



HÄLSA
wellbeing

How to facilitate safe, open and inclusive conversations

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Session Aim

Creating conversations where people feel safe:

To speak

Be heard

And are respected

✓ *Safe doesn't always mean easy – it means respectful*



The poster features the HÄLSA wellbeing logo in the top right corner. The main text reads 'I CAN'T ~~X~~ TALK ABOUT IT.' in large, bold, yellow letters. Below this, it says 'Time to Talk day is taking place on the 5th Feb this year. Wherever you are, choose to talk about Emotional & Mental Health on this day.' At the bottom right, there are two speech bubbles: a red one saying 'I'M NOT OK' and a yellow one saying 'THAT'S OK'. The hashtag #TimeToTalk is in the bottom left, and the date 1st Feb 2024 is in the bottom right.

HÄLSA wellbeing

I CAN'T ~~X~~ TALK ABOUT IT.

Time to Talk day is taking place on the 5th Feb this year. Wherever you are, choose to talk about Emotional & Mental Health on this day.

I'M NOT OK

THAT'S OK

#TimeToTalk

1st Feb 2024

What is psychological safety?

- ✓ You feel you won't be punished or embarrassed for asking questions
- ✓ You can freely admit mistakes without being made to feel uncomfortable or be shamed
- ✓ You can feel safe to share ideas, to raise concerns or doubts
- ✓ You don't need to walk on eggshells

**Even if I am
wrong, I will still
be respected**

When you create psychological safety, team members feel accepted and respected, and it generally contributes to a better experience in the workplace.

It also applies to friendships, families and relationships



Eat Well



Sleep Well



Think Well



Feel Well

How do organisations create psychological safety?

1. Start at the top!!

When leaders admit their mistakes, say “I don’t know” or ask for feedback and validate concerns, it sends a positive message that you don’t need to be perfect!

2. No Punishment

Staff are not penalized, mocked or punished for:

- ✓ Asking questions
- ✓ Raising concerns
- ✓ Challenging ideas (respectfully)



How do organisations create psychological safety?



3. Learning

When something goes wrong, instead of punishment and blame, we ask “what can we learn/how can we improve”

4. Give everyone a voice

- Ideas are considered
- Different views are welcomed
- Quieter people are encouraged to join in



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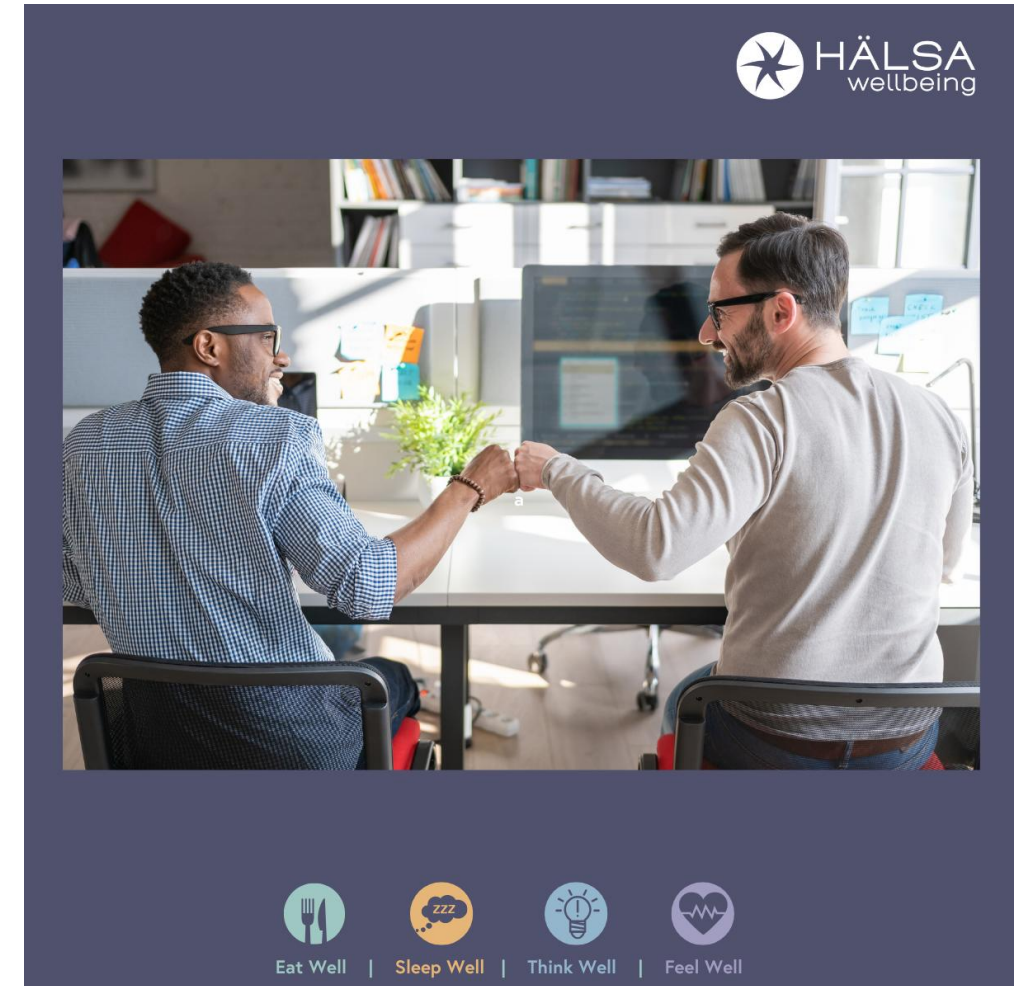
How do organisations create psychological safety?

