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Creating the right environment

This cheat sheet is about how you create the right environment, for people to feel relaxed and confident about chatting to you – whether that's face-to-face or virtually.

It's about what you do and your behaviours. As a leader, one of the most crucial parts of your job is to support the members of your team to be the best that they can be, by:

- Being a great role model

- Being open and available

- Creating the right environment

Your role as a leader

IT'S WHAT YOU DO

Give it a go...

You will have heard the expression: 'Be the change you want to see.' By modelling the behaviours that you want to see in your team, you are far more likely to get others to change.

You can do this by sharing your personal challenges and asking for help and ideas from others.

Talking through vulnerabilities and what you've tried will mean others are happier to share too.

Being open and available

To do this well, leaders need to be mentally present. Did you know that people are worse at conducting tasks, remembering information and paying attention, if they have a mobile phone within eye shot?

Being mentally present and available means giving your full attention and being open to hearing in a non-judgemental way.

DO

✓ Check-in before you start your agenda

✓ Choose the right chatting device. Let them lead on this, it helps create a level playing field

✓ Be pro-active with chats, don't wait for them to come to you

✓ Share your own challenges, be open about your own struggles

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If you are instigating the chat, spend time thinking about how it will take place to ensure the best outcome. Before you even start the chat, check-in on how the other person is feeling. Start with a simple, 'How are you?' This will help you understand if it is the right time to chat. Listen to their response, before you jump in with your own agenda. It might not be the right time, even if you have booked this chat in. If it is the right time, switch off other distractions or put them away. This matters even more when chats are virtual.

DON'T

X Jump in with your own agenda; let them lead

X Take notes on a device – use paper and pen

X Be distracted by emails/ mobile updates

X Think you have to have answers. Listening is sometimes enough

By having regular Big Chats, Little Chats, we are more likely to avoid 'car crash conversations,' when things can go wrong or when there have been misunderstandings.

Be open and listen with empathy. Ask people: 'How are you? Is there anything I can support you with that I'm not doing?' Listen for feedback and act on it.

Phrases such as: 'I understand that must be tough' and nodding show empathy. You might even try rephrasing back to them. 'So you feel anxious? Is there anything I can do to help?'

Remember! When listening with empathy, you are not trying to solve the issue or lead them to an answer.