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Time To Talk



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The early part of the year can be a difficult time for many people. Once the focus on festivities and family gatherings comes to an end, the new year can be even more daunting for those dealing with poor mental health. Together with colder weather and dark evenings, we are told that the 3rd Monday in January is 'Blue Monday'. Treating 'Blue Monday' as a single difficult day can trivialise the impact that poor mental health has, suggesting in some way that once that day is over, it no longer applies. In reality, poor mental health can make daily life difficult throughout the year.

A reported 1 in 4 people experience poor mental health each year, and millions of work days are lost to mental health conditions annually.

We know that talking openly about mental health is an important step in breaking down the stigma that, although reduced, still exists. Having mental health discussions in the same way as we would about physical health can give people the confidence to seek support without fear of being judged.

Time to Talk Day

Time to Talk Day falls on 1 February 2024 and is known as the 'nation's biggest mental health conversation'. This initiative is run by the charity Mind and Rethink Mental Illness. Further information can be found here: [Time To Talk Day - Time To Talk Day](#).

Time to Talk Day reminds us how important supportive conversations can be. Whilst we may not all be experts in the field of mental health (and it's important to know our boundaries and not pretend that we are), supporting people by listening without judgement and signposting to the right type of networks and services can be incredibly helpful. Sometimes, being present to support someone during an initial conversation with a medical professional can provide the extra reassurance that is needed.

Starting Conversations About Mental Health

A conversation can start anywhere, whether at work or at home, with colleagues or with young people, so taking some time to learn more about the support available can be a useful exercise and increase our confidence in

this subject.

It may take time for someone to talk about their personal circumstances, and how you approach those conversations will look very different according to the individual. Sometimes, a chat whilst walking is less threatening than meeting across a table in the office, or a chat in a neutral place like a coffee shop may make the person feel more comfortable. The Time to Talk website has some useful tips on how to start conversations.

As well as talking, being able to truly listen and give people time and space to talk is important. For some, that first conversation may take a lot of courage, so approach the subject sensitively and with compassion.

It can be easy to accept a response like 'fine, and you?' when you ask someone how they are, but when you really take time to listen and observe, there may be indications that things may not be as fine as suggested.

Accessing Mental Health Resources

There are a lot of resources available and places to refer individuals to where they can obtain the support and training guidance they need. The [Mind website](#) has a range of advice on how best to support others and ourselves.

Workplaces may have support available to their employees, such as Mental Health First Aiders, employee assistance programmes, internal support networks or counselling services, so it is worth finding out what may be available to you.

How you choose to start talking and where the best place is to do this will vary enormously, but what is in no doubt is that it really is Time to Talk.

Contact us

If you would like to talk to our [Employment & HR Team](#) for support on any of the issues raised, please contact emma.starmer@LA-law.com.