

MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

We believe that everyone should be able to like where they work.





MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Dealing with issues related to mental health in the workplace can be challenging and difficult to navigate. It is essential that organizations have the capabilities to manage mental health because early identification and support typically leads to continued productivity and retention of employees. This workshop provides a roadmap to help managers participate in conversations with employees who may require support when experiencing difficulties related to mental health. Participants will learn strategies for creating a more inclusive work environment that reduces stigma surrounding mental health.

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Mental Health Matters

Mental illness and mental health impact everyone in some way. It is becoming increasingly important for everyone, regardless of profession, to have a basic understanding of the role that mental illness and mental health play in our personal and professional lives.

What is the Difference Between Mental Health and Mental Illness?

Mental illness refers to a diagnosed clinical condition that leads to a psychological or behavioural pattern that causes distress not expected as part of normal functioning. Common examples include depression, anxiety and schizophrenia.

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| Mental health refers to our emotional state of well-being. More than the mere absence of mental illness, it refers to healthy functioning and happiness. Everyone has mental health and it exists on a spectrum that changes. Some characteristics that are indicative of good mental health include: emotional stability and awareness, good communication skills, empathy and having an ability to experience joy. |
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| Interconnectedness |
| While seemingly counterintuitive, one may experience a mental illness while maintaining positive mental health. Likewise, someone may have no mental illness but very poor mental health. |
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Mental Disorders Overview

What is Mental Illness?

There are different kinds of mental disorders, each with different sets of symptoms that affect how one thinks, feels and behaves. The symptoms of mental illness range from mild to severe. To be classified as mental illness, symptoms must cause significant distress in one's life and reduce one's ability to_function as one would like.

While we cannot provide an exhaustive overview here, we will briefly review the following mental disorders:

- Schizophrenia is a brain disorder that affects the way a person thinks and acts, as well as their ability to determine what is reality and what is not. It is characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behaviours that cause social dysfunction.
- Depression is characterized by periods of depressed mood and/or loss of
 interest or pleasure. Problems and misfortunes are a part of life and everyone
 experiences situations that cause brief times of unhappiness and sometimes
 even feelings of worthlessness and self-blame. Most of the time, most people
 return to a balanced state. However, depression becomes an illness when these
 feelings last several weeks and interfere with the normal functioning of life.
 Depression can be classified as mild, moderate or severe.
- **Bipolar Disorder** is an illness in which periods of depression are followed by episodes of markedly elevated moods or highs (in the absence of drugs or alcohol). Essentially, people with bipolar disorder experience mood swings, alternating from emotional highs (mania/hypomania) to lows (depression). During phases of mania, people may have an inflated sense of self, need less sleep, have racing thoughts and have potentially impulsive or reckless behaviour. Periods of stability can also occur before and after the mood changes.

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- Anxiety Disorders are characterized by excessive fear and related behavioural disturbances. Anxiety is an organized response by which a person senses, evaluates, anticipates and responds to cues of threat or danger in one's internal or external environment. When this response arises too frequently or intensely and does not match a person's actual situation, anxiety can interfere with life and cause great distress, thereby becoming disordered. There are several different types of anxiety disorders, but most have similar symptoms. What differs are the types of scenarios that lead to fear and anxiety.
 - Social Anxiety Disorder or Social Phobia is characterized by a persistent and significant fear of one or more social situations in which a person is exposed to unfamiliar people or the potential for scrutiny. They may have a fear of behaving in a way that is embarrassing or humiliating.
 - Panic Disorder symptoms include recurrent, unexpected panic attacks that strike suddenly and without warning. A panic attack may arise from either a calm state or an anxious state and is characterized by a surge of intense fear that reaches a peak within minutes. Since people with panic disorder cannot predict when a panic attack will seize them, they may live in persistent worry that another bout of terror could overcome them at any moment.
 - Agoraphobia is characterized by the fear of being in a situation that might trigger a panic attack and the consequent avoidance of such situations.
 Specifically, it is a fear of at least two of the following: using public transportation, being in enclosed spaces, being outside of home alone, being in open spaces, standing in line or being in a crowd.
 - Generalized Anxiety Disorder is typified by frequent, excessive worry about routine events and activities. Most people experience some form of anxiety after or during certain situations, later returning to a state of balance, sometimes by implementing coping strategies. However, people with GAD have difficulty handling the anxiety, accompanied as it is by persistent restlessness, feeling "on edge," irritability, fatigue, muscle tension, difficulty concentrating and difficulty sleeping.

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- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a result of one being exposed to a death, threatened death, serious injury or violence by witnessing, learning about or experiencing repeated exposure to traumatic events (e.g., first responders to violent crime scenes). Such experiences can lead to continuous distress that interferes with a person's ability to function normally. Symptoms may include recurrent memories of the event, flashbacks, avoidance, negative cognition and mood, and anxiety.
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is characterized by recurrent, persistent and
 unwanted thoughts or urges and repetitive behaviours that a person feels driven
 to do as a result. People with OCD often feel the need to check or count things
 over and over. They may have certain thoughts or perform certain routines and
 rituals again and again. While performing these rituals often only provides
 temporary relief, not performing them tends to increase the level of anxiety and
 distress.
- Antisocial Personality Disorder presents as a lack of regard for moral or legal standards in addition to an inability to get along with others or abide by societal norms. This may also include a blatant disrespect for others' safety. People with antisocial personality disorder are sometimes referred to as having psychopathy or sociopathy. Key features are deceitfulness, manipulation of others, lack of remorse and chronic irresponsibility.
- Borderline Personality Disorder features frequent changes in mood, including
 difficulty controlling anger. In addition, they fear being alone or abandoned and
 tend to have intense, unstable interpersonal relationships that alternate between
 idealization and devaluation. People with BPD can also experience
 impulsiveness, instability in many areas of life; and, sometimes, recurrent suicidal
 or self-injurious behaviour.

