



CMHA HK MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING BULLETIN Q&A

Jo Loughran is the Director of Time to Change - Jo has over a decade of involvement in the UK charity sector, specialising in behaviour change campaigns, mental health anti-stigma programmes, and lived experience leadership, particularly in relation to young people. She leads all of Time to Change's work in England.

Welcome Jo. How did Time to Talk Day come about? How long has it been going for?

Time to Talk Day was launched in England eight years ago in recognition of the fact that talking about mental health - having conversations and sharing experiences - is one of the most powerful ways to break down the stigma that sadly still exists around mental health.

In recent years, Time to Talk Day has expanded beyond England and even the UK, to become a key fixture in the mental health calendar.

This year, Time to Talk Day takes place on Thursday 4 February and the theme is 'The Power of Small'. Please can you share a bit more about this theme?

It's easy to think that we don't have the power to make a difference when it comes to tackling the stigma and silence around mental health. But if we all come together and do our bit, by talking openly, we start to break down barriers.

This year's focus is on the power of small, because however you have a conversation about mental health, it has the power to make a big difference. That could be a quick message to a colleague, a virtual coffee morning, or a socially distanced walk and talk with your team (if your workplace is operating in this way).

Every conversation brings us a step closer to ending the isolation, shame and worthlessness that too many of us feel when experiencing a mental health problem.

How can organisations in Hong Kong get involved to mark this day?

The Coronavirus pandemic might mean that Time to Talk Day looks a little different this year, but that doesn't mean we can't start those vital conversations about mental health. Here are some ideas:

1. Walk and talk

If you're still working with colleagues in-person, you could organise a socially distanced lunchtime walk and talk to get outside and have conversations on Time to Talk Day.

2. Mental health quiz

Use our quick [mental health quiz](#) to start conversations, test staff's mental health knowledge and help people learn something new. You can present the quiz in a virtual meeting and use a poll tool to make it interactive.

3. Mental health bingo

Another fun way to get colleagues talking about mental health. Use our ready-made [interactive bingo card](#) or create your own with

our [editable version](#).

4. Lunch and learn

Run a lunch and learn session to teach your colleagues more about mental health and how to support each other. If anyone within the organisation is happy to talk about their own experiences, this can be a great way to bring the issue to life.

You can find more ideas in our Employers Activity Pack [here](#).

Stigma is a global issue, but perhaps more so in Asia. What in your opinion should workplaces be doing in order to support the mental health and wellbeing of their employees?

We advise employers on how to create mentally healthy workplaces by taking action in the following three areas: tackling the work-related causes of stress and poor mental health at work; supporting members of staff experiencing a mental health problem; and promoting wellbeing for all staff.

To create mentally healthy workplaces, employers should ensure every member of staff has clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, a manageable workload and achievable targets. Regular communication between managers and line reports is important, particularly for staff working remotely and/or in isolation. The physical workspace is also hugely important as lighting, temperature and greenery all play a role in how we feel.

We want every employer to create a working environment where people can open up to mental health problems. Here are some tips from them on reducing stigma in the workplace.

- **Leading by example.** More senior leaders need to be open about their own experiences with mental health problems to show that it isn't a sign of weakness and it won't hinder your career if you open up to your colleagues.
- **Being clear about why a mentally healthy workplace is valuable.** A workplace where everyone is supported to talk openly about their mental health creates a positive, inclusive and more productive workplace for everyone.
- **Talking things through with line managers.** Line managers need to feel comfortable having conversations about mental health with their direct reports. It doesn't need to be difficult or scary, simply raising the issue or asking how they are feeling is a great start. Avoiding the issue could make people feel more inclined to hide their mental health problem.

- **Sharing with one another.** Things will only change if we are all more open with one another. Encouraging employees to speak about their mental health at work by speaking publically about it at events and meetings, through blog posts or the intranet can be a great way to do this. Feedback from employers tells us that this makes the biggest difference in starting a cultural shift.

- **Be clear about how employees will be treated.** Employees need to know that they will be treated fairly and without negative consequence if they disclose a mental health problem at work.

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This content first featured in our Mental Health and Wellbeing Bulletin. You can sign up to receive the emails [here](#). This bulletin synthesises the latest information on mental health and wellbeing to support companies and their staff, as well as fresh expert viewpoints and case studies from CMHA HK member companies.

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The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong is a collaborative venture founded by city businesses. Championed by senior leaders, the Alliance is business led and expert guided and aims to create a culture of good mental health for workers in the city of Hong Kong, share best practice and increase mental health understanding.