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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

October 10 |

World Mental Health Day



World Mental Health Day

This year’s theme for World Mental Health Day, **”Lived experiences heard: real voices, real change”** reminds us that every experience deserves to be heard exactly as it is lived, without assumptions, interpretations, or hasty conclusions.

However, it isn’t always easy to express what we are feeling. Sometimes we haven’t yet found the right words, while other times we choose a simpler, everyday phrase to describe something much more complex that’s going on inside of us.

If these phrases had subtitles, they might help us hear a little more clearly, what isn't explicitly said.



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IF WHAT I AM SAYING HAD SUBTITLES…

Sometimes we say what's easiest for us to express, not what truly reflects how we feel. Not because we want to hide the truth, but because we may not have found the right words yet or may not know where to start. Perhaps we are afraid of burdening others, or we don't feel safe enough to say more, and/or we are not sure if the other person is truly ready to listen to us.
Or maybe we have just got used to automatically saying that everything is fine.

If, however, what we say had subtitles, it might reveal more than what is actually heard.



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IF WHAT I AM SAYING HAD SUBTITLES…

WHAT IS HEARD
«I am a little tired»

WHAT MAY NOT BE SAID
- "I can't handle taking on more things."
- "For some time now, I've been trying to do more than I can handle."
- "I can't remember the last time I felt truly rested."

WHAT IS HEARD
"It's okay, I'll take care of it."

WHAT MAY NOT BE SAID
- "I don't know how to say that I can't take this on"
- "I am afraid I'll let others down if I say no"
- "I am used to putting other people's needs before my own"

WHAT IS HEARD
"I just didn't sleep well."

WHAT MAY NOT BE SAID
- "My mind doesn't stop thinking when the day is over."
- "Something is bothering me more than I realize."
- "It's been a while since I've felt truly calm."

WHAT IS HEARD
"Everything's fine"

WHAT MAY NOT BE SAID
- "I don't know where to start."
- "I'm not sure I can say what I'm really feeling."
- "I want you to ask me again. That's what I need, and a little time to open up."

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THE SAME WORDS DON'T ALWAYS HAVE THE SAME MEANING...

The phrase “I’m tired” may indeed mean that someone needs more sleep. However, it can also describe mental exhaustion, mounting pressure, or the feeling that demands have exceeded our available reserves of endurance.

Similarly, “everything’s fine” may mean that everything really is fine. But it can also be the easiest way to end a conversation that someone doesn’t yet know how to continue.

We can't know what lies beneath a statement unless the person themselves chooses to tell us.

However, we can create the conditions that will make it a little easier to be said.

How? In the following pages, you'll find a few simple ways.



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WHEN WORDS SEEM TO SAY SOMETHING MORE...

How can you start a conversation in an engaging way without making assumptions?

1. DON'T ASSUME | ASK
You don’t have to guess what lies beneath the words. Show interest and let the other person give their own interpretation. “When you say you are tired, do you mean more physically, or do you feel overwhelmed in general?”

2. ASK IN A WAY THAT LEAVES ROOM FOR AN ANSWER
The question “Are you okay?” often automatically leads to a “yes.” A more open-ended question can make it easier to give an honest answer. “How are you really doing these days?”, “What’s weighing on you the most?”

3. SHOW THAT YOU HAVE TIME TO LISTEN
Don't start a personal conversation when you are in a hurry or can't give it the attention it needs. “If you want to talk, we can find a time that works for both of us, because I would like to listen to you without rushing.”

4. DON'T FORCE A RESPONSE
The other person might not be ready to talk. “You don’t have to tell me anything right now. I just want you to know that I am here, if you ever need me.”

How can you really listen when the other person starts talking?

1. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE WHAT THEY ARE GOING THROUGH
Avoid phrases such as: “We all get tired,” “Don’t worry about it,” “It’ll pass.”
Try saying:
“It sounds like this has been really stressful for you,” “I understand that this isn't easy for you.”

2. DON'T RUSH TO OFFER A SOLUTION
Before you suggest what, they should do, ask what they really need. “Do you just want me to listen, or would it help if we think together about what you can do?”

3. LISTEN WITHOUT COMPARING
Your own experience may be different. Avoid saying, “I’ve been through that too,” when the conversation shifts to you. Instead, say: “How does that feel for you?” or “What’s the hardest part of all this for you?”

4. ASK WHAT WOULD BE USEFUL
Support isn't the same for everyone. Try asking: “What would help you the most right now?” or “Is there anything tangible I can do?”

WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOUR OWN WORDS DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY...

How can you recognize what you're really trying to express?

1. PAUSE FOR A MOMENT

Before you automatically reply, “Everything’s fine,” ask yourself: “If I were to say what I really feel, what would I say?” You don’t have to answer right away or share your answer with anyone. It’s enough to be honest with yourself first.

2. TRY TO BE MORE SPECIFIC

Instead of saying, “I’m tired,” maybe what you really mean is: “I’ve taken on more than I can handle,” “I can’t stop thinking about the things that are weighing on my mind,” or “I need some time free from more demands.”

3. RECOGNIZE WHAT YOU NEED

You may need:

- someone to listen to you
- to get some rest
- to set a boundary
- to ask for hands-on help
- to share a responsibility
- to talk to a professional

When you have a better understanding of what you need, it becomes easier to ask for it.

4. CHOOSE WHAT, HOW, AND TO WHOM YOU WANT TO TALK

You don’t have to tell the whole story or share more than you feel comfortable expressing. You can start with a simple phrase: “I’m not feeling very well, but it’s hard to explain,” “I’m under more pressure than I let on,” “I’m not ready to say much, but I’d like you to listen to me.”

5. DON'T WAIT TO FIND THE PERFECT WORDS

You don't have to know exactly what's going on with you to ask for support. You can start by saying: “I don't know exactly what I need, but I don't want to keep dealing with this on my own.”



Sometimes real change begins the moment that, what there is inside of us and what we feel finds a safe way and space to be expressed.

You don't have to find the right words.
All you need is a safe space where you can speak in your own words, and someone who truly cares about you and is willing to listen.

If something is troubling you:

- don’t wait for it to get worse
- talk to someone you trust
- try to express what you need
- seek support from a mental health professional

The counselors on the Hellas EAP Counselling Support Line are always available to listen to you with respect and support you with whatever is on your mind. Anonymously and Confidentially.

24/7 Counselling Support Line

800 8481 734 (from a landline, free of charge)

211 3454 422 (from a mobile or landline, the charge depends on your provider’s pricing policy)

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