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The Whole Picture

Who is Affected and What Causes It?

- Mental illness indirectly affects all Canadians at some time in their lives either personally or through a family member, friend or colleague.
- Mental illness affects people of all ages, educational levels, cultures and income levels.
- One in five people in Canada (20%) live with mental illness.
- Mental illness is usually caused by a combination of genetic, biological, personality and environmental factors.

In the Workplace

- There is a \$6 billion cost to businesses in lost productivity resulting from absenteeism and turnover. In 2011, this study conservatively estimated that the cost of mental illness was \$42.3 billion in direct costs and \$6.3 billion in indirect costs.
- On any given week, more than 500,000 Canadians will not go to work because of mental illness.
- More than 30% of disability claims and 70% of disability costs are attributed to mental illness.
- In 2009, 3 in 10 Canadian employees reported working in environments that are not psychologically safe or healthy.
 - 64% of Canadian organizations report having no structured process for supervisors to support employees returning to work after illness or disability.
 - 84% report having no process to address significant changes in employee productivity or behaviour.

The Good News

- In a 2012 Ipsos-Reid survey, 85% of respondents agreed that workers with mental health conditions can be productive with access to the right supports.
- It is estimated that employers could save between \$6.6 billion and 16.5 billion annually in Canada by taking steps to address mental health concerns in the workplace.

The above statistics come from:

Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2012). Making the case for investing in mental health in Canada. Ottawa: Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Smetanin, P., et al. (2011). The life and economic impact of major mental illnesses in Canada: 2011 to 2041. RiskAnalytica: Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Myths About Mental Illness

People who have been diagnosed with a mental illness are likely to experience stigma. Attitudes and beliefs about mental illness are often based on fear, misunderstanding and stereotypes. Stigma fosters isolation and causes feelings of guilt, shame and inferiority.

Self-stigma, or embarrassment about having a mental illness, often keeps people from seeking treatment. When no one else is talking about living with a mental illness, you believe the symptoms you are experiencing are due to personal flaws and that "Everyone else seems to be able to handle life but me."

It is also important to note that it may not be the worker who is suffering with a mental illness, but it could be a family member or friend. Mental illness in the family or in a close relationship can produce stress or difficulties that can affect a person's performance at work.

The following myths only serve to exacerbate the stigma associated with mental illness.

- People with mental illness can't function in the workplace.
- People with mental illness are less intelligent.
- Many people will feign mental illness in the workplace to take advantage of their employers.
- There is no way to treat mental illness.
- Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.
- People with a severe mental illness are usually dangerous and violent.
- Psychiatric disorders are not true medical illnesses like heart disease and diabetes.
- People with mental illness often do not take their medication.
- People diagnosed with mental illness can "snap out of it" if they really try.

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Reducing Stigma

Some people with mental health problems report being turned down for a job or stopping themselves from looking for work because they anticipate discrimination. Disclosure of a mental health problem in the workplace can actually lead to discriminatory behaviours such as lack of opportunities, gossip, and social exclusion. Stigma also leads to a reluctance to seek treatment for mental illness, which simply prolongs the intensity and duration of suffering. Presentations and conversations with people in recovery who have experienced mental illness is a proven method for reducing stigma.

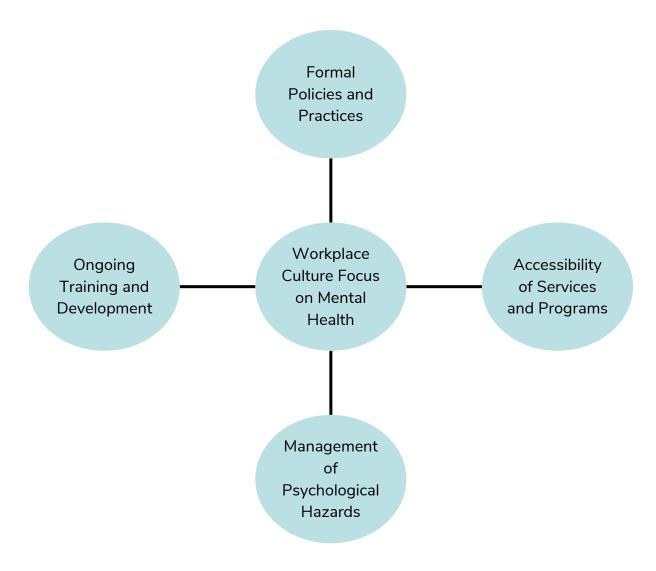
Self-stigma occurs when people internalize stigma, which leads to feelings of isolation, diminished self-worth, and a disinclination towards seeking help. It also negatively impacts self-esteem (*I* am not worthy) and self-efficacy (*I* am not able). Essentially, self-stigma leads you to believe you are weak or damaged. Often workers who struggle the most with self-stigma are also the ones whom others perceive as reliable, strong, and in positions of trust or leadership.

