Approaching someone you are concerned about in the workplace. If you've noticed a change in one of your colleagues they might seem to be more stressed lately or withdrawn or lack motivation, don’t be afraid to reach out early.

Every year, one in five Australians will experience a mental health issue such as mood disorders, anxiety or substance abuse. In particular, an average of one in six will experience depression within their lifetime.

**What are the signs at work?**

- people experiencing depression or anxiety may often seem detached from colleagues and start acting differently to their ‘usual selves’
- not all people struggling with mental health will show obvious signs. Even people we assume are successful and happy may be fighting an internal battle that others cannot see
- The key is to create workplace environments where people are comfortable to share their struggles without the fear of being judged.

**Try to find the right moment**

If you’re concerned about a colleague at work, try to find some time to discuss these concerns in a quiet area. Make sure you feel comfortable and set aside enough time to have a discussion without interruptions. Be mindful not to include others or bring up your concerns in a group discussion, as this will likely make your colleague feel uncomfortable or defensive.

**Start a conversation**

When the moment presents itself, approach the person you are concerned about in a calm and caring way. Open-ended questions are always best, such as asking, how are you doing? or ‘how have you been travelling?’ This gives the person an opportunity to speak generally and doesn't limit the conversation to yes or no responses. Be honest about what you have been noticing and show that you genuinely care.

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“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.”

Charles Dickens
Seek further help
It’s important to remember that you don’t need to do it all on your own. If you feel that this person requires further support, suggest they contact their General Practitioner or a telephone help line such as Lifeline (13 11 14). Another option is a confidential Employee Assistance Program that many organisations offer. Further, if you feel that your superiors need to know about the issue, ask for your colleague’s permission to share their concerns with a manager or supervisor they trust.

Maintain connections
Try to keep in contact and check in once a week or fortnight to see how they have been coping. You can use the skills mentioned above to continue the conversation and remind the person that you are around to support them if needed.

References

Note: The information contained in this Tip Sheet is general advice from En Masse Pty Ltd. For specific advice in relation to mental health concerns please contact an appropriately qualified health professional.

Notes