

Eve, me and You Matter

Eve had been given the action to call Stuart during a meeting that she hadn't even attended. Typical of this place she thought. Still, it made sense as she had worked with Stuart longer than the others.

Eve had picked up the phone to call him a number of times since then. Each time she had lost her nerve knowing it would be a "difficult conversation" and that he might take offence. On the other hand, it had been unpleasant to see the unexplained changes in him. For some time it had been the subject of staffroom conversations with phrases such as "burnout", "meltdown", "losing the plot" and "nervous breakdown" being used.

Stuart himself was aware that something was different, not quite right. He'd lost interest and motivation, every decision seemed to take him forever and he was feeling increasingly overwhelmed. All of which resulted in working even longer hours. He'd become irritable and, despite regarding himself as resilient and able to cope with the stress of the job, he'd often found himself on the verge of tears.

A particular incident finally gave Eve the nudge she needed to make the phone call. He had once again been "out of character" during a discussion at work and she undertook to phone him later that evening.

Stuart was surprised to see Eve's incoming call on his mobile so late in the day. Picking up the call he said "Hi Eve". She could tell he was exhausted.

"Stuart, this is a bit awkward but people have been talking. I just wanted to call and ask if you are OK."

Realising that others had noticed some changes in him was a shock to him, yet he wasn't entirely surprised. Before responding he considered hanging up or saying he was fine but paused and said "To be honest Eve, I'm not sure that I am but thank you for asking."

Relieved that he hadn't taken offence she said "You know there are people who can help don't you? Have you considered reaching out to that You Matter service?"

"The last couple of years has been tough on everyone in the NHS. Besides You Matter is only for people who are *really* struggling" he said.

Eve said "It's not just been me who has noticed you may be finding things difficult at the moment. I really think You Matter may help you."

Later that evening, thinking about what Eve had told him Stuart decided the time had come to reach out for help. He realised that it had been kind and, in some ways, brave of her to call him.

Following some initial assessments, a package of support was offered to Stuart. At first, he had been surprised that he needed input from mental health professionals. It took some time but months later, he thought back to that phone call and wondered if Eve knew how important her call to him had been.