Personal Reflection

| What factors may be present for you in the workplace that could contribute to self-stgima? |
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| What can be done to mitigate the effects of self-stigma in the workplace? |
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Best Practices in Workplace Mental Health

Despite various stereotypes and perceptions, the impacts of mental illness are variable and unique to each person. Some conditions will produce no noticeable impact on work, while others can be disruptive, causing reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and difficulty with interpersonal relationships. The workplace has a responsibility to mitigate the damaging impacts of stress, conflict and risk of burnout that contribute to an unhealthy work environment. Here are the foundations from which to build those practices.



Creating A Psychologically Safe Workplace

An environment with psychological safety includes having employees who are able to ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose new ideas, all without fear of negative consequences. When psychological safety is not present, there is discouragement, a sense of threat, disengagement, ambiguity, and unpredictability. When psychological safety is present, there is trust, safety, respect, growth and development.

Psychological Safety Climate

- Health and safety that includes mental health
- Workplace concerns and complaints are taken seriously
- Feedback is welcome
- Accountability exists at all levels in the organization
- Lower rates of absenteeism
- Existence of resources and supports
- Accessibility for everyone (e.g., ramps, doors, washrooms)
- Diversity is visible
- Policies that support work-life balance
- Physical safety is a priority

| What indicators of a psychologically safe climate exist in your workplace? |
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| Are there areas for improvement? |
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PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

- Promote positive attitude toward mental health
 - Provide self-care tools
 - Create a list of local mental health resources, self-help groups, websites and help lines
 - Provide learning opportunities during lunch breaks, staff meetings or retreats that focus on health and wellness
- Focus on diversity and inclusion initiatives
 - o Team-building
 - Review your organization's policies and practices from a human rights perspective and make sure they consider the widest variety of needs
 - o Provide training in human rights and diversity
- Promote work-life balance
 - Recognition and support of the need to balance work, family and personal life
 - Innovative policies regarding leaves and time off to support caregiving, parenting, sick time, etc.
- Provide early intervention
 - Education and training opportunities in areas that impact personal wellness
 - Innovative policies regarding leaves and time off to support caregiving, parenting, sick time, etc.

| What strategies could be implemented in your work environment? | |
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Early Identification and Support

Signs and Symptoms of Mental Health Concerns

While the initial appearance of symptoms may be sudden, it is often a more gradual process. People may find it more difficult to relax, sleep or concentrate. They may start to withdraw from long-term friends and families. Presenteeism is defined as a person coming to work despite being ill or dealing with extreme stress and/or family and life pressures. This affects performance and productivity and can contribute to higher stress and lower morale. It is believed that presenteeism is much more common than absenteeism.

General signs to watch for in the workplace may include:

- Loss of interest in work
- Reduced productivity or effectiveness
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions or memory problems
- Decline in physical appearance
- Increased health complaints, including fatigue
- Change in personality
- Feeling overwhelmed and unable to meet the demands of the job
- Increased accidents or safety problems
- Irritability and short temper
- Avoidance of situations
- Increased health complaints
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Lack of cooperation or decreased ability to work with people
- Lateness or frequent absences
- Expressions of strange or grandiose ideas

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Reflection

Having a discussion regarding mental health issues may look very different depending on who we are talking to. Workplaces vary widely in their norms, values and relationships among staff. These are just a few of the factors to take into consideration when thinking about starting a dialogue regarding mental health concerns. It is helpful to think about how we would like to engage in these conversations, including the manner and specific words and phrases that would open a meaningful and productive dialogue.

| 01 | How would you want to be approached by a peer or co-worker? What would you like them to say? |
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| 02 | What would you not want them to say or do? |
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| 03 | How would you want to be approached by a supervisor or manager? What would you like them to say? |
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| 04 | What would you not want them to say or do? |
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How to Approach the Conversation

As a manager or supervisor, talking to employees in the workplace when you notice they may be struggling, or when others have reported observations or difficulties to you can be daunting.

It is important that you approach the concern as a workplace performance issue when that situation applies. Be sure to raise the possibility of providing adjustments or accommodations as needed, and assist them with accessing supports and resources.

4 Steps

01 | Prepare to initiate the conversation

- Plan what you are going to say, including the questions you will ask.
- Review your plan and consult with a trusted advisor.
- Choose a suitable time and location to ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- Allow enough time and be prepared to listen.

02 | Explore and broaden the conversation

- Be curious and take a neutral stance.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Use active listening skills and state observations about behaviour in an impartial manner.
- Define the important issues.

03 | Generate options and offer support

- Collaborate to achieve desired outcomes.
- Consider adjustments that could be made for both employer and employee.
- Focus on creating solutions, not diagnosing the problem.

04 | Create an action plan

- Together, define specific steps to be taken by all parties.
- Follow up at an agreed time.
- Review the action plan together.
- Provide and listen to feedback.

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KEYS FOR GOOD PREPARATION

Remember, it is very important to clarify the facts. Do not assume you have the answers or the whole picture before sitting down with the person. Start the conversation by acknowledging the person's skills and contributions to the workplace. Assure the person you will respect their privacy and confidentiality.

Before you begin, ask yourself if you have any fears or pre-conceived notions that will make it difficult to respond appropriately. If the answer is yes, seek out assistance from a member of your team or support system.

Questions Related to Job Performance

- What is the specific behaviour or performance issue that has become a concern?
- Is there a duty or an obligation that the person is not currently meeting?
- Are there concerns related to quality of work?

