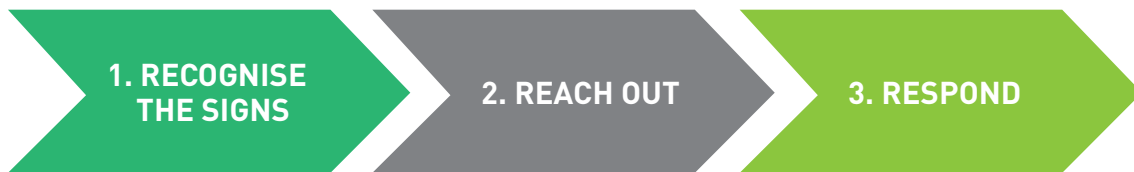




Noticing that your employee is not their usual self can be challenging. However, it helps to be on the front foot when you see someone's performance or engagement changing at work. This 'conversation framework' can help you feel prepared and capable when talking to an employee about their fitness for work.



1. RECOGNISE THE SIGNS

Consider mental and physical changes that relate to aging. Look out for changes in thinking and behaviour:

EMOTIONAL SIGNS

- Are they more irritable, angry or withdrawn than normal?
- Are they being more negative or giving themselves a hard time (e.g. saying things like "I'm hopeless")?
- Are they taking more personal leave or getting to work late?
- Are they taking longer to perform their normal duties? Has the quality of work decreased?
- Are they less enthusiastic about volunteering for new or additional work tasks?
- Are they more cynical or critical of others?
- Have they appeared more sad or more emotional?

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Are they complaining of having difficulty sleeping or headaches?
- Has there been changes in their personal appearance or hygiene?
- Are they more breathless?
- Have they gained or lost weight recently?
- Have there been any changes in diet quantity or preferences?
- Have there been changes in frequency of toilet breaks?

Trust your gut.

Don't draw conclusions.

Stick to your observations.



PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU SAID, PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU DID, BUT PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGET HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.

MAYA ANGELOU

Notes:

GET READY FOR A CONVERSATION

Get the facts:

- Be familiar with the legal entitlements relating to Reasonable Work Adjustments.
- Research relevant policies such as Flexible Working policy, Personal and Extended Leave, Reasonable Work Adjustments.
- Review the Award, Enterprise Agreement and/or Employment Contract.
- Check the employees' entitlements.
- Talk to HR about specific questions or concerns.
- Know the role and the risks.

Get in the right headspace:

- Be clear about your role and limitations.
- Know what you hope to achieve by having this conversation.
- Choose your mindset (e.g. supportive, curious, a mentor, sounding board).
- Know that these conversations often feel uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean you don't do it.



Notes:

2. REACH OUT

PUT YOURSELF IN THE EMPLOYEE'S SHOES AND CONSIDER:

When to have the conversation. Do you schedule a meeting, have it as part of a regular catch-up, make it more informal? Does the time of day matter, or the day or the week? Think about how they may react and whether you need to monitor them after the conversation, or if you think they would want some space afterwards to reflect.

Where to have the conversation. Think about privacy, comfort, what their peers may say if they see you talking.

What resources to bring. Are there other AWR Project resources that would be helpful, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) contact details, information about how to access other resources.

Bring a 'cheat sheet' if that helps you feel more comfortable.

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WILL START THE CONVERSATION:

- Start with an observation:
 - Usually you are <strength>, but recently I've noticed...
 - I saw you do <...>. That's out of character for you, can we talk about what happened?
- Get to the point quickly, don't leave them wondering why they are there.
- Let them know you are committed to helping them get the help they need so they can be safe and productive and enjoy their work.
- Practice your opening out loud.

Notes:

3. RESPOND

- Listen carefully.
- Ask open questions.
- Check body language.
- Provide reassurance.
- Share experience, insight, resources.

REMEMBER :

- You are their manager, not their friend or advisor.
- Show support and direct them to resources and experts as and if required.
- Don't offer financial, medical, psychological or other advice or try to be HR.
- Don't try to 'fix it' for them—help them come up with their own solutions.
- Avoid offering advice or making rushed decisions.
- If in doubt, take an action to look into it and talk to a trusted person for advice.

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION :

To move the conversation toward agreed action you might ask:

- "Where do you want to go from here?"
- "What are you thinking are the next steps?"
- "What do you need from me?"

Expect that more than one conversation is likely to be needed.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Follow up with an email and agree on your next meeting time.
- Schedule a reminder to call them in a couple of weeks. If they are really struggling, follow up with them sooner.
- Follow through on your commitments and keep them updated on progress.
- Remember that the first conversation is just the beginning.
- Makes notes about the meeting for your records and future reference if needed.

Notes:



RESOURCES

Policies and guidelines

Manager or HR

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
Manager help

'Investing in Experience Tool Kit'
www.dese.gov.au/mature-age-hub

AWR resources: awrproject.com.au