

TALKING TOOLKIT FOR NGO LEADERS

Starting a Conversation About Stress with Your Board



The NGO Coach

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INTRODUCTION

Hello, I'm your coach Rochelle Stewart-Allen.

Kia ora, and welcome! I'm Rochelle, The NGO Coach. I'm passionate about supporting NGO leaders like you who give so much of yourselves to create positive change in the world. With over two decades of experience working both in and alongside nonprofits, I've seen firsthand how challenging—and rewarding—this journey can be. My focus is on empowering NGO leaders to thrive, not just survive, by helping them build sustainable practices that support both their wellbeing and their organisation's success.

I understand how important it is to feel supported, especially when you're facing the daily pressures of leading a nonprofit. My aim is to help leaders find that balance, bringing together



empathy, practical strategies, and a deep understanding of the unique challenges you face in this sector.

This toolkit is just one way I'm here to help. It's designed to open up conversations about stress and wellbeing at the leadership level, so you don't have to carry the weight of the world on your own. We're all in this together, and I believe that by creating sustainable support systems, we can ensure both you and your organisation are set up for long-term success.

Let's work together to keep you leading with strength, passion, and, most importantly, balance.

Rochelle xx

1.

Start with heart

Share Why You're Opening Up

Kick off the conversation by explaining why this chat is important, framing it as a positive step toward better support and collaboration.

- Example: *"Kia ora team, I'd love to take a moment to talk about something that's been on my mind. It's about how we can work together to make sure I'm able to lead at my best, and part of that means being open about stress and finding ways to manage it better. This is about setting up both me and the team for long-term success."*



Acknowledge the Board's Role

Highlight the crucial role the board plays in supporting you as a leader, showing that you value their guidance and partnership.

- Example: *"I really appreciate the wisdom and support you all bring to the table. I believe that if we work together on this, we'll be able to create the best environment for strong leadership and a thriving organisation."*

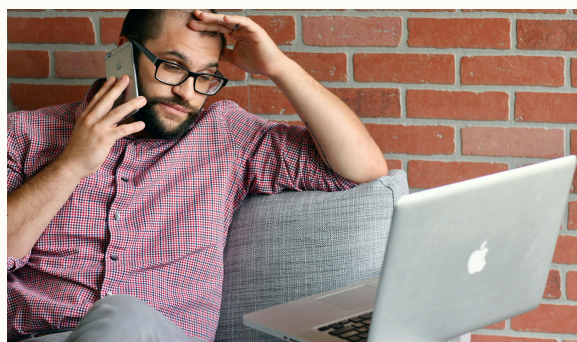
2.

Share Your Current Experience

Describe Your Current Reality

Be real and honest about where you're at, but keep it simple. Share some examples of how stress is showing up for you.

- Example: *"Lately, I've been feeling the pressure build with everything going on – from juggling day-to-day tasks to trying to keep us moving forward strategically. It's a bit overwhelming, and I've noticed it's starting to affect my focus."*



Talk About The Personal Impact

Help them understand how this stress is impacting you, both in your role and personally.

- Example: *"I'm finding that this stress is starting to take a toll on me personally as well. I'm feeling more tired and less present for the team, which isn't what any of us want."*



3.

Propose Ways the Board Can Help



Ask for Specific Support

Suggest a few ways the board can help you lighten the load or give you the space to focus on what matters most.

- Example: *"I'd really appreciate some extra support in managing the operational side of things. Maybe we could look at delegating some tasks or bringing in extra help, so I can stay focused on the big-picture strategy."*

Make Wellbeing a Board Topic

Propose making well-being a regular part of board discussions, showing it's a priority for everyone.

- Example: *"Could we add leadership wellbeing as a regular agenda item? I think having ongoing conversations about this will help make sure we're all operating at our best."*



4.

Invite Ideas from the Board

Ask for Their Input

Invite the board to share their thoughts or experiences, making it a two-way conversation.

- Example: *"I'd love to hear if any of you have been through something similar and what worked for you. I really value your insights and would appreciate any advice you might have."*



5.

Plan the Next Steps Together

Share Why You're Opening Up

Offer a clear plan for how you and the board can tackle stress management together, with follow-up in mind.

- Example: *"Maybe we could work on identifying a couple of areas where I can hand off tasks or where we could bring in some extra support. I'm happy to update you at the next board meeting on how things are going."*



Invest in Self-care and Leadership Development

Ask for the board's support in taking proactive steps for your well-being, such as professional development or self-care practices.

- Example: *"I'd also love to explore leadership development or stress management coaching, not just for me but to ensure the organisation benefits in the long term. I think this would help me be a stronger leader."*

6.

Wrapping Up with Gratitude

Thank the Board

End the conversation by thanking the board for being open to this important dialogue and for their ongoing support.

- Example: *"Thank you all for being so understanding and supportive. I'm fully committed to leading this organisation to the best of my ability, and I believe by working together we'll continue to create something amazing."*



After the Conversations

Wrapping Up

- **Keep a Record of Agreed Actions:** Write down any action points you've agreed on with the board so everyone's clear on the next steps.
- **Check-in Regularly:** Set up a time to review progress at your next board meeting to make sure the support is helping and adjust as needed.

Ngā mihi for taking the time to explore this talking toolkit. I hope it helps you start meaningful conversations with your board about managing stress and finding the support you need.

Remember, you don't have to do it all on your own—working together as a team is the key to sustainable success. I'm here cheering you on as you lead with heart, sustainability, and balance. Feel free to reach out anytime if you need more guidance or just a supportive kōrero. You've got this!