Questions Related to Impact on Others

- Are there any behaviours having a negative effect on others in the workplace?
- If so, who are the people impacted (clients, customers, colleagues, supervisor, others)?
- What are the objective and specific observations regarding the impacts?

Questions Related to Personal Well-Being

- Have others in the workplace expressed concern for the person's personal health and well-being?
- What are my concerns for the person's personal health and well-being?

Questions Related to Resources and Support

- What resources and support services does the organization have to offer?
- What policies are in place to deal with accommodation?
- How can I make this meeting less stressful for the employee?
- What positive contributions does the employee make?

It is especially important that you do not initiate the conversation without having a plan for addressing concerns or providing support for the worker(s) involved in the dialogue.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER- PRACTICE

Case Example:

Jennifer is a 30 year-old who has worked for your organization for about one year. She recently started coming in to work late, a couple of times per week. She also seems distracted and not her usual self. She stopped eating in the lunch room and instead remains seated at her desk through the lunch hour. A customer called in to complain that Jennifer had been rude and dismissive on the telephone. One of Jennifer's coworkers mentioned that she is worried about her.

| What is the first step you would to take to address this situation? |
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| How would you begin the conversation? |
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| What are some of the questions you would ask? |
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| How would you follow up after your initial conversation? |
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Employer Responsibilities

There is a long history of occupational health and safety legislation in Canada addressing employees' physical well-being and safety. The focus has been on physical health rather than addressing mental health and illness in the workplace. Mental illness is considered a disability in human rights legislation.

These 11 grounds for discrimination are protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act:

- Race
- Ethnic or national origin
- Colour
- Religion
- Age
- Sex (including pregnancy)
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Family status
- Disability
- A conviction for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended

Employers have a duty to accommodate employees with mental health disabilities; however, there is no set formula for this. Each person must be addressed individually on a case by case basis. Keep in mind that people want to be treated with respect, dignity and compassion.

Duty to Inquire

When there are observations or awareness that an employee may be suffering from a mental health concern, the employer is expected to ask questions to elicit further information and explore the possibility of accommodations.

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Overview of Responsibilities

- Employers must not discriminate on the basis of disability or perceived disability against people who apply for employment.
- Provide a safe and healthy workplace. In certain circumstances, this may require employers to remove employees who may cause harm to themselves or others.
- Prevent harassment and discrimination.
- Harassment must be investigated and corrected as soon as you become aware of it.
- If you are aware that accommodation may be needed, and that need has been identified, you have a legal obligation to accommodate.
- Offer and provide suitable accommodation.
- Accept requests for accommodations in good faith.
- Respond to accommodation requests in a timely manner, even if temporary solutions need to be implemented.
- Identify and plan for any implications for others in the work environment.
- Cover the costs of accommodations, including any needed medical, expert opinion or documents.
- Regularly follow up and make modifications as necessary.
- Support to enable the employee's decision to take a leave if necessary.

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What Is Reasonable Accommodation?

An accommodation is a modification of the workplace. It means changing a rule or practice to incorporate alternative arrangements that eliminate discriminatory barriers. It is a legal obligation. Although employers bear the primary responsibility, employees have a reciprocal duty to cooperate in the process. The structure of work is important for someone who is experiencing a mental illness. It makes good business sense to help the employee continue at work, as the longer an employee is off work, the less likely it is that they will return.

Principles of Reasonable Accommodation

- Address the individual needs of each employee.
- Be concrete and specific and put them in writing.
- Respect the employee's confidentiality and privacy.
- Be willing to engage in joint problem solving.
- Review accommodations periodically to meet changing needs.

The process can be initiated by:

- The employer (human resources, occupational health, management) where an employee may require an accommodation.
- The employee.
- A worker or union representative who is supporting an employee.
- A healthcare professional (physician, psychologist, occupational health professional, social worker) supporting a patient to stay at or return to work.
- A disability management professional or vocational rehabilitation consultant in conjunction with disability claim.

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COMMON AREAS OF ACCOMMODATION

Helping staff who have a disability remain productive in the workplace is the objective of accommodation. Most of the following suggestions are simple, cost-effective strategies and adjustments.

Dealing with Change and Transitions

- Advance notice of impending change
- Development of a plan to manage change before it begins
- Regular meetings to discuss and support work-related changes
- Consult with a previous or future supervisor to ensure effective transition

Communication and Supervision

- Modification of instructions and feedback
- Brief, regularly scheduled meetings
- Communication approaches such as tone of voice, choice of words, eye contact, body language, hand gestures, etc.

Training Needs

- Retraining or re-orientation
- Individualized training approaches
- Manager and supervisor training

Flexibility in Job Duties and Scheduling

- Graduated return to work after a leave
- Start or end times that help with the effects of medication, energy levels or needing to attend appointments
- More frequent but shorter breaks or split shifts
- Exchange of tasks with other workers that maintain the balance of work while capitalizing on the strengths of each

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Challenges with Stamina or Stress

- Gradual increase in duties and responsibilities
- Modification of workplace processes to allow focus on one task at a time
- Collaboration between employer and employee regarding priorities
- Work from home options
- Job-sharing arrangements

Memory and Concentration

- Use of recording devices
- Electronic or online organizers
- Regular reminders, follow-up and priority setting to stay on track

Relationships

- Clear expectations and plans for dealing with issues before they arise
- Regular meetings to review and address progress made
- Procedure to evaluate the efforts made regarding co-worker relationships
- Supportive employment services, job coach or mentor
- Adjustments in expectations for work-related social functions

Environmental Modifications

- Increased natural light or softer light in the work area
- Reduced noise distraction
- Scent-free or limited use of scents

Dealing with Crisis Situations

If there is potential for a person to experience a crisis at work involving anxiety, panic attacks, or flashbacks, work with them to develop a plan for how you and others are to respond and what supports to access in each particular situation.

