Background and Aims
1. Background
   • Mental health has now been recognised to be as important as physical health
   • As leaders we have a duty of care to our staff to provide a psychologically safe workplace
   • One thing we can do is to check in regularly with our colleagues
   • Context is changing ... and we need to remain flexible and supportive

2. Aims of this Talk
   • Share psychological and practical tips for talking to your colleagues and your team regarding their mental health (note: there is no ‘perfect way’!)
   • Summary of helpful tips, not a comprehensive course
   • How to prepare, what to say and do (simple micro-counselling/good listening skills)
   • Self-care

3. Key Messages
   • Checking-in is a great way to build a positive workplace culture
   • Checking in is not about therapy OR about performance management – it is about interpersonal support
   • We support our teams within a broader framework of organisational support
Key Issues
Key Issues: Mental Health is a Continuum

1. Our mental health exists on a continuum ranging from healthy to unwell
2. We all have fluctuations in our mental health
3. Most people are resilient
4. Mental health is something we all need to work on
5. Mental health does not occur in a vacuum
1. Mental health is affected by many things (e.g., COVID-19 impacts, personality style, etc)

2. Work/employment is important to many people, and can have a considerable impact on our mental health

3. Role design and clarity, culture, employment stability and other factors affect mental health at work

4. Organisational issues also affect workplace mental health

5. Organisations provide HR and other support for workplace mental health (we are not doing this by ourselves)

6. When is mental health an issue?
Key Issues: When is Mental Health an ‘Issue’?

1. It is always important

2. Prevention:
   a) Support people in the ‘Healthy’ range
   b) Check-in with people ‘Experiencing ‘Challenges’
   c) Check-in and engage with people ‘At Risk’ or ‘Unwell’

3. Signs include:
   a) Low mood/high anxiety
   b) Change in behaviour
   c) Interpersonal problems
   d) Avoidance
   e) Performance issues
   f) Absent/Presenteeism

4. Key tips for checking in ...

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**MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHY</th>
<th>EXPERIENCING CHALLENGES</th>
<th>AT RISK</th>
<th>UNWELL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 – 80%</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
<td>3-7%</td>
<td>0-3%</td>
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- Normal fluctuations in mood
- Normal sleep patterns
- Physically well, full of energy
- Consistent performance
- Socially active
- Nervousness, irritability, sadness
- Trouble sleeping
- Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches
- Procrastination
- Decreased social activity
- Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness
- Restless or disturbed sleep
- Fatigue, aches and pains
- Decreased performance, presenteeism
- Social avoidance or withdrawal
- Excessive anxiety, easily enraged, depressed mood
- Unable to fall or stay asleep
- Exhaustion, physical illness
- Unable to perform duties, absenteeism
- Isolation, avoiding social events

**ACTIONS TO TAKE AT EACH PHASE OF THE CONTINUUM**

- Focus on task at hand
- Break problems into manageable chunks
- Identify and nurture support systems
- Maintain healthy lifestyle
- Recognize limits
- Get adequate rest, food, and exercise
- Engage in healthy coping strategies
- Identify and minimize stressors
- Identify and understand own signs of distress
- Talk with someone
- Seek help
- Seek social support instead of withdrawing
- Seek consultation as needed
- Follow health care provider recommendations
- Regain physical and mental health
Key Tips (for Checking In)
Key Tips

Three step framework for checking in …

1. Prepare (think)
2. Ask (talk)
3. Act (do)

Note

• This is a simple, but effective framework
• But, checking-in is not about performance management
• Checking-in is about someone’s wellbeing
• And, checking-in can help prevent performance issues
Key Tips: Step 1: Prepare

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the change/area of concern?</td>
<td>• What does a good outcome look like?</td>
<td>• Am I feeling confident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What might be the issues/outcomes?</td>
<td>• What HR/ other resources could help?</td>
<td>• When and where will we meet?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

- Give yourself time to prepare and plan
- Your plan will depend on: Your team member; your relationship with them; your experience; your confidence
- Remember, you are seeking a good outcome for the person and for the broader team
- Remember, you can get support and training

Example: Team member looking distressed ("experiencing challenges", may be "at risk")
# Key Tips: Step 2: Ask

