

## 4 Strategies Every Manager Should Use When an Employee Says “I’m Not Okay”

It’s time to pay attention to our employees. As increased demands are placed on resources to “get the job done” and the pressure of personal life converges with the requirements of the workforce, it is imperative that managers be more compassionate. Research suggests that compassionate managers improve employee satisfaction, motivation and productivity, and reduces stress for employees. It’s a WIN-WIN that every leader should embrace.

Here are **four strategies** to keep in mind while establishing team norms, when an employee states outwardly that he/she is not okay, or if you observe changes in behavior or work performance:

**1. Make it clear that there is a safe space to raise concerns and have sensitive conversations.**

Safe space can be considered as conference calls, video sessions, on-site conference rooms or offices where all employees can speak freely about challenges, feelings, or concerns. These can be related to work related issues, family or current events that may impact his/her ability to perform job requirements. Establishing commitments (“ground rules”) in safe space is key. Some of these commitments may include reserving judgement, allowing everyone to have a chance to speak (in group settings) and using inquisitive statements like “help me understand.”

Safe space allows employees to feel valued and supported, and should be provided on an individual or group level.

**2. Ask employees what information they feel comfortable sharing.**

This allows employees to have control over what they share and they may be more inclined to open up about their concerns with this level of flexibility.

**3. Ask employees what they need in order to feel supported.**

When employees feel supported it demonstrates that they are valued. When employees feel valued they become invested in the work you need them to do for your team/organization. Support can range. It can include time-off if they feel stressed or burned out, load sharing if they are overwhelmed with meeting deadlines, or flexible work hours to accommodate family needs. Its also important to note that some support requests may not be easy or probable to grant. So it's important to listen to what is needed, be open about what can be done, while being realistic about what you can't provide.

**4. Remind employees about other available services.**

Ideally, safe space conversations will address concerns and you, the employee or entire team can develop workable solutions to make things okay for all. However, there may be situations where other resources like an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Human Resources (HR) may be needed.

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**Bottom Line:**

Be connected enough to know what’s going on with your staff. Make space for the *whole* person, not just the one showing up to do a job but also what they may be bringing with them when they report to work, personally and professionally.

If you have questions about these strategies or other topics for your organization, inquire at [www.TruSynergy.org/contact](http://www.TruSynergy.org/contact).