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Adapted from: https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/managing-workplace-issues/accommodation-strategies.

Employer Rights

Although employers have a duty to accommodate employees with disabilities, the duty is dismissed if the employer has reached a point of undue hardship. The duty to accommodate has limits. When adjustments would cost too much or create risks to health or safety are the most common situations of undue hardship. However, other factors like morale and workforce issues can also be considered. There is no precise definition and each situation must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. An employer must provide evidence as to the nature and extent of the hardship.

As an employer, you also have a right to consider the following questions:

- Can the person perform the inherent requirements of the job?
 - A bona fide occupational requirement is a standard or rule that is integral to carrying out the functions of a specific position.
- Are reasonable adjustments needed in the work environment or the employee's role?
 - Accommodations cannot threaten the survival of the organization or business or change its fundamental nature.
 - Duty to prevent harm: the employer has a right to say no if accommodating the employee would pose an unreasonable risk to the health or safety of that person or others.
- Are the facts established for the employee's entitlements to leaves, benefits, insurance, etc.?
 - In general, an employer has a right to information regarding the person's prognosis, not diagnosis.

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Employee Rights and Responsibilities

Approaching your supervisor to discuss mental illness and related work concerns may feel intimidating for some employees. Before meeting with your manager, talk with someone else about how much and what kind of information you want to give. While your manager doesn't need to know everything, you will need to disclose some details and participate in the discussion about what changes may help you to accommodate your illness.

Duty to Disclose

Employees are responsible to make employers aware of any conditions that affect their judgment or ability to properly perform their job when they have knowledge and awareness of that condition.

The rest of the duties of the employee during the accommodation process can be summed up as follows:

- Communicate the need for adjustments in the workplace.
- Cooperate by undergoing a health evaluation or assessment, if appropriate.
- Answer questions or provide information regarding relevant restrictions or limitations, including information from health care professionals.
- Participate in discussions regarding possible solutions.
- Meet agreed-upon performance and job standards once accommodation is provided.
- Advise if the accommodations need to be changed or if they are not working as intended.

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Return-To-Work Strategies

Communication with the rest of the staff in the workplace is important before, during and after someone takes a leave in the workplace due to a mental illness. The process is complicated when co-workers have strong reactions to the employee who is returning. This is especially true where conflict or performance problems were an issue prior to leave. Co-workers may be experiencing fear, anxiety or frustration if they were involved in conflict with the employee or if their workload has been impacted by the absence or return-to-work accommodation(s).

The following are suggestions for helpful steps to have in place to ensure that the transition is managed effectively at all points in the process.

Before a Leave

- Normalize the need for a period of recovery, just as you would for an employee undergoing treatment for a physical illness.
- Have a clear roadmap of the procedures and policies regarding return to work.
- Make a policy regarding communication during a leave. Consider who is the most appropriate person to have contact with the employee. It may be a manager, supervisor, co-worker, union rep or a human resources staff.
- Make a policy regarding re-training or re-orientation after an absence.
- Leadership utilizes effective and clear communication, and while respecting privacy and confidentiality, does not leave conflict or confusion unaddressed.

During a Leave

- Share information about organizational events and news that are not specifically related to the employee's job or tasks.
- Communicate in the preferred mode of the person who is off. This may be over the telephone, or through emails and text messages.
- Ease the transition back to work by including the person, as they are ready, in workplace events and celebrations.
- Ensure that any staff away from work due to mental illness receives the same acknowledgement (cards, flowers or greetings) as someone off for a physical illness.
- Consider any specific recommendations made by professionals involved in the person's care.
- Discuss with the employee how they would like information to be shared with co-workers. This can include how the employee will respond to questions about their health, their absence and any changes in work responsibilities.

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After a Leave

- Gradually increase the working hours over a period of time.
- Allow flexible scheduling to attend medical appointments.
- Consider employee energy levels at various times of the day and schedule work accordingly. Begin with tasks that will help build a successful return.
- Minimize stressors that might impact the employee and their work team.

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HOW TO APPROACH THE RETURN-TO-WORK CONVERSATION

Consider what has changed or is new since they have been off, and prepare them for any changes that have taken place. It is also important to remind the employee of their value to the organization.

In regard to staff relations, focus on solutions and moving forward. This may involve acknowledgement of difficult situations or events. Explore this area gently and with compassion, taking the lead of the person returning.

Clarify each step and make sure that the entire plan is written as the employee agrees it should be.

Questions during the meeting may include:

- How are you feeling about the return to work? What are you looking forward to?
- What might be the most challenging or stressful part of your day?
- What did you notice was a challenge before you were off?
- In what areas would you want further training or retraining?
- Have you thought about what you will say about your absence? (You may assist with this if needed.)
- How would you like to be reintroduced? (Individual meetings, a group meeting or something simple and informal.)
- Do you have concerns or worries about working with other staff?
- Is there anything your supervisor can do differently in terms of how they communicate, give feedback or instructions?
- What are some of the signs that might tell us you are in need of some support?
- Can you give some specific suggestions about how to approach you if we start to notice those signs? Who would be the best person to communicate that to you?

