



Wellbeing

Support at work

Talking to your line manager: How to open up a conversation about not coping well.

A little stress can keep us energised, focused and meet new challenges. Sometimes stress can be almost unnoticeable – we keep things spinning and cope really well. Yet, there are times when that changes. Work can feel like an emotional roller coaster. There can be tight deadlines, difficult demands and long hours. These can all leave us drained, overwhelmed and feeling anxious or worried. When stress overtakes our ability to cope it's not helpful and can take its toll on our health, wellbeing and ability to do our job well.

We may feel irritable, anxious, fatigued or apathetic and we can lose interest in our work. We might have difficulty concentrating, sleeping, our muscles can become tense, we may have stomach problems and get headaches.

If any of this resonates, we should take action - we can't control everything in our working environments, but that doesn't mean we are powerless.

One of the key people to talk to is our line manager. In an ideal world, we would be able to do this without worrying, but sometimes this is difficult, not all of us might feel like we can. However, it's really worth reaching out.

Talking to them can be a really helpful way of getting support and regaining our sense of perspective. They may be able to offer some solutions and having a conversation early is really important. It's harder to adjust working patterns if we keep things to ourselves for months.

Here are a few tips to help us think about how we might do this.

Taking time to prepare what we are going to say and then writing things down before a conversation can be helpful - think about the tone of voice, our body language and how we use eye contact. We should stay calm, be honest, self-controlled and keep a check on our emotions! If it helps, write out some bullet points or even a letter so you have this to read from.

It is worth flagging with that we'd like some time to talk about something personal to us beforehand so they are prepared to listen.

Agree on a time and place where both people feel comfortable to talk freely and when there is enough time for the conversation to take its course without interruption.

We can also try and anticipate what our line manager might say, this will help us stay focused on the issues. There might also be some give and take required, so it's good to think about how we want the conversation to go – what would be a positive outcome?

If we aren't getting the outcome we hoped for, or the conversation isn't going as smoothly as we'd like, that can sometimes feel difficult to manage, and it's a time when self-control is definitely needed. Try to sit as calmly as possible and allow for the conversation to take a natural break. Here is a good space to voice what we need: Do we need them to just listen for a minute? Do we need to reiterate something we said because perhaps it didn't come out right? Do we need to take a couple of minutes break from the conversation and come back to it feeling fresher or more prepared?

None of this is easy – but it is important. When we talk to others about how we feel it creates and builds trust and good open working relationships. These are so important for us and our wellbeing; these are important to Oasis too. They create great foundations for the teams we work in and help our communities to thrive.