

# LET'S TALK

## Creating a Supportive Workplace for Employee Mental Health

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A Toolkit for City of New York Employees



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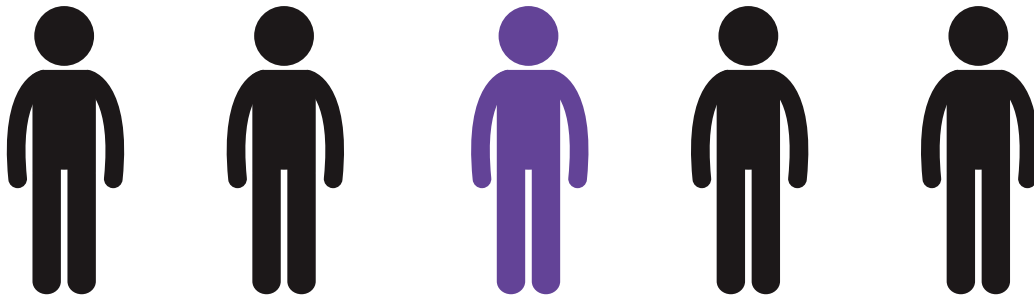
- Supporting Colleagues with Mental Health Challenges
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**Approximately 1 in 5 New Yorkers experience a mental health disorder each year.**



The City of New York employs over 380,000 people, **which means as many as 75,000 City employees may experience a mental health disorder this year.** If an employee is not struggling with their own mental health challenges, they are most likely working alongside someone who is.

Mental health challenges are extremely common, but they frequently remain hidden due to the stigma associated with it. Stigma can be seen as judgmental attitudes, discriminating behavior and perceptions that lead to shame and self-neglect. Fortunately, we can change the conversation around mental health.

**"Let's Talk"** is WorkWell NYC's campaign to eliminate mental health stigma in the City of New York workforce by creating supportive workplaces and building resilience in employees. The *Let's Talk* Toolkit provides valuable information and resources to help city employees support mental health awareness in their workplace, and improve their mental health and resiliency.

The "Let's Talk" mission is to empower New York City employees to address mental health stigma in the workplace, support colleagues with mental health challenges and to use and share mental health resources.



**Promoting** education, awareness, and knowledge about mental health in the workplace



**Changing** the culture around discussing mental health in the workplace



**Empowering** employees to take up calls to action, to seek resources and offer support to each other

WorkWell NYC is asking City of New York employees to take the "Let's Talk" pledge. Those who sign the pledge indicate their commitment to end stigma around mental illness in the workplace and encourage conversations around emotional health and wellness.

**Together, we can foster compassion and acceptance in the workplace. By signing, you pledge to:**

- ✓ **Make** mental health a priority in the workplace
- ✓ **Reach** out to and support colleagues
- ✓ **Serve** as a leader in ending mental health stigma
- ✓ **Engage** in self-care

**Take the pledge by  
clicking here**

**Or sign the pledge by visiting  
[on.nyc.gov/LetsTalkPledge](https://on.nyc.gov/LetsTalkPledge)**

LET'S **TALK**

# Workplace Tools



Starting a conversation with a colleague who is experiencing mental health challenges may feel a bit uncomfortable however, a conversation can be extremely helpful and comforting for your colleague. Below are some tips for having a helpful conversation.



## Express Your Concern and Support

In a private area, express to your colleague your concerns. Ask them how they are doing/feeling. Let them know you are available for support.



## Practice Active Listening Skills

Put your troubles aside momentarily and give your complete attention to the person who is talking. It's okay to share similar experiences, but be careful not to compare your experiences.



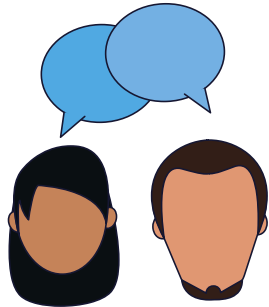
## Provide Reassurance

Reassure your colleague that their feelings are valid.

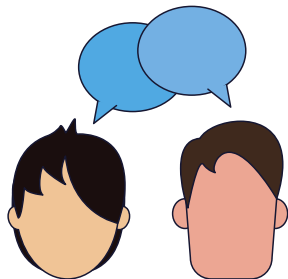


## Ask What You Can Do

Ask your colleague how you can help. Do not make assumptions. Respect if they do not have an answer right away, or express they do not need help. Let your colleague know you are available for support at all times.