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PUTTING IT TOGETHER- PRACTICE

Case Example:

Doug is a 45 year-old employee who has been working at your organization for 10 years. He is returning to work after a 6 month leave of absence. Prior to his leave, he had begun to miss important deadlines and not completed work on several projects. His personal appearance had became increasingly unkept and his usual sense of humour seemed to disappear. After a suicide attempt, he was hospitalized and diagnosed with depression.

| How would you prepare for Doug's return-to-work? |
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| How do you begin the conversation? |
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| What are some of the questions you would ask? |
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| How would you follow up after your initial conversation? |
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Develop Your Plan

There are many ways that managers can address the issue of mental health and mental illness in the workplace. It is important to seek out relevant research and consult with others who have expertise in this area. It is also essential to gather information from your staff and to be proactive. While it is helpful to know your rights and responsibilities, the best way to deal with this issue is to have healthy communication, respect and access to relevant resources.

Here is a checklist to assess all areas that have been targeted for best practices:

Workplace Culture

- Have you addressed any organizational factors that might be contributing to turnover and burnout?
- Do you have stress management resources in the workplace?
- Is mental health and well-being emphasized in the actions of leadership?
- Is there an atmosphere of trust, openness and accountability?
- Do you pay attention to issues of diversity and inclusion?

Training and Development

- Are all workers at all levels in the organization or business trained in basic mental health literacy?
- Do you provide training in areas such as respect in the workplace, conflict resolution, human rights and issues related to communication such as assertiveness and engaging in difficult conversations?
- Are managers and supervisors given adequate training in leadership skills?
- Do you engage in team building on a regular basis?

Formal Policies and Practices

- Do you have a workplace policy on mental health?
- Is mental health and wellness included in health and safety initiatives?
- Do you have a process for providing accommodations?
- Do you have policies regarding leaves due to personal and family circumstances?
- Is there a clear process for return to work after a leave?
- Do you provide opportunities for evaluation and feedback on a regular basis?

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Management of Psychological Hazards

- Do you have a clear policies and procedures for dealing with the following in the workplace?
 - Harassment
 - o Bullying
 - Discrimination
 - Violence
- Do you have formal or informal processes for dealing with internal dispute resolution?
- Do you have policies to focus on prevention and awareness of psychological hazards?

Accessibility of Services and Programs

- Do you have access to Employee and Family Assistance programs for all employees?
- Is there access to online and telephone resources for staff?
- Do you have adequate health benefits and insurance?
- Is the process to access services clear and simple?
- Do you have internal committees or task forces that make mental health and wellness a priority in the workplace and report concerns to management?
- Do you engage in collaborative partnerships with community agencies and resources that can assist with safeguarding the mental health and wellness of your workforce?

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| This checklist is not exhaustive. Are there other factors you would add that apply specifically to your context? |
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What to Do

- Encourage commitment and undertaking of initiatives at all levels of the organization from management and leadership to peer support.
- Start by looking to other organizations and businesses who have made a commitment to mental health and wellness and build on what they have done.
- Access training and consultants who have expertise in workplace mental health and can offer practical suggestions that are suited to your organization's needs.
- One of the best places to start is by formulating specific strategies to combat stigma.
- View people with mental illness as a resource. They can make a valuable contribution, and are often more sensitive and empathetic to people, having personally experienced difficulties.

Circle the areas that you believe are in need of improvement. <u>Underline</u> the areas where you have some direct impact. For the areas which are both circled and underlined, write down an action step that you can take in that area following this workshop.

Stigma and Awareness

Psychologically Safe Work Climate

Organizational Factors

Training and Education

Clear Policies for Psychological Hazards

Appendix

PERSONAL CHECK-IN FOR LEADERS AND MANAGERS

In order to facilitate a psychologically healthy work environment, leaders, managers, supervisors and those in authority must set the tone. It is not necessary to be perfect. Rather, be a role model who pays attention to the culture and relationships and is not afraid to be vulnerable in the face of stigma. Also provide the structures and support that everyone within the organization can utilize to make the workplace a productive and vibrant environment.

| 01 | Do I look after my own mental health? |
|------|---|
| 02 | Do I treat others in the organization with respect? |
| 03 | Do I foster a sense of fairness within the workplace? |
| 04 | Do I hold people accountable when needed? |
| 05 | Am I held accountable when needed? |
| 06 | Is there a balance between effort and reward? |
| 07 | Do I use good communication skills? |
| 80 | What happens when someone makes a mistake? Do I help them to do better? |
| 09 | Do I take breaks, lunch time and vacation time? |
| 10 | Do I encourage others to take breaks and vacation time? |
| 11 | Finally, do I treat others as I would like to be treated? |
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ROLE OF THE WHOLE TEAM

It is important that everyone supports a mentally healthy culture in the workplace. In addition, it is vital that everyone understand their role. This ensures that there are multiple entry points for a person experiencing difficulties to access help.

