

ANONYMOUS REAL EXPERIENCE

ONE CONVERSATION AT WORK CHANGED EVERYTHING

The moment a manager noticed and stayed to listen

SHARED ANONYMOUSLY • SHAPED COLLABORATIVELY BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



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"I'd always been the person people relied on. At work I was the one who stayed late, covered extra shifts and never complained. If someone asked how I was, the answer was always, 'Yeah, I'm fine.' It became automatic.

The truth was very different.

My dad had died the previous year, my marriage was under pressure and I wasn't sleeping properly. I was exhausted, but I kept telling myself that everyone else had problems too and that I just needed to keep going.

One afternoon my manager asked if I had a few minutes for a coffee. I assumed I'd done something wrong, but instead he simply said, 'I've noticed you don't seem yourself lately. How are things really?'

For the first time in years, someone had noticed.

At first I brushed it off, but he didn't rush me or try to solve anything. He just listened. He told me about the wellbeing support available through work, gave me information about local men's groups and reminded me that asking for help wouldn't change how people saw me.

That conversation gave me permission to stop pretending.

Over the following months I used the employee wellbeing service, joined a local men's walking group and slowly started reconnecting with friends I'd drifted away from. None of those changes happened overnight, but they all started because one person cared enough to ask a second time instead of accepting, 'I'm fine.'

Looking back, I often think about how easy it would have been for my manager to walk past my office that day. He probably thought it was just a conversation over a cup of coffee. For me, it was the moment I realised that people weren't expecting me to carry everything on my own.

Sometimes we underestimate the power of noticing someone.

Sometimes the most important support we ever receive begins with one person who chooses to stop, listen and genuinely care."

A Note About This Real Experience

This is a real person's lived experience, shared anonymously in their own thoughts and feelings. The contributor spoke openly about what happened, and Maggie Learoyd shaped the piece collaboratively, preserving their meaning and voice. They want their experience to be heard and understood but have chosen not to be named. Some identifying details may have been changed to protect their privacy.