AARHUS UNIVERSITET

THE RISK ZONE

A guide to discussing well-being and stress with individual employees

- **when you are concerned about their well-being**

If you notice – or if somebody else tells you – that one of your employees is in the risk zone, it is important that you reach out and invite the employee in question to a one-to-one meeting about well-being and stress. The employee may also contact you directly, in which case you should also offer a one-to-one meeting.

In the risk zone, it is important that you:

- adapt the dialogue and the content to the specific situation. If you notice that the employee is very affected by the situation, only talk about the most necessary things.
- assess the degree to which the person is burdened.
- address the possible causes of the employees stress
- find ways to relieve and support the person as quickly as possible
- control and steer the dialogue more than you would if talking to an employee in the well-being zone.

As a manager, you should also consider the following questions – before, during and after the one-to-one meeting:

- What are the causes of stress and sources of well-being?
- How do we balance demands and options/resources?
- What are we doing right now? What is realistically possible in the current situation?
- Is there something that could be done right now to enable the employee to be in the workplace in a manageable way (that will not aggravate the situation)?
- What help is available from the workplace in terms of advice or support? (cf. the possibility to get psychological counselling)

Before the one-on-one

Be honest and direct when you reach out to an employee you are concerned about. Say, for example:

“I would like to invite you to a one-to-one meeting, because I am concerned about your well-being and workload.” Consider giving the employee AU’s stress leaflet before the meeting.

During the one-on-one meeting

Frame the discussion by repeating the reason for and aim of the meeting. It is worth taking some time for you and your employee to balance your expectations.

You might also wish to point out that the discussion is confidential, because for many people stress can be a sensitive topic to discuss with their manager.

At the same time, it is also important to let the employee know that – depending on what you end up discussing – you may need to arrange to tell other colleagues about the situation.

It's also a good idea to ask whether the employee has any thoughts or considerations for the meeting based on the information in AU's stress leaflet.

Questions that may help you assess the employee's situation and decide on specific courses of action:

- How are you?
- I have noticed ... and therefore I'm worried you might be heading into the amber/red zone.
- How do you experience your situation yourself?
- Where are you on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is having no stress and 10 is having several serious stress symptoms?
- Are there any factors here at the workplace that are making you feel under pressure/stressed?
- What could help alleviate your situation right now?
- What can we do here at the workplace to support you and help you feel less stressed?
- As your manager, how can I best help or support you? For example, can I help you prioritise your tasks, make a plan for the week ahead, or offer advice and support?
- Tell the employee that AU offers psychological counselling and, if relevant, suggest that they contact their own GP.

At the end of the meeting, it's important that you draw up a joint plan/agreement about:

- How you will reduce work-related pressures
- Full-time or part-time sick leave (if relevant)
- Follow-up procedures
- Information for colleagues (if relevant)

After the one-on-one

Remember to follow up on the meeting and the agreements you've made.

This guide has been made with inspiration from:
Martini M, Tøttrup, CA & Krarup, M (2017). Lederens stresshåndbog: Styrk dine stresskompetencer, når det gælder stress.
Dansk Psykologisk Forlag.

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