Leader

- Provide and expect excellence in health and safety management
- Give rewards for keeping a mentally healthy workplace
- Capacity-build from within to lead workplace initiatives
- Provide flexible working conditions
- Create an inclusive working environment

Manager/Supervisor

- Possess a basic understanding of mental health conditions
- Communicate effectively and enable effective teamwork
- Facilitate an inclusive working environment
- Provide reasonable accommodations as needed

Human Resources

- Promote workplace health and safety
- Implement and review policies regarding mental health and wellness
- Inform employees of support available
- Train staff in mental health awareness and support

Employees

- Manage own mental health
- Cooperate with workplace policies and procedures
- Support co-workers with mental health conditions
- Participate in and support initiatives aimed at improving mental health and wellness

Other Key Groups

- Health professionals, including family physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and other allied health providers
- Employee Assistance Programs
- Occupational health and safety practitioners
- Unions and other professional associations

BURNOUT IN THE WORKPLACE

"Burnout" is a special type of job stress — a state of physical, emotional or mental exhaustion combined with doubts about your competence and the value of your work. It can result from various factors, including:

- Lack of Control. An inability to influence decisions regarding schedule, assignments, or workload.
- Role Ambiguity. Lack of clarity regarding expectations and duties.
- **Dysfunctional Workplace Relationships.** Difficult patterns of behaviour such as bullying, gossip, unresolved conflicts, and lack of trust can take a lot of mental energy away from your actual work.
- Mismatched Values. Can lead to fundamental disagreements and difficulties in carrying out certain responsibilities that do not match your values.
- Lack of Social Support. Isolation or lack of teamwork can be very challenging, and the impact can be more acute in certain workplaces.
- Work-Life Imbalance. When your work takes up too much time and there is no energy to spend time with family and friends.
- **Absence of Fairness.** Perceptions of favourable treatment or an imbalance of how workers are rewarded.
- **Inadequate Rewards.** When there is inadequate financial compensation or recognition.

| How can your organization address the underlying issues that contribute to job |
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| burnout? |
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| What are some specific strategies to avoid burnout? |
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SAMPLE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND CULTURE SURVEY

- 01 | Do you understand and support the goals of the organization?
- 02 | Do you know what you do to help the organization meet its goals and objectives?
- 03 | Do you have a clear understanding of your duties and responsibilities?
- 04 | Do you have the right amount of information and resources to complete your work?
- 05 | Are workload expectations reasonable and realistic?
- 06 | Do you have a good understanding of the policies and processes at your organization?
- 07 | If needed, do you know who to ask for help or where to go for help?
- 08 | Do you feel valued and recognized for the work you do?
- 09 | Does your supervisor have a clear understanding of your contribution to the workplace?
- 10 | On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable do you feel giving feedback to your supervisor?
- 11 Do you believe leadership takes your feedback seriously?
- 12 | If you were to guit your job tomorrow, what would your reason(s) be?
- 13 | What three words describe the workplace culture here?
- 14 Do co-workers give each other respect here?
- 15 | Does the leadership team contribute to a positive work culture?
- 16 | Do you enjoy being at work?
- 17 | On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your work-life balance?
- 18 | Does your workplace support and encourage staff to make personal wellness a priority?
- 19 | Does leadership demonstrate a commitment to their own health and well-being?
- 20 | Do you believe you are a good role model for new employees?

INTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

Start by identifying the needs of your employees. This will help you decide what kind of processes make sense for your organization and how long they will take to develop. Be proactive instead of reactive, as conflict will not simply go away on its own. Often disputes escalate because a proper, effective investigation is not conducted and there is lack of accountability. Also it is important that there are no repercussions for employees who choose to file a complaint or seek legal counsel.

Guiding Principles and Practical Suggestions

Accessibility and Feedback: Be inclusive from the beginning of the process.

Consider all of your employees and include people from diverse backgrounds.

Multiple entry points: Train all of the people who will be involved.

- Include leadership, managers, directors, and human resources and legal staff.
- Information about human rights should be included.
- Put information on your website or in a newsletter during the orientation process and post information in places where people get together regularly.

Neutral procedures and prompt timelines: Monitor and evaluate how the process is working.

- Evaluation processes should be voluntary and confidential.
- Ask questions like:
 - Has the process been implemented as designed?
 - o Is it done in a timely fashion?
 - o Is the process fair?
 - What do people involved have to say about the process?
 - o Are there changes that would improve how the process works?

What if YOU Are the Problem?

Sometimes conflicts that arise with your staff are due to a management style that may be the source of the problem. A leader must have the skills to effectively deal with conflict rather than letting it fester and cause more problems. Unfortunately, in attempts to keep the peace, leaders can create insincere and untrustworthy environments. This happens when you are more concerned about being well-liked, avoiding a negative reputation or being put into a situation that might reveal your vulnerabilities as a leader.

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TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS AND PROVIDING SUPPORT

Listen, Listen and Listen

Be ready for intense reactions and emotions. Don't attempt to sort out everything for them. Understanding is more important than fixing.

Normalize

Let them know that their feelings are normal and okay – whether those feelings are anger, shame, fear, etc. – and that they don't have to be alone with them.

Assist in Mobilizing Support

Offer direction on where they may go for assistance. If needed, assist them in making the initial connections.

Things Not to Say

Although they may have good intentions, people sometimes say things that are not helpful. Avoid these kinds of strategies and statements:

- Rescue: "I can help you."
- Minimize: "It could be worse."
- Distract: "It's best that you just stay busy..."
- Monopolize and tell your own story: "I know just how you feel..."
- Use simplistic explanations: "God works in mysterious ways..."

Things to Say

- "I care about you."
- "What can I do to help?"
- "I am here for you."

| Notes: | | |
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TIPS TO FOCUS ON OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS IN CONVERSATION

It is important to begin conversations on difficult topics with curiosity and openness. As a leader, it is also essential that you remain positive, respectful and hopeful when speaking to employees about personal difficulties that are impacting the workplace. The following suggestions are intended to provide some guidance for moving forward in collaboration.