5. Respect

Respect forms part of your culture.
People are treated with respect even
when teams are under pressure

6. Acknowledgement

Responses that build trust



EXAMPLE: Team Meeting

1

Prepare

- ✓ Share the agenda in advance. This helps:
 - People who are more introvert
 - People who don't have English as their first language
 - People who like to process and think

2

Set the tone

- ✓ All views are welcome
- ✓ It is ok to challenge and disagree
- ✓ Let's hear from different voices today

EXAMPLE: Team Meeting

3

Encourage quieter staff

- ✓ Susan, what is your take?
- ✓ We haven't heard from this side of the room yet
- ✓ Does anyone have a different view?

4

Manage dominant staff

- ✓ Let's just pause here and hear from others
- ✓ That is a great point – does anyone see that differently?

EXAMPLE: Team Meeting

5

Communication styles

- ✓ Sticky notes or boards
- ✓ Anonymous Polls
- ✓ Follow up emails

6

Respond positively

- ✓ Respond with curiosity rather than dismissal
- ✓ Normalise disagreement
- ✓ Close the meeting loop

Managing tension points

- ✓ Pause, slow down
- ✓ Name what is happening (don't blame)
- ✓ Reset



Top Tips

- ✓ Set the tone early
- ✓ Listen to understand
- ✓ Invite, don't force
- ✓ Slow it down
- ✓ Handle disagreement calmly
- ✓ Be aware of your reactions
- ✓ Make space for all voices
- ✓ Close the loop

**People speak up
when they feel
respected**



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The importance of supportive conversations

- Avoid interruptions – switch off phones, ensure colleagues can't walk in and interrupt
- Ask simple, open, non-judgemental questions
- Avoid judgemental or patronising responses
- Speak calmly
- Maintain good eye contact
- Listen actively and carefully
- Encourage the employee to talk
- Give the employee ample opportunity to explain the situation in their own words
- Show empathy and understanding
- Be prepared for some silences and be patient
- Focus on the person, not the problem
- Avoid making assumptions or being prescriptive

✓ **Be pragmatic**
✓ **Be supportive**
✓ **Be sensitive**

What can happen when conversations are not supportive

Tim's Story

Tim asked his manager for a private meeting. During this meeting he explained that he had been struggling with anxiety and lack of sleep. He was finding it hard to concentrate at work and was starting to feel panicky in certain situations.

He advised that he was getting professional help but asked if he could have a little bit of flexibility at work whilst he navigated this difficult period.



What can happen when conversations are not supportive

How his manager responded

- ✓ Everyone gets stressed – you need to toughen up
- ✓ The whole team are under pressure so I can't make exceptions
- ✓ If this starts to impact your performance, I will have to formally monitor this situation

What he did by that response

- ✓ He dismissed how Tim was feeling
- ✓ Didn't ask how the company could support Tim
- ✓ He made this into a performance issue



What can happen when conversations are not supportive

How this made Tim feel

- ✓ Embarrassed
- ✓ Unsafe
- ✓ His anxiety spiralled
- ✓ He ended up taking sick leave



What can happen when conversations are not supportive

What could have been done differently

- ✓ The manager could have acknowledged it took courage to talk to him
- ✓ He could have listened without judgement
- ✓ He could have separated wellbeing and performance management
- ✓ He could have explored reasonable adjustments
- ✓ Signposted support
- ✓ He could have agreed next steps together



Manager's Checklist



Think about:

- ✓ Allow enough time
- ✓ Thank them for speaking up
- ✓ Acknowledge their experience: "That sounds really difficult for you"
- ✓ Listen and don't interrupt
- ✓ Ask what would help at work
- ✓ Explore support
- ✓ Agree next steps
- ✓ Keep in touch



Useful Resources

[Creating a safe environment for open conversations](#)

[The Art of Facilitating Effective Discussions: Techniques and Strategies for Productive and Inclusive Conversations](#)

[How I Foster Open Dialogue Among Teams /
osdemethodology.org.uk](#)



Move the dial on your Wellbeing

