

TOOL and TEMPLATE

Using the 'stress and support' tool in supervision

Within the workplace individual employees will find different elements of their job or day stressful, and will each have different responses to these stressors.

Good practice supervision provides a forum for managers or supervisors to support members of their team to address any issues of stress within the workplace in a constructive manner.

Using a person-centred approach to these situations enables managers or supervisors to support their employees to reflect on stressors and at the same time feel empowered to take ownership over their reactions, and comfortable to provide information on the support they want and need from others.

TOOL:

The '**stress and support**' tool can be used as a framework for discussions during supervision that assist with open conversation on the subject of how employees manage stress within the work place.

The tool provides employees with the opportunity to consider stress within their workplace, how they manage it and what they can do for themselves to better cope with the stressors. It also provides the space for them to provide feedback to their manager or supervisor.

Information and feedback from this process can feed into the employees existing **one-page profile**.

Where relevant, information may also be added to the staff member's development plan as sometimes further professional or skill development might be of assistance.

For example:

Wendy acknowledged that one of her major stresses within the workplace related to monthly report writing. Her IT skills were excellent and so were her writing skills and so it had not been raised as a performance issue.

However, she lacked confidence in pulling together the necessary information.

Her manager found a development opportunity related to writing proposals and reports that gave her the skill needed, therefore removing the stressor.

How to use the stress and support tool:

What makes me most stressed?

Begin by supporting the staff member to reflect on and capture the elements of their work that makes them feel stressed.

Their focus may be on a particular task within work or something related to external factors that affect how they go about their day.

Ask the staff member to think about times of the day, week or month where they start to feel tense or stressed. What tasks do they know they avoid or feel anxious about and what is it about this task that causes the stress?

Initiating this type of conversation provides managers or supervisors with the opportunity to provide feedback on what others including both individuals and staff members may have noticed about the person's stress levels and the impact this may be having on them and their job.

How I react to being stressed?

This section is about the employee identifying their reactions to stress (considering both their positive or negative responses). Taking time to reflect on and becoming more aware of their reactions to stressful situations within the workplace can assist employees to develop their own positive solutions.

What I can do?

Discuss current stress management strategies that the person finds useful now and ones that may have worked in the past.

Support them to think about other ideas they might like to try in order to feel 'on top of' stressful situations at work. This can also include a more holistic approach that takes into account what people find useful outside of work.

Once we are aware of and acknowledge our own part in managing stress levels, we are better equipped to take ownership and action.

What I want others to know or do?

This is the section where information is captured that details that the staff member wants others to know or do in order to support them to manage stress.

This section can provide additional useful information to be included in a person's one-page profile as it should provide helpful detail for how to best communicate with or provide support to the person in stressful situations.

This might also relate to support wanted from others to assist the staff member to take more control over the situation themselves.

For example:

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A frontline worker regularly supported a young man, James, whose behavior was often a threat to him and others. The support worker enjoyed working with James but often felt her stress levels rising when he was having a bad day and struggled to let go of that stress at the end of the day.

With time to think through this in her supervision session she identified that:

'If I've been working with James all day, I just need someone to debrief with someone for five or ten minutes at the end of my shift. Typing up my notes from the day assist me to reflect on the day and to think about any new learnings, however, I sometimes need to get it off my chest because I've had to remain calm and not show my stress at all during the day.

A quick phone call is all I need if I can't see someone face-to-face.

I've also learnt some relaxation techniques and I've started to swim a couple of times a week, both of which help, but sometimes I also need to talk it through with another person.'

TEMPLATE:

Name	What makes me most stressed	How I react to being stressed	What helps	
			What I can do	What I would like you to know or do

Additional resources:

- The Workforce Capability Framework
- The disability career planner and capability framework implementation guide
- Technique, tips and technique – a person-centred approach to supervision
- Tips – building on a one-page profile through supervision
- Tips – using ‘what’s working / not working’ in supervision
- Technique and template – using ‘praise and trouble’ in supervision.

Definitions:

The term **individual(s)** refers to an individual with a disability and their family and/or circle of support.

The terms **staff/employee(s)** refer to paid or unpaid members of the workforce regardless of their employment relationship with their employer i.e. permanent, casual, full-time, volunteer, etc.