

Interview Script: Semi-Structured Guide for Psychosocial Risk Discussions



Purpose:

To explore in depth the psychosocial factors affecting employees, gather qualitative insights, and clarify survey findings. Interviews are confidential and voluntary.

Introduction (Read Aloud)

“Hello [Name], thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is [Interviewer Name], and I’m part of the team conducting a psychosocial risk assessment for our organization. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experiences at work – especially any factors that may affect mental health or well-being. Your responses will help us design better controls and supports. Everything you share is confidential. We will anonymize your feedback in our final report, and no identifying details will be shared outside the assessment team. You can decline to answer any question or stop at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

Recording Consent

“I would like to record our conversation (audio only) to ensure I capture your responses accurately. The recording will

be stored securely and deleted after we complete our analysis.
Do I have your permission to record?"

Section 1: General Work Experience

1. Can you describe a typical workday for you? What tasks do you find most demanding?
 - **Prompt:** How does your workload vary during peak periods?
2. How would you characterize your relationship with your immediate supervisor and coworkers?
 - **Prompt:** Can you share an example where you felt supported—or unsupported—by them?
3. In your own words, what are the main strengths and weaknesses of your work environment?

Section 2: Workload & Job Demands

4. Tell me about times when you felt you had too much or too little work. How did that affect you?
 - **Prompt:** Have deadlines or production targets ever felt unrealistic?
5. Have you ever skipped breaks or worked through lunch to keep up with tasks? If so, why?
6. Are there specific job tasks that regularly cause you stress or physical fatigue? Please elaborate.

Section 3: Control & Autonomy

7. Can you recall a situation where you needed to make a decision about how to do your work? Were you able to do so?
8. If you have suggestions for improving workflow or processes, how easy is it to communicate them? What happens when you do?

Section 4: Support & Relationships

9. Have you ever needed help coping with a difficult situation at work? Who did you reach out to, and how was it addressed?
 - **Prompt:** How comfortable would you feel reporting bullying, harassment, or safety concerns?
10. Can you think of an example when teamwork or collaboration helped you resolve a work challenge?

Section 5: Role Clarity & Expectations

11. Do you feel that your job responsibilities are clear and do not overlap with others' roles?
12. Have conflicting directives from different supervisors ever caused confusion or stress? If so, please describe.

Section 6: Organizational Change & Job Security

13. Over the past six months, what changes (e.g., new policies, reorganizations) have affected your role? How were these communicated?
14. Do you have concerns about job stability or future organizational direction? How does this uncertainty affect your well-being?

Section 7: Work–Life Balance

15. How do you manage work demands alongside personal or family obligations?
 - **Prompt:** Are there times when work intrudes on your personal life (e.g., after-hours emails, weekend tasks)?
16. Have you experienced burnout or exhaustion due to work? What signs indicated to you that you were nearing a breaking point?

Section 8: Work Environment & Safety

17. Have you ever noticed any physical conditions (noise, poor lighting, temperature extremes) that make it difficult to focus or feel comfortable?
18. Can you describe a recent incident where you felt unsafe at work—whether physically or psychologically? How was it handled?

Section 9: Closing Questions

19. If you could change one aspect of your job to improve mental health, what would it be?
20. Is there anything else you would like to share—either to highlight a positive aspect or to raise a concern we haven't covered?

Wrap-Up

“Thank you for sharing your honest feedback. Your input is invaluable to our assessment. We will use this information—without identifying who said what—to develop controls and supports. If at any point you want to share anything further or have follow-up questions, please feel free to reach out to me or our HR team. Our next step is to analyze all the survey and interview data, then draft recommendations. We aim to have a summary of findings and suggested actions within the next month. Thank you again for your time.”

Summary Document: Recognizing Psychosocial Risks & Mental Health Strain in Employees

Employees' mental well-being can be affected by a range of psychological hazards. Below is a summary of key risk factors and observable indicators to help OHS managers identify areas

of concern and intervene early.

1. Major Psychosocial Risk Factors

- **Excessive Workload & Time Pressure** – Sustained high demands, tight deadlines, and unrealistic targets often lead to chronic stress.
- **Lack of Control & Autonomy** – When employees cannot influence their work methods, schedules, or priorities, feelings of helplessness and frustration can develop.
- **Poor Role Clarity & Conflicting Expectations** – Unclear job descriptions or contradictory instructions from multiple supervisors create confusion, tension, and increased error rates.
- **Insufficient Support & Negative Interpersonal Relationships** – Lack of managerial empathy, workplace bullying, harassment, or unsupportive coworkers can contribute to anxiety, depression, and disengagement.
- **Organizational Change & Job Insecurity** – Layoffs, restructurings, or unclear future direction heighten fear and uncertainty, which can manifest as reduced motivation or absenteeism.
- **Imbalance of Work and Personal Life** – Excessive after-hours work, unpredictable schedules, or lack of flexible arrangements can erode resilience and lead to burnout.
- **Inadequate Physical Environment & Resources** – Noisy, poorly lit, or ergonomically unsuitable workspaces, as well as lack of proper equipment, add to mental strain by compounding daily frustrations and fatigue.