For the past (day/week/\_\_\_\_), it seems like you have been feeling (unlike yourself/distracted/stressed). I care about you and I'm here to listen if you would like to let me know how you are feeling.



You seem to be struggling with your (loss of a loved one/finances/job stress/\_\_\_\_\_).

Sometimes talking to someone who has experienced a similar issue can be helpful. Is there anyone you can think of who has overcome this problem and are you able to reach out to them?



I have been (worried/concerned/\_\_\_\_\_) about you. Have you been getting the care and support you need?





## Show Your Support for "Let's Talk" on Social Media

You can show your support for the "Let's Talk" Campaign online. Below are samples of social media postings, suggested hashtags and the "Let's Talk" Social Cards, which you can download and share on social media.

### Suggested Hashtags

#Let'sTalkNYC  
#WorkWellNYC  
#MentalHealthMonth  
#SupportiveWorksites  
#WorkplaceWellness

### Sample Social Media Posts

- **What is the highlight of your day today?**
- **I pledge to make my emotional health a priority by [insert goal]**
- **Today, my positive affirmation is...**

### Social Cards

Share the "Let's Talk" social media cards. Download them all at [nyc.gov/bewell](http://nyc.gov/bewell).



# LET'S TALK Manage Challenging Thoughts



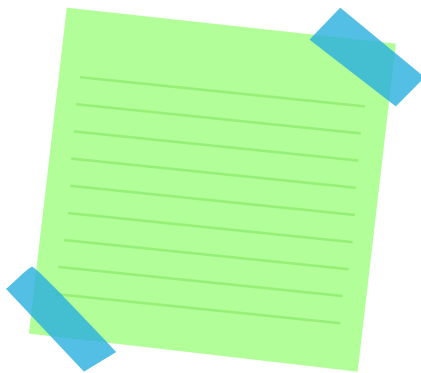
## Are you dealing with challenging thoughts?

While experiencing negative, irrational, or anxious thoughts is common, sometimes these thoughts can be overwhelming and unproductive. Put your thoughts on trial and assess their accuracy by asking yourself, "Is this thought based on fact or feeling?"

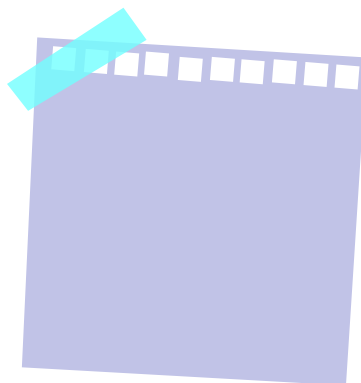
### Activity

For each negative thought you have, write down the evidence for and against supporting that thought. After assessing the evidence, reframe the thought into a positive one. Although this may be challenging at first, after some practice, you may find yourself thinking more positively.

#### Negative Thought



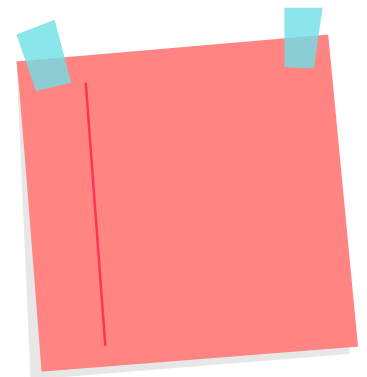
#### Evidence For



#### Evidence Against



#### Positive Thought



[www.TherapistAid.com](http://www.TherapistAid.com)

# LET'S TALK Building Blocks of Resilience

## Got Resilience?

Resilience is our capacity to draw on inner strength to help us rebound from stressful or traumatic events. It is a powerful tool that anyone can cultivate with practice. The 4 key building blocks of resilience are 1) healthy thinking, 2) connections, 3) wellness, and 4) purpose.

## Activity

Complete the four boxes to help cultivate the four building blocks of resilience.



### Healthy Thinking

Think about the ways you have overcome hardships in the past. Write down three skills you used then that you can employ now.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

### Connections

Write down three people you can reach out to for social or emotional support in the next 48 hours, should you need it.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

### Wellness

Write down three self-care and healthy practices you will incorporate into your life this week.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

### Purpose

Identify one thing that gives you a sense of purpose and two things that you will commit to over the next two weeks that will help you fulfill your purpose.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

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# Resources





It is important to use specific and standardized language around mental health. Using the correct language reduces stigma and accurately represents the breadth of emotional, social and psychological experiences associated with mental health.

