

Step 2: Developing knowledge and skills

Managing an absent and returning employee can be difficult, especially when there are many pressures and demands on your time. Bear in mind that you do not need to assume a medical expert role: your responsibility is to manage the employee through their absence and return.

The way you behave during your employee's absence and on their return can have a big impact on whether the return is successful or not.



TO DO:

- **Look after the rest of the team**

- Think carefully about how you cover the absent person's workload/tasks while they are off work. Consider the potential impact on other team members. This may affect how they feel about the employee on their return.
- Check what you can share with the team. Do not share information about the person's health without gaining their consent.
- If the absence is work-related, explore how the rest of the team/ organisation are coping with similar pressures. As part of this, you could hold a meeting to discuss the six areas set out in the Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards. These outline aspects of work that can cause stress, if they are not properly managed. See the [Health and Safety Executive website](#) to find out more.

- **Develop your managerial skills**

There are some simple things that you can do to develop your ability to have open and constructive conversations with employees who are suffering mental ill-health. These include:

- **Reflect on your behaviour as a manager**
 - Guidance (supported by the CIPD, HSE and Healthy Working Lives) identifies some important do's and don'ts. Use these to consider what you could do to improve the employee's chances of a successful return.
 - See the [CIPD guidance](#) for further information (look at the checklist on page 5).
- **Prepare for open conversations.** [Tips and tools for having an open conversation.](#)
- **Put yourself in your employee's shoes.** See this [exercise designed to improve perspective taking.](#) Managers who are able to put themselves in their employee's shoes are better able to support their employees' wellbeing.

- **Look after yourself**

When you are a team member down this can be difficult for your business. [Here are some resources aimed at looking after yourself.](#)