2. Behavioral & Performance Indicators

- **Increased Absenteeism or Tardiness** – Sudden rises in sick days—especially stress-related or unexplained—often signal underlying mental health issues.
- **Decline in Productivity or Work Quality** – Missed

deadlines, careless errors, or a drop in output can indicate concentration difficulties caused by stress or anxiety.

- **Withdrawal or Isolation** – Employees who once engaged with peers and supervisors may start avoiding social interactions, skip meetings, or eat alone.
- **Frequent Conflict or Aggression** – Heightened irritability, outbursts, or arguments over minor issues may reflect emotional overload or frustration.
- **Reduced Motivation & Engagement** – A previously enthusiastic employee may become disengaged, express cynicism, or demonstrate a “go through the motions” attitude.

3. **Physical & Psychological Warning Signs**

- **Changes in Appetite or Weight** – Noticeable weight loss or gain can be a sign of emotional distress.
- **Frequent Physical Complaints** – Headaches, stomach issues, muscle tension, or unexplained aches can be somatic symptoms of psychological strain.
- **Visible Fatigue & Exhaustion** – Yawning, dark circles under the eyes, or an overall appearance of being drained may indicate the employee is on the verge of burnout.
- **Mood Swings & Emotional Reactivity** – Uncharacteristic tearfulness, anger, or sudden mood shifts can signal poor coping or untreated mental health concerns.

4. **Contextual & Environmental Clues**

- **High Turnover or Staff Shortages** – Departments with frequent resignations or chronic understaffing often experience elevated stress levels among remaining workers.

- **Excessive Overtime or Mandatory Weekend Work** – Regularly working long hours without adequate recovery is a known risk factor for burnout and depressive symptoms.
- **Lack of Supervisor Engagement** – Managers who fail to check in on mental well-being or dismiss concerns can exacerbate feelings of isolation and helplessness.
- **Inconsistent or Poor Communication** – When organizational changes are announced abruptly or without clear rationale, employees feel insecure and anxious.
- **Absence of Mental Health Resources** – No obvious pathway to counseling, peer support, or reasonable accommodation suggests the organization is not prioritizing psychological health.

6. **Immediate Red Flags That Require Prompt Action**

- **Expressions of Hopelessness or Suicidal Ideation** – Any mention of wanting to harm oneself or feeling that life isn't worth living demands immediate referral to qualified mental health professionals and HR.
- **Self-Harm or Risky Coping Behaviors** – Visible self-harm scars, excessive alcohol/drug use, or erratic behavior should trigger urgent support interventions.
- **Complete Withdrawal from Work Duties** – If an employee stops responding to communications, fails to show up without explanation, or locks themselves away, check in immediately.

7. **Recommended Managerial Responses**

- **Timely Check-Ins** – Schedule private, empathetic conversations. Ask open-ended questions (“How are you managing your workload this week?”) and listen without judgment.

- **Offer Flexible Adjustments** – Where possible, temporarily adjust workloads, modify schedules, or provide telework options to alleviate immediate stressors.
- **Facilitate Access to Support** – Remind employees of EAP resources, external counselling services covered by benefits, or peer-support initiatives. Follow up to ensure they have accessed support.
- **Review Work Processes** – If multiple employees report the same stressor (e.g., a complex reporting requirement), collaborate with the team to streamline or automate the task.
- **Promote a Culture of Psychological Safety** – Encourage open dialogue about mental health. Highlight that seeking help is a strength, not a weakness. Ensure no negative career repercussions for raising concerns.

8. Documentation & Follow-Up

- **Record Observations & Actions Taken** – Keep confidential notes on conversations, accommodations provided, and referrals made. This demonstrates compliance and continuity of care.
- **Track Trends Over Time** – Use data from absence records, productivity metrics, and follow-up interviews to determine whether implemented controls are effective.
- **Conduct Periodic Reassessments** – Even after initial interventions, revisit high-risk areas—especially during peak workload periods or after organizational changes—to ensure that stress levels have decreased.