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2. Ask</th>
<th>a) Set agenda</th>
<th>Permission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can we talk now, or is there a better time?</td>
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| b) Ask | 1. Reason for checking | 1. I have been concerned about you / I have noticed you have been quiet / sad / not-engaging/ looking worried / not your usual self |
|        | 2. Checking-in | 2. How are you going / doing? / How can I help? |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>c) Acknowledge</th>
<th>Event/Impact or Emotion</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It sounds like it has been a difficult time (reflect impact)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I can see why you have been worried (reflect emotion)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I’m sorry to hear that its been a difficult time (acknowledge)</td>
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</table>

- Remember, most people are aware when things are not ‘right’ and will be relieved to talk
- **Micro-counselling skills:** Eye contact; body language; verbal cues, pacing, open questions, etc
- Be clear about your role (colleague, supervisor, or friend)
- Keep it simple (there is no ‘perfect’ way!)
Key Tips: Step 3: Act

**Step 3. Act**

**a) Immediate Supports**
- **What will we do to help?**
  - Support at work (Tasks/Priorities/Supports)?
  - Are there personal safety issues?
- **Who can help?**
  - You?
  - HR / Management / Others?
- **What will the person do?**
  - Consult GP/HP?
  - Talk to a friend/family?

**b) Follow-up**
- What else could help?
- When/how will you follow-up?

**c) Action List**
- Plan: Who will do what, when?
- Document
- Follow-up

**Example:** Team member looking distressed ("experiencing challenges", may be "at risk")

- Explore support options (personal, health, work, other)
- Use the MQ mental health support framework
- Get advice if unsure, or give yourself time to think
Key Tips

Three steps for checking in ...

1. Prepare (think)
2. Ask (talk)
3. Act (do)
Key Tips: “What If” Scenarios?

Each situation is different, but there are common ‘What if’ scenarios including:

1. Person becomes upset
   • Support them (and follow the 3 steps)
   • Recognise our own reactions (self-care)

2. Person discloses concerning issues, but they don’t want you to tell anyone
   • Negotiate a course of action balancing duty of care to them, responsibility to MQ, and practical steps (and seek advice)
   • Follow the 3 steps

3. Doesn’t want to talk to you
   • Will they talk to someone else?
   • Invite future discussions

4. Discloses thoughts of self-harm
   • Support them as you would anyone else (but seek support immediately)
   • Follow the 3 steps
   • Use the MQ mental health support framework
   • Remember, most people are aware when things are not ‘right’ and will be relieved to talk to someone
   • Have confidence in yourself and in the process
   • Use the MQ mental health framework
   • Get additional training
   • Engage in self-care
Self-Care
Self-Care

1. **Refers to our ability to take steps to stay mentally healthy**

2. **Permission:** Give yourself permission to look after yourself; particularly if caring for others

3. **Plan:** Reflect on your health and wellbeing and what you can do to stay healthy …
   1. Schedule time and activities to help you to re-charge, re-fresh, and re-energise
   2. Seek support from colleagues, mentors, friends, others when you need to
   3. Seek professional development opportunities to improve your knowledge and skills in leadership/management

4. **And:** Please reach out to HR if you need support

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<tr>
<th>Healthy Thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I allowed myself to be less than perfect</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I treated myself with respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I stopped myself from thinking unhelpful or unrealistic thoughts</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I did something that was very satisfying to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I did something enjoyable</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I spent time doing something I believed in</td>
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<tr>
<th>Goals &amp; Plans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I set realistic and achievable goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I did something to help me achieve my goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I made a plan and stuck to it</td>
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<th>Healthy Routines</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. I went to bed and woke up at a regular time</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I kept a healthy daily routine</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I prepared and ate a healthy meal</td>
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<tr>
<th>Social Connections</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. I socialised with positive people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I had a meaningful conversation with someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I talked about my day with a friend or family member</td>
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Summary
Summary

1. Our mental health status exist on a continuum
2. Checking in on our team’s mental health is as part of our duty of care
3. The three steps (Prepare, Ask, Act) and tips can assist with checking in on your team
4. These three steps should occur in the context of the MQ mental health framework
5. And, make sure you look after for your own mental health!
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