

5 Naming pressure without blaming the person



Helps reframe pressure as something to understand in the work, rather than treating it as a personal failing.



Reflection statements



5.1 Leaders and teams explore what may be contributing to pressure before treating it as a personal performance, attitude or resilience issue.



5.2 Leaders are supported to have clear, fair and non-blaming conversations about pressure, workload, behaviour, role clarity and support.



A Conversation Starter Pack for Aged Care

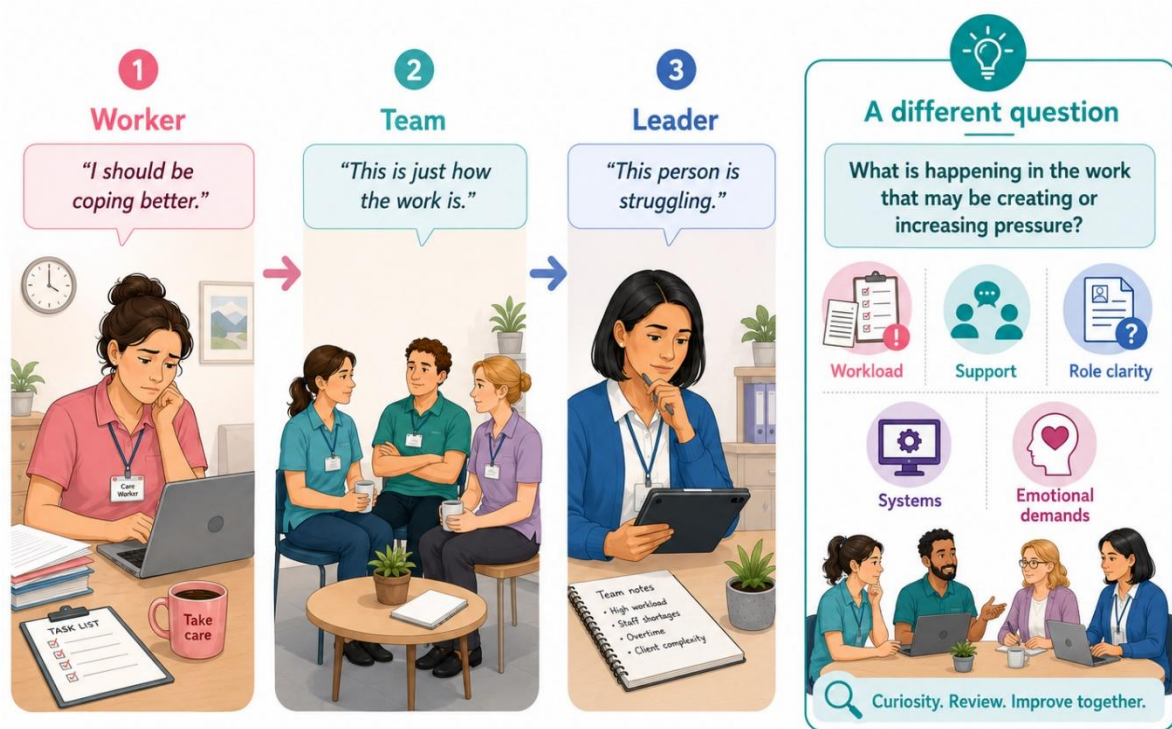
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Looking at the work, not just the person

Psychosocial safety invites workers, teams and leaders to look beyond the immediate reaction to pressure and consider what may be contributing to it. This does not mean ignoring personal experience or removing individual responsibility. It means recognising that pressure is often shaped by workload, systems, role clarity, support, behaviours, expectations and working conditions.

When work pressure builds, it can be easy for people to personalise it.



This matters because pressure can become harder to address when it is treated only as an individual problem. In aged care, workers are often responding to complex needs, emotional conversations, service limits, role boundaries and time pressure.

When these pressures are not named clearly, they can be misunderstood as personal weakness, poor attitude, lack of resilience or conflict between individuals. For example:

- a worker experiencing repeated distress may be seen as "not coping"
- a team under sustained workload pressure may be told to "manage priorities"
- a worker raising concerns may be viewed as negative or resistant
- repeated client or family distress may be treated as "just part of aged care"
- confusion about roles may be treated as a personal communication issue rather than a systems issue

Naming pressure clearly can help workers, teams and leaders move from blame, silence or self-criticism towards better support, clearer roles and safer systems.

