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SUPPORTING MENTAL WELLBEING

A PRACTICAL MANAGER'S GUIDE

Confident conversations.
Compassionate leadership.
Healthier teams.



NOTICE
Recognise the early signs.

SUPPORT
Have confident conversations.

LEAD
Build healthier workplace cultures.

> A conversation can change someone's day.
> *A supportive culture can change someone's life.*

People. Connection. Impact.

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What you'll find inside

Practical, evidence-informed guidance to help you support mental wellbeing, have confident conversations, and build a culture where people can thrive.

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> Managers set the tone.
> *Compassion sets the culture.*



People. | Connection. | Compassion. | Impact.

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Welcome & purpose

You play a vital role in creating a positive, healthy workplace where people feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

This guide is here to support you with practical tools, strategies and confidence to have conversations that matter and to support the mental wellbeing of your team.

This guide will help you to:

- **Understand** why mental wellbeing matters in the workplace.
- **Recognise** signs that someone may be struggling.
- **Have** supportive, confident conversations.
- **Provide** practical support and signpost to the right resources.
- **Look after** your own wellbeing while supporting others.
- **Take** simple actions that make a real difference to your team and your culture.



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Why Managers Matter



Managers shape the everyday experience of work more than almost anything else.

You set the tone. You influence the culture. You notice what others might miss. And you have the power to make your team feel safe, valued and supported or the opposite.

You don't need to be a therapist to make a difference. You just need the right knowledge, confidence and support.

Great managers:

- Create environments where people feel **safe to speak up.**
- Notice when something feels different and **act early.**
- Respond with **empathy and understanding** when it matters most.
- Help people access the **right support** and resources.
- Look after **their own wellbeing** so they can lead with confidence and resilience.

> People don't leave *organisations.*
> *They leave managers.*
>
> Make yours a place they want to stay.

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Notice the Difference



People rarely say, "I'm struggling." But there are often signs.

Spotting changes early means you can offer support before things become overwhelming.

You don't need all the answers. You just need to notice and start a conversation.

Look out for changes in:

Behaviour
Withdrawal, irritability, increased lateness, less engaged.

Energy
More tired than usual, struggling to concentrate.

Work patterns
Missing deadlines, more mistakes, avoiding certain tasks.

Communication
Shorter responses, less open, seems "not themselves".

Wellbeing
Changes in mood, appetite, sleep, or appearance.

Trust your instincts.
If something feels different, it probably is.

Small observations can lead to big impact.

You don't need to be certain. You just need to care enough to check in.

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Starting the Conversation



The thought of starting a conversation about wellbeing can feel daunting. But it doesn't have to be.

A simple, genuine conversation can open the door to support and make a real difference.

You don't need the perfect words.
You just need to show you care.

Tips for starting the conversation

Choose the right time and place
Find a quiet moment without distractions and keep it private.

Be genuine and approachable
Start with openness and a willingness to listen.

Use open, non-judgemental questions
Try:
"How have you been feeling lately?"
"Is there anything on your mind?"

Listen more than you speak
Give them space to share without interrupting or rushing to fix.

Respect their response
They may not want to talk and that's okay.

Offer support and next steps
Let them know you're here and where they can find more help.

Remember

The goal isn't to fix the problem.

The goal is to start a conversation that helps someone feel heard.

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Supporting Your Team

Supportive teams don't happen by accident. They happen because of the everyday choices you make as a manager.

Your team looks to you for leadership, guidance and reassurance.
When people feel supported, they feel safe to speak up, take risks and do their best work.

You don't need to have all the answers.
You just need to create the right environment for people to thrive.

Practical ways to support your team

Build trust
Be consistent, keep your promises and treat everyone with respect.

Encourage open conversations
Create a culture where people feel safe to share how they're feeling.

Check in regularly
Small check-ins show you care and help you spot issues early.

Recognise and value
Acknowledge effort and celebrate achievements, big and small.

Be flexible where you can
Understand that life happens. Flexibility can make a real difference.

Signpost the right support
Know what support is available and help your team access it when needed.

Lead by example
Look after your own wellbeing. It shows your team it's okay to do the same.



Remember

Culture isn't built by policies alone.

It's built through the conversations managers have every day.

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Small Changes, Big Difference

You don't need a big budget or a complete culture change to make a positive impact.
Small, consistent actions create healthier workplaces.

It's the everyday moments of leadership that shape how people feel, perform and stay.
Start small. Stay consistent.
You'll be amazed at the difference it makes.

Simple ways to make a big difference

Start the day with a check-in
A quick "How's everyone doing?" sets a positive tone.

Say thank you
Genuine appreciation boosts morale and motivation.

Listen actively
Give people your full attention. It makes them feel valued.

Be flexible
Small adjustments to workload or time can reduce stress.

Celebrate progress
Recognise effort and achievements, not just outcomes.

Encourage breaks
Regular breaks improve focus, creativity and wellbeing.

Create moments of connection
Team lunches, walks or virtual coffees build stronger relationships.

Lead by example
When you prioritise wellbeing, your team feels safe to do the same.



Remember

Small actions, done consistently, create a culture where people feel supported, valued and able to thrive.

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Building Trust

Trust is the foundation of every strong team and every meaningful conversation.
It isn't built overnight.
It's built in small, consistent ways.

When people trust you, they feel safe to be honest, ask for help and challenge ideas. When they feel safe, performance and wellbeing improve.

Your actions as a manager shape the level of trust in your team every day.

