Safe Space Leadership

LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

Five questions for your next one-to-one

For leaders who want check-ins that go beyond the to-do list

Use one or two each time. Over a few one-to-ones, you'll cover all five.

One-to-ones can easily drift into status updates: what's done, what's late, what's next. The questions that reveal how someone is going get squeezed out, and global research suggests managers spend only 13% of their time developing their people.

These five questions shift the focus from the work to the person doing it. Most employers are confident in their managers, and the questions are a simple way to test whether that confidence shows up in everyday conversations.

What Australian employers report AHRI, 2026

93%
say their line managers are well equipped to identify psychosocial risks, yet most organisations describe themselves as only "somewhat prepared"

29%
are placing greater emphasis on respectful, more regular feedback to improve psychosocial safety

	THE QUESTION	WHY IT HELPS	WHAT TO LISTEN FOR
01	What's taking most of your energy at the moment?	Surfaces workload before it turns into strain.	*Deadlines stacking up. Tasks nobody else knows about.*
02	What's one thing I could do, or stop doing, that would make your work easier?	Invites honest feedback on how you lead.	*Obstacles you can remove. Support that's missing.*
03	Is anything unclear right now: what's expected of you, or who makes which decisions?	Catches confusion early.	*Overlapping responsibilities. Assumptions that haven't been checked.*
04	What's something you've done recently that you're proud of?	Makes recognition part of the conversation.	*Effort that hasn't been noticed.*
05	Where would you like to grow over the next six months?	Keeps development on the agenda.	*Ambitions you didn't know about. Frustration at standing still.*

ONE QUESTION FOR YOURSELF

When did I last leave a one-to-one knowing something new about this person?

If the answer is "not recently", the conversation has likely become about the work alone. Pick one question from this page for your next one-to-one, and see what changes.

The question opens the door. What you do with the answer is what people remember. Ask, then listen more than you talk, and follow up at your next one-to-one on what you heard. That's how people learn their answers are safe to give, and worth giving.

Want to know where your leaders stand?

The free Retention Scorecard takes about 10 minutes and shows the leadership area that needs attention most.

safespaceleadership.com.au/scorecard

SSL builds leaders people choose to stay for.

General information about leadership practice. Sources: Australian HR Institute, Quarterly Australian Work Outlook, June Quarter 2026 (606 employers; complaints or claims over the last two financial years); Deloitte, 2025 Global Human Capital Trends (global survey). Updated November 2026.

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