

Strategies to Elevate Workplace Communication



Q: When you have an employee who is bringing a second job into the job I supervise her in and when I address it she is on the defensive... is there a go to phrase I can say to get her to see what is happening as it is affecting her job performance?

A:

SEE – what cues are present that indicate that the employee may be managing their other role?

SAY – communicate objectively what you’ve noticed

SUPPORT – ask how you might be able to assist them

SELF-CARE – check in with yourself post conversation and do what’s necessary to take care of yourself.

Example:

“I wanted to check in with you about something I’ve noticed. Correct me if I’m wrong, but it seems like responsibilities or demands from your second job might be overlapping into this one, and I’ve seen some effects on your performance here. I’m bringing this up because I want to better understand what’s going on and support you in staying successful in this role.”

Consider the following if there is resistance to the initial conversation:

“I’m not questioning your commitment, I understand juggling two roles is tough. I just want to work together on making sure this job gets the focus it needs when you’re here.”

“This isn’t about blame, it’s about making sure we’re both clear on expectations and how we can make things work better moving forward.”

Q: Outside the EFAP from the employer, are the options you noted free resources or paid?

A: The resources on slide 22 are community resources that are free for British Columbians/Canadians to use.

Q: Are any of these resources specific to substance use and when use becomes too much?

A: Please visit [Here to Help BC](#) for substance use inquiries and support. Reach out to [Here to Help BC](#) to inquire.

Q: Effective communication goes both ways: if you are on the receiving end of “support” from a superior who is going about it all the wrong ways - how can we respond in a way that is meaningful and successful that can get us to where we need to be communication-wise?

A: Great question. We recommend the following:

1. Acknowledge the intention – *“I appreciate you checking in. I can see you’re trying to support me”*
2. Name what you need – *“I think I’d benefit more from (name what you need). Would you be open to trying that with me?”*
3. Invite partnership – *“I really want us to be on the same page and I’m open to suggestions about how to tackle this. I’d appreciate if we could find an approach that reflects both of our needs”*

Note: Stick to “I” language (“I work best when...”) rather than “you” language (“You always say it wrong...”) to avoid personalizing actions and keep things constructive.

Q: How do you support if senior leaders do not operate with the same levels of compassion and understanding? How can we help change our workplace cultures?

A: Lead by example: Even if senior leaders aren't modeling compassion, you can be the example in your team or peer group.

Connect with like-minded peers: Find like-minded colleagues—even in different departments, and start weaving micro-moments of empathy into meetings, feedback, and decisions.

Give upward feedback gently: "I know you're juggling a lot—I've noticed the team responds well to empathy, especially during change. May I offer a small idea that might support that?"

For ideas to support workplace culture, check out Workplace Strategies for Mental Health.

***Remember:** cultural change is gradual. Your everyday actions, tone, and approach help build the foundation for a more compassionate culture one day at a time!

Q: How can we have those conversations without creating anxiety on our team? The "We need to talk" or "Let's chat quickly" sentences might come off as if we want to say something negative.

A: The above phrases can sometimes cause worry for staff. Instead, consider using the following openers: *"I'd love to check in with you about something when you have a moment"* or *"Can we catch up on a couple of things today? Nothing urgent, just want to touch base."* Be transparent about the purpose of the conversation to reduce uncertainty for the receiver.

Q: How do I support someone in this way if I'm not a mental health professional?

A: Your role is to simply observe behaviour, like someone seeming withdrawn, overwhelmed, or upset. You're **not** diagnosing with the **SEE-SAY-SUPPORT-SELF CARE** framework. Instead, the goal is to be aware and present by mirroring back objectively what you're noticing about the individual's behaviour, and ultimately, encourage/ navigate them towards seeking helping.

Q: How do I support someone without sounding scripted or cold?

A: Speak like you would to a friend - be genuine, use your own words, and focus on listening more than fixing. A simple, honest statement like "I'm here for you—what do you need right now?" feels warm and human, not scripted.

Here are a few more phrases you might consider using:

"I can see you're having a tough day—want to talk about it?"

"It looks like something's bothering you. I'm here if you'd like to share."

"I notice you seem stressed. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"I'm here for you. Let me know if there's anything you need."

"It sounds like you're dealing with a lot right now. I'm listening if you want to chat."

Remember, it's not only about what you say, but how you say it – ensure your words are aligned with your tone and body language as well.

Q: As a leader, how can I encourage my newly promoted supervisor to feel confident when having challenging conversations with his team? It's hard for him, particularly because some of them seem resentful that he got promoted when they used to work together.

A: This is a difficult position to be in as a leader.

1. Acknowledge and normalize the discomfort:

"It's completely normal to feel awkward leading a team of people you used to work alongside. Many successful leaders have experienced this shift"

2. Clarify with the leader what leadership values matter most to them and encourage modelling their approach from that foundation.

"What would being a fair and respected leader look like for you?"

"How do you envision your leadership and what values are most important for you to lead from?"

3. Encourage the leader to meet one-on-one with each team member to:

- Check in and listen openly to any concerns or feedback they may have
- Clarify roles and responsibilities so everyone is clear on how they will be working together
- Reinforce a shared commitment to team goals

Q: What if a guest or colleague becomes emotional—what's my role then?

A: We recommend using the See-Say-Support-Self Care model. See below for an example.

SEE - Recognize the signs

- Observe verbal and non-verbal cues: Is the person tearful, agitated, withdrawn, or frustrated?
- Notice changes in behaviour: Are they speaking louder, avoiding eye contact, or showing signs of stress?
- Stay present and non-judgmental. This is about noticing, not diagnosing.

Example: You notice a guest is visibly upset after a long wait and their tone becomes sharp when speaking to staff.

SUPPORT - Offer appropriate help

- Focus on practical ways you can assist.
- Respect boundaries and avoid trying to "fix" deep emotional issues. Your role is to support, not counsel or diagnose problems.

Example response to a guest: "Let me see what I can do to make this right for you. I can offer you a drink while I check with the manager about your room."

SAY - Acknowledge and respond with empathy

- Use calm, non-stigmatizing language to acknowledge their feelings.
- Keep your tone warm and open.
- Use active listening (e.g., nodding, paraphrasing their concerns).

Example response to a guest: "I can see this has been really frustrating for you. Thank you for sharing that with me—let's see how I can help."

SELF-CARE - Check in with yourself afterward

- Acknowledge your own emotional response.
- Take a short break, debrief with a supervisor, or do a calming activity (e.g., deep breaths, hydration, quick walk).
- If the interaction was particularly intense, talk it through with someone you trust or use available wellness resources.

Example: "That was tough, but I stayed calm and present. I'm going to take 5 minutes to reset before continuing my shift."



Looking for more resources?

Use the QR Code to find extra resources to support you and your team with effective workplace communication. **Have questions?** [Contact us at safety@go2hr.ca](mailto:safety@go2hr.ca).