Ways to build trust every day

Do what you say you'll do
Follow through on commitments, no matter how small.

Listen first
Show you value their perspective before sharing your own.

Be honest and transparent
Share information openly and explain the reasons behind decisions.

Be consistent
Fairness and consistency build confidence and reduce uncertainty.

Show empathy
Understand that everyone has challenges you may not see.

Give credit where it's due
Recognise contributions and celebrate effort as well as results.

Encourage openness
Invite feedback and create space for honest conversations.

Support growth
Invest in your team's development and believe in their potential.



Remember

Trust isn't built in a single moment. It's built in the everyday moments when you choose to lead with integrity, empathy and respect.

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Signposting & Specialist Support

You don't have to have all the answers. Sometimes the best support you can offer is connecting someone with the right help.

Every organisation and community has specialist services available.

Knowing where to find them and how to refer can make a real difference.

You don't need to be a specialist.
You just need to know where to look.

Signposting shows you care.
It helps people get the right support at the right time.

How to signpost effectively

Know what's available
Familiarise yourself with internal resources and external services.

Share clear information
Give people the details they need, including links or contact numbers.

Make it easy to access
Remove barriers and help people take the first step.

Offer to help – but respect choice
Let people decide what feels right for them.

Keep it confidential
Respect privacy and only share information with permission.

Follow up
Check in if appropriate and ensure they've had a chance to connect.

Keep the door open
Let people know you're there if they need to talk again.



Remember

You don't need to have all the answers. Connection and signposting can be the first step towards real support.

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Your Wellbeing as a Manager



Supporting others is rewarding, but it also carries responsibility.

Managers often spend so much time looking after their teams that they forget to look after themselves.

Protecting your own wellbeing is not selfish. It helps you stay calm, make better decisions and be there for others when they need you.

Looking after yourself is part of being an effective leader.

> "A manager who looks after their own wellbeing leads with greater clarity, patience and confidence."

Signs You Need to Recharge

- You're mentally exhausted at the end of every day
- You're struggling to switch off after work
- Small problems feel much bigger than usual
- You're becoming less patient with your team
- You're constantly firefighting instead of leading
- You're neglecting your own health or work-life balance

Practical Ways to Protect Your Wellbeing

- ✓ Take regular breaks during busy days
- ✓ Use annual leave before you desperately need it
- ✓ Share challenges with another manager or mentor
- ✓ Set realistic expectations of yourself
- ✓ Delegate wherever appropriate
- ✓ Finish work at a sensible time whenever possible
- ✓ Remember that you cannot solve every problem alone

Healthy Leadership Habits

Good managers:

- Ask for help when they need it
- Keep learning and reflecting
- Lead by example
- Encourage open conversations
- Accept that perfection isn't possible

Remember

Looking after yourself isn't taking time away from your team.
It's helping ensure you're able to support them tomorrow.

Healthy managers build healthy teams.

Listen. | Connect. | Support. | Follow up.

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Putting It Into Practice



Awareness is the first step.
Action is what makes the difference.

You don't need a big budget or a long strategy to make progress.

Small, consistent actions can create meaningful change for your team and your workplace.

Use this simple 5-step plan to start embedding wellbeing into everyday management.

Your 5-step plan

1. Look at where you are now
What's working well? What could be better?
Use feedback, observations and conversations.

2. Choose one area to focus on
Start small. Pick one wellbeing priority that will make the biggest impact.

3. Take action
Put a simple action in place.
Make it practical and achievable.

4. Review and adjust
Check in regularly. What's making a difference?
What could you do differently?

5. Build momentum
Celebrate progress. Share successes.
Keep building a culture of wellbeing together.

Try this this week

- Have one meaningful check-in conversation.
- Say thank you to someone for their effort.
- Block 15 minutes in your week to focus on your own wellbeing.
- Ask your team: "What would make the biggest difference to your wellbeing at work?"

Small steps create a stronger culture.

Remember

You don't have to get it perfect.
You just have to keep moving forward.

Every positive action you take helps build a healthier, more resilient workplace.

Small actions today. Stronger teams tomorrow.

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The Difference You Make



Being a great manager isn't about having all the answers.

It's about creating an environment where people feel heard, supported and able to thrive.

The conversations you have.
The questions you ask.
The example you set.

These everyday moments shape the culture your team experiences.

Small actions create lasting change.

Today I will...

- Listen before I solve.
- Notice the small changes.
- Make time for my team.
- Encourage honest conversations.
- Look after my own wellbeing too.

> People may forget what you said, but they rarely forget how you made them feel at work.

Before you close this guide...

- Check in with one member of your team this week.
- Ask, "How are you really doing?"
- Celebrate progress, not just performance.
- Make time to listen without distractions.
- Signpost support when it's needed.
- Remember that looking after yourself helps you look after others.

The Secure Cortex Manager Promise

Great managers don't need to be perfect.	They need to be present.	They need to listen.	They need to care.	They need to act.

Every conversation is an opportunity to build trust.

Every act of kindness strengthens culture.

Every manager can make a difference.

Thank you for choosing to lead with compassion.

Together, we can create workplaces where people feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

Leading with compassion. Building stronger workplaces.

Listen · Care · Talk · Support

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About Secure Cortex

At Secure Cortex, we believe that healthier workplaces are built through everyday conversations, compassionate leadership and practical action.

Our evidence-informed training, consultancy and wellbeing resources help organisations create cultures where people feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

Because when people thrive, organisations do too.

securecortex.co.uk