

Conversation Guide: Talking to your manager about burnout

To help prevent and address occupational burnout, have an open conversation with your manager about the factors causing stress at work. Together, you can explore the issues affecting your wellbeing and find mutually beneficial solutions to regain a healthy work-life balance.

If you're at risk of burnout or have burnt out, this guide will help you address the causes with your manager. Provide relevant examples alongside potential solutions. Share only what you're comfortable with and be open to exploring alternatives.



Impact

It's important for your manager to understand your risk of burnout and to take immediate and preventative actions. Describe the pressures at work and how they've affected you personally and professionally (mentally, emotionally and physically). Discuss how burnout impacts you and your team.

Workload

Workload is a common cause of burnout, so discuss the pressures you're facing. Summarise your tasks, deadlines, and any challenges like



unachievable timelines, limited resources, or competing priorities. Suggest deprioritising or delegating tasks, extending deadlines, or seeking external support if possible.

Personal factors

Personal circumstances may affect your wellbeing, such as physical or mental health concerns, family or caring responsibilities, significant life events, or financial worries. Reflect on these challenges prior to your meeting and how they may exacerbate how you feel, cope, and behave at work. Even if you choose not to discuss them, being mindful of their impact is important. Sharing context can help your manager direct you to workplace support, but only share what you're comfortable with based on your relationship and trust. You may also want to consult a healthcare professional for further guidance.

Work-life balance

How are your work responsibilities affecting your life outside of work? How much control do you have over this? Clarify expectations around deadlines, just in case there are any assumptions or misunderstandings. Share examples of working beyond your hours, skipping breaks, or after-hours communications. An honest discussion about work-life balance can help your manager support you in maintaining boundaries. Consider solutions like no-meeting time or setting clear after-hours communication rules. Familiarise yourself with company policies beforehand to guide the conversation.

Job description

Roles evolve over time but might not necessarily be reviewed, so it's a good idea to revisit your job description. Are there expectations you consider not commensurate with your position/role? Perhaps there are tasks you've absorbed or feel expected to do? There might be resource constraints or restructures that have led you to lead on an area outside of your skills set. Explore how roles have changed over time with your manager as this may highlight an area to budget for in future.

Workplace resources and support

Discuss with your manager the available support within your organisation, like Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), stress management, peer support, or Wellbeing Action Plans (WAP). You could suggest tools, equipment or software to support your work — providing potential time savings and costs. Anticipate pushback as your manager will have budgets to consider and think of cheaper alternatives.

You could explore opportunities for volunteers or work placements. Some of the stress may highlight a training need, and you could explore courses that empower you to deliver confidently and efficiently.

Employment policies and rights

Before your conversation, review company policies like Sickness Absence, Annual Leave, Flexible Working, and others relevant to your situation (Grievance, Whistleblowing, Health & Safety, etc.). Be aware of potential positive and negative impacts, such as reduced pay after using up sickness entitlement. You can seek clarification from HR or your manager if you have concerns. If long-term solutions are not supported you could propose short-term adjustments like remote working, compressed weeks, or unpaid leave. Keep in mind your manager will consider the broader impact on the team and delivery, so a trial period with a review may be more feasible.

Workplace culture

Workplace culture might be a difficult area to explore with your manager but it can have an impact on wellbeing. Frame thoughts as observations and opportunities, exploring examples in your team or workplace, noting how this impacts on you.

Consider the impact of the following: communication, team dynamics, employee satisfaction, company values, strategy and leadership and diversity and inclusion. Although change will be gradual, by sharing you could help shape the workplace and inspire initiatives.

Evaluate and revisit

A follow-up to the discussion is crucial so that you can both have an opportunity to check in to see if the measures taken are having the desired impact both for yourself and the wider team. Set specific and measurable goals for improving the situation.

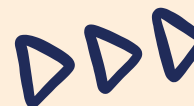
Important aspects to note

Approaching the conversation this way shows you're proactive and committed to improving both your wellbeing and work performance, encouraging productive discussions and positive outcomes.

- **Be open to your manager's suggestions** on supporting your wellbeing. They will have thoughts and ideas after reflecting on the conversation and it's important to be receptive to their input. If you believe something won't work, explain why; if it's helpful, acknowledge it and take action.
- **Discuss confidentiality** upfront to clarify what you're comfortable sharing.
- **Plan a follow-up** to review actions and their effectiveness.

Many companies offer employee support programs, which your manager or HR can guide you to.

You could also consider contacting a healthcare professional to access other support services.



Visit Mental Health UK's website for more info or scan the QR