



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei: Hello! I'm Feifei and welcome to another episode of 6 Minute English! In today's programme we're talking about stress, and here with me in the studio today is the very lovely Neil. How are you today Neil, not too stressed I hope?

Neil: You know me Feifei, always cool as a cucumber!

Feifei: Ha! Yes, I do. I'm pleased to hear it and have you brought a stress-related business fact to talk about?

Neil: I have. It's a report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development here in the UK. Apparently up to 50% of employers are saying that stress-related absence from work has gone up.

Feifei: Really? We're losing more and more work time due to stress?!

Neil: Yes Feifei, so don't stress me out or I'll be going home before we get to the end of the programme...

Feifei: I'll do my best to be nice to you Neil.

Neil: Good, because sometimes, you know, things get a bit too much for me and -

Feifei: So Neil, if it's not too personal a question, what do you do to reduce your stress levels at work?

Neil: Well, I always deal with problems with colleagues face-to-face before things get too serious.

Feifei: Problems with colleagues? Neil you are such a lovely person - I can't imagine you having problems with colleagues...

Neil: I know it's hard to believe, isn't it? But it's the best way, person to person, face to face... you just have to choose your words carefully, especially when you're asking personal or sensitive questions.

Feifei: I think we need to ask Business Betty to tell us more.

Neil: And here she is!

Neil / FF: It's Business Betty!

Neil: It's good to see you Betty, looking stunning as always.

BB: Thanks. What can I help you with today?

Feifei: Can you give us some advice on asking personal questions Betty?

BB: I'd be very happy to Feifei. I'm going to start with a cultural tip. Generally speaking, it's OK to ask personal questions in British culture, when the situation is right and when you choose your words carefully. Now, when asking personal questions, the first thing to do is to give a warning that you're going to talk about something personal. You could say something like: 'I wanted to talk to you about a personal matter. Is that OK with you?'

Feifei: I wanted to talk to you about a personal matter. Is that OK with you?

BB: That's a very good way to start, Feifei. And to introduce a personal question, you can say: 'If you don't mind me asking...'

Feifei: If you don't mind me asking, have you been feeling stressed at all?

BB: Well done. Another useful phrase to use either before or after a personal question is 'If it's not too personal a question.'

Feifei: If it's not too personal a question, is everything alright at home?

BB: Good one! And finally, a really easy one, just say 'May I ask...' and then say what you want to know.

Feifei: May I ask what the problem was?

BB: Good! So to sum up: first give a warning, and then use phrases like 'If you don't mind me asking', 'If it's not too personal a question', and 'May I ask?' So Feifei and Neil, how's that?

Feifei: That's great - thanks Betty!

Neil: Thank you Betty!

BB: You're welcome. If there's nothing else, I'll be on my way. Bye!

Neil / FF: Bye!

Neil: She's a wonderful woman, Business Betty!

Feifei: She really is.

Neil: I think it's time for our role-play.

Feifei: So do I. I think it's coming...

Neil: Yes, and do you know what that means? It means it's my turn to be the boss.

Feifei: No it's not, it's my turn.

Neil: It was your turn last time, it's always your turn to be the boss.

Feifei: No, it wasn't. It's my turn this time. Let's start, are you ready?

Neil: Bossy! Bossy equals boss!

Role-play

Feifei: *Come in! Ahhh, Neil! Come in and sit down. What can I do for you today?*

Neil: *Well actually, you asked to see me.*

Feifei: *Did I? Oh yes, that's right, yes I did. OK, Neil I wanted to talk to you about a personal matter. Is that OK with you?*

Neil: *OK...*

Feifei: *Well, I've noticed that you've been looking a bit worried lately. So if you don't mind me asking, have you been feeling stressed at all?*

Neil: *No, not really.*

Feifei: *Oh good. Because the thing is, the other day you looked a bit upset. If it's not too personal a question, is everything alright at home?*

Neil: *At home, well, we did have a problem last week, but it's OK now.*

Feifei: *Oh good, good. May I ask what the problem was?*

Neil: *Oh my daughter's goldfish died. She was quite upset, but she's OK, we are pulling through.*

Feifei: *Good, good, well if it happens again you will let me know, won't you?*

Neil: *Yes of course. Thank you.*

Feifei: *You're welcome.*

Feifei: OK Neil, that was today's role-play. How did I do?

Neil: That was pretty good! You're not bad actually.

Feifei: I told you I would be!

Feifei: That's it for today's topic. May I ask if you enjoyed the programme?

Neil: I enjoyed it very much! It's been good and not at all stressful.

Feifei: So you won't be taking any time off work because of stress?

Neil: No, I don't think so.

Feifei: Good! Join us again for another episode of 6 Minute English.

Neil / FF: Bye!

Asking personal questions: Key phrases

Warning someone that you're going to talk about something personal	I wanted to talk about a personal matter. Is that alright with you?
Introducing a personal question	If you don't mind me asking...
	If it's not too personal a question...
	May I ask...?