From blaming to naming

The language used to describe pressure matters. When concerns are framed around the behaviour or attitude of one person, it can lead to blame, defensiveness or silence.

Reframing the conversation helps teams and leaders stay curious about what may be happening in the work, what support is needed, and whether there are risks or patterns that need closer attention.

Instead of saying	Try asking
 Staff need to be more resilient.	 What pressure are staff being exposed to, and what would reduce the risk?
 That family is difficult.	 What support do workers need when family distress is repeated or escalating?
 That worker is negative.	 Is this worker naming a pattern we need to understand?
 That is just part of the job.	 Is this unavoidable, or is there something we can clarify, support or change?

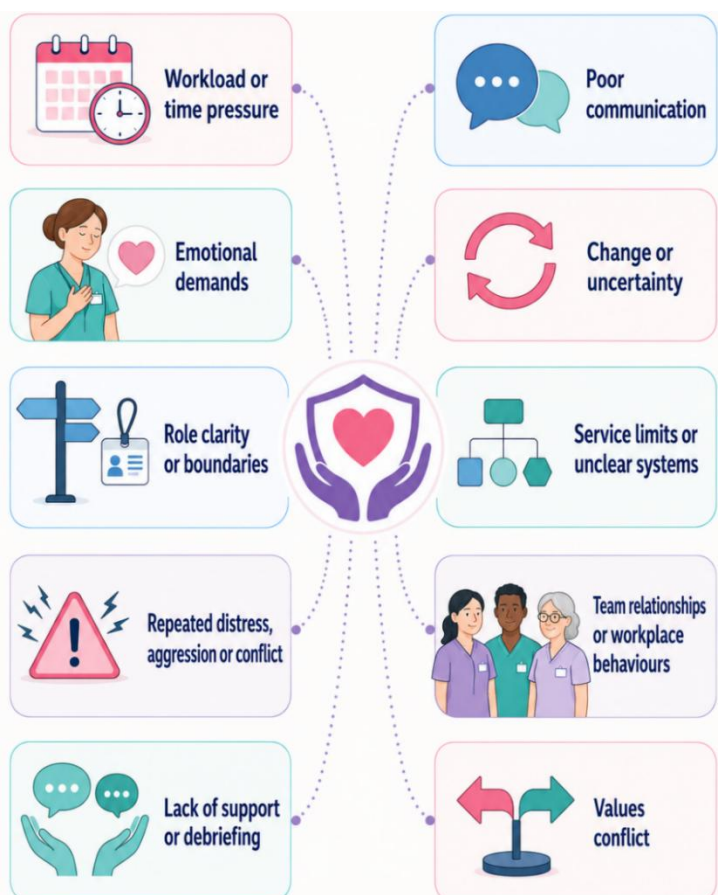
What pressure may be connected to

When pressure is named clearly, it becomes easier to understand what may be contributing to it. The source of pressure is not always one person, one incident or one decision.

It may be connected to the way work is organised, how expectations are communicated, how support is provided, or how workers are expected to manage situations that are emotionally or practically difficult.

Naming the source of pressure does not mean blaming one person. It helps identify what may need support, review or action.

It also helps teams and leaders look beyond the immediate situation and consider whether there are patterns, gaps or system issues that are increasing psychosocial risk.



What this should prompt

This resource should help workers, peers and teams recognise that pressure is not always an individual problem. If pressure is repeated, unclear, unsupported or outside a worker's control, it should not be left for the worker to manage alone. It may need to be shared, documented, escalated or reviewed through the appropriate organisational pathway.

Organisations also need to build leaders' capability to have these conversations well. Leaders need to be able to listen without blame, ask useful questions, recognise when pressure may point to a work-related hazard, and understand when concerns require support, documentation, escalation or review.

Naming pressure is not the same as solving it. It is a starting point for clearer conversations, stronger leader capability and further review where needed. Depending on the concern, the next step may be to speak with a supervisor, team leader, manager, Health, Safety and Wellbeing team, or another appropriate organisational pathway.

This resource is a starting point for noticing patterns and prompting review. It does not replace work health and safety advice, psychosocial risk assessment, supervision, consultation, training or organisational processes.