Below are a few key mental health terms to help guide respectful and thoughtful conversations.

- ✓ **Mental health** is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community.[1]
- ✓ **Mental health problems** is a broad term that recognizes the mental health spectrum from health, to challenge, to illness, and acknowledges the breadth of these experiences.[2]
- ✓ **Mental health challenges** may be experienced by all of us and do not necessarily refer to an underlying condition or illness. A mental health challenge can arise at particularly stressful moments in our lives (e.g. stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic, job loss, feeling socially isolated or grieving), and this term typically refers to time-bound events.
- ✓ **Vicarious trauma** (also referred to as secondary trauma) is an occupational challenge due to continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence. Frequent interactions with individuals who have experienced trauma is associated with negative psychological, emotional, and cognitive effects.[3]

1] World Health Organization. (2004). Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report) Geneva: World Health Organization.

2] Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2009). Toward recovery & well-being. Calgary: Mental Health Commission of Canada, Calgary

3] Bercier, M. L., & Maynard, B. R. (2015). Interventions for secondary traumatic stress with mental health workers: A systematic review. Research on Social Work Practice, 25(1), 81-89.

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# Be Well Workshops

Be Well Workshops are designed to support and enhance mental resilience through small, tailored self-care programming. Programming can be offered virtually at the agency or departmental level, and tailored to the unique needs of employees, anywhere. Worksites can request one Be Well Workshop per quarter.



## Introduction to Mindful Meditation

Learn meditation techniques for relaxation and stress reduction. All levels welcome!



## Creating Supportive Connections

Learn how supportive connections can aid in stress management, strategies for combating social isolation, and steps you can take to strengthen your social network.



## Mindfulness Matters

Learn different ways of cultivating mindfulness and integrating it into your daily self-care practice.



## Sleep Soundly

Learn about the connection between sleep and mental health, various sleep disorders, and strategies for improving your sleep quality.



## Establishing Work-Life Harmony

Learn how to create a more harmonious life by maximizing leisure time, pacing work schedules, and setting boundaries to avoid burnout and minimize stress.



## Mindful Journaling

Learn and practice tips and tricks for mindful journaling to expand creativity and meaningful change in our lives.



Sign up for a Be Well Workshop by visiting  
[on.nyc.gov/workshops](https://on.nyc.gov/workshops)



[workwell@olr.nyc.gov](mailto:workwell@olr.nyc.gov)



[nyc.gov/workwellnyc](https://nyc.gov/workwellnyc)



[@workwellnyc](https://www.instagram.com/workwellnyc)



FOR ADDITIONAL BE WELL RESOURCES, VISIT [NYC.GOV/BEWELL](https://nyc.gov/bewell)

- [Just Five Website - invest 5 minutes to learn about substance misuse](#)
- [Suicide Prevention - Signs and How To Help](#)
- [Understanding Racial Inequity](#)
- [Asian Americans - COVID-19 and Discrimination](#)
- [Tools to Build Self-Belief](#)
- [Building Your Emotional Resilience](#)
- [Building Resilience: Humor and Laughter](#)
- [Calming Uncertainty Stress](#)
- [Behavioral Addictions - Signs and Recovery](#)
- [What to Expect From Therapy](#)





### NYC Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- Free and confidential support for employees and their families.
- Onsite support following crises at the workplace.
- 212-306-7660 | [eap@olr.nyc.gov](mailto:eap@olr.nyc.gov) | [nyc.gov/eap](http://nyc.gov/eap)

### NYC Well

- Free and confidential 24/7 mental health support for you or someone you care about.
- 888-NYC-WELL | Text WELL to 65173 | Chat [nyc.gov/nycwell](http://nyc.gov/nycwell)
- [Digital app library](#).

*Texting and live chat services are available in English, Spanish and Traditional Chinese. Free over-the-phone interpretation services are available in more than 200 languages.*



### WorkWell NYC

- Access recordings and slides of previous webinars on topics such as [stress management](#), [building resilience](#), and more.
- Discover tools and resources, such as [tips to staying mentally healthy](#) and a [meditation 101](#) guide.
- Visit WorkWell NYC at [nyc.gov/workwellnyc](http://nyc.gov/workwellnyc) for additional tools and resources to help you lead a healthy lifestyle.

