work.

As an employer, it therefore makes sense for you to take an interest in what's happening in your staff's lives outside work and ensure that you can respond appropriately if a stressful situation at home is impacting work – for example, following a separation.

We understand that talking to your staff about their personal relationships is not always an easy conversation. It can be tricky to strike the right balance between offering support and meeting professional obligations, but there are some handy techniques you can use to help challenging conversations go more smoothly.

OnePlusOne, a relationship research charity with over 50 years' experience, has put together the following advice to help you support staff who are going through a significant transition such as becoming a parent or separating from a partner.

TIPS FOR SPEAKING TO EMPLOYEES

However the conversation comes up, the following tips can help you keep things on track and offer a supportive response. This is the OLPAC approach.

Open mind

Relationship transitions can bring many challenges. Try to remember that the situation at home might affect how the person responds to you.

Listening ear

The person you are talking to may be feeling vulnerable and exhausted. Offer a safe space for them to talk and make yourself available to listen.

Patient response

Your employee may be experiencing daily changes in their circumstances, and things may get worse before they get better. Give it time.

Accommodating nature

Be flexible around any practical changes your employee needs to manage. For example, they may need to sort out childcare or living arrangements.

Culture of support

Offer flexibility to help staff manage work and family commitments. Even if you don't have these conversations, you can support your employees by creating a culture in which it's OK to adapt following personal challenges.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT

Before you talk to staff about personal issues, it's worth bearing a few things in mind.

- You don't have to be an expert to offer support. Often, just asking people how they are doing is enough to start a conversation.
- Don't force the issue. Not everyone will be ready for a conversation, and some may not want to talk at all. In some cases, it's more helpful to offer signposts to available resources.
- Conversations may come up at unexpected times. Be ready to respond if an employee comes to you looking for support.

FURTHER SUPPORT

You may find it helpful to signpost your employees to other places where they can receive advice and support. You can link to these free resources on your intranet or noticeboard.

See it differently is a video website which helps parents to see the impact of stress and arguments on their children, with ideas on how to communicate differently. Powerful videos reflect different family scenarios. seeitdifferently.org

Click is OnePlusOne's relationship platform with lots of free expert advice on a wide range of relationship issues. You can refer parents to the site for further help and support. clickrelationships.org



WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SUPPORTING YOUR STAFF?

OnePlusOne's Relationship conversations training is an evidence-based programme designed to help employers and managers handle conversations about relationships in a way that makes employees feel listened to, supported, and empowered. It's not about turning you into a relationship counsellor or an agony aunt, but simply equipping you with valuable skills to help your staff cope with issues that could be affecting their work lives.

For further information, contact the OnePlusOne team at info@oneplusone.org.uk