Begin the conversation by giving support and empathy when needed. You don't want to get so focused on solutions that you forget to acknowledge and understand the person's situation. However, you do want to focus on opportunities and solutions.

Resources and Strengths

- Given the difficult time you have had, how did you manage did make it through?
- What support or resources (internal and external) did you use?
- What did you find helpful or unhelpful?
- What kind of support do you need during a setback? What will be the best way of handling a setback?
- How can I help you? What do you know about what has been helpful in the past?

Clarity of Direction

- What will tell us our meeting has been a success today?
- What would you like to see different about the current situation?
- What will be the signs that tell you things are moving in the right direction?
- On a scale of 1-10, how far away are we from the ideal conditions for you to be successful at work? How can we move from 2 to 3? (Ask about small increments.)

Strategies and Goals

- Where would you like to make changes in the areas you have control over?
- What have you tried so far that you know does not work? What have you tried so far that you know does work? What can you do more of? What can I do more of?
- How would you advise a friend who was facing a similar situation to you? What advice would be most helpful?
- What is the smallest step we can take in the next couple of days which would be most helpful? What about the next week?

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TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES RETURNING TO WORK AFTER A LEAVE

Don't Let Work Take Priority over Your Recovery

Work is important, but it is only one part of your life. Your treatment plan and the self-care strategies you use each day should be followed consistently.

Focus on What's Important at Work

Most jobs involve challenging relationships, deadlines, difficult tasks and other stressors. At times when it feels overwhelming, try to focus on the positive reasons why you work. This may include financial security, a sense of pride and inspiration, or the loyalty and friendship of your co-workers.

Don't Expect Perfection

It is inevitable that you will face disappointments, make mistakes and encounter obstacles at work. Use positive self-talk and show yourself kindness and compassion, especially in the beginning phases of your treatment. Give yourself credit for the progress you have made, and permission to start over as needed.

Develop Specific Strategies

Take a close look at the symptoms that have troubled you in the past, and develop specific strategies for each of them. Develop a tool kit for your personal use with items, reminders and objects that help you stay in the present and utilize effective coping.

Use Your Support System

Examine your schedule and look for activities, both at home and at work, that could be delegated to others. Remember that asking for help is not a weakness. Use helpers like your family doctor, counsellor, support group or other health professionals. Reach out to your family and friends and anyone else who cares about you and is invested in your well-being.

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Resources

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Healthy Minds @ Work www.ccohs.ca/healthyminds/

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) www.cmha.ca

CMHA of Ontario, Workplace Mental Health Promotion: A How-to Guide wmhp.cmhaontario.ca

Heads Up Australia, Mental Health in the Workplace www.headsup.org.au/creating-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/mental-health-in-the-workplace

Mental Health America, Workplace Wellness www.mentalhealthamerica.net/workplace-wellness

Mental Health Commission of Canada (includes access to the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace) www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

Mind for Better Mental Health UK, Work and Mental Health www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/work/

Mood Disorders Society of Canada, Workplace Mental Health https://mdsc.ca/workplace/

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health: An Initiative of the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace (free tools and resources) www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com

WEBSITES FOR EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

Alberta Human Rights Commission, Human Rights in the Workplace www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/employment.asp

British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal Human Rights and Duties in Employment www.bchrt.bc.ca/human-rights-duties/employment/index.htm

Canadian Human Rights Commission Employer Obligations www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/organizations-and-businesses

Government of Canada Employment Equity

www.esdc.gc.ca/en/jobs/workplace/human_rights/employment_equity/index.page

Manitoba Human Rights Commission, Employers

www.manitobahumanrights.ca/employers.html

New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/nbhrc.html

Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission

www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/index.html

Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission, Employers & Employees

http://nwthumanrights.ca/resources/employment/

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Education for Businesses and Other Organizations

organizacions

https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/content/education#businesses-and-other-organizations

Nunavut Human Rights Tribunal

www.nhrt.ca/english/general_information

Ontario Human Rights Commission, Employment

http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/social_areas/employment

Prince Edward Island Human Rights Commission

www.gov.pe.ca/humanrights/

Quebec Human Rights Commission, Employment

www.cdpdj.qc.ca/en/droits-de-la-personne/domaines/Pages/travail.aspx

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Employers & Employees

http://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/learn/employers-employees

Yukon Human Rights Commission

www.yhrc.yk.ca/

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Workshop Reflection and Application

01 | Remembering and Understanding

List three important things that you REMEMBER from the workshop. Describe in detail what was IMPORTANT for you for each takeaway.

Ask: What problems are you experiencing that the workshop material has

| addressed? | | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|--|--|
| A: | | | | |
| B: | | | | |
| C: | | | | |
| 02 Applying | | | | |
| What SPECIFIC things will you do to APPLY v problems listed above? What will you implement this month)? | • | | | |
| Ask: How will this workshop material affect a typical workday/overall job performance? | | | | |
| A: | | | | |
| Da | ate of Implementation: | | | |
| B: | | | | |
| | ate of Implementation: | | | |
| C: | | | | |
| Da | ate of Implementation: | | | |

03 | Evaluating

What CRITERIA will you use to EVALUATE the impacts your applications have made on you and/or your workplace? How often will you evaluate what you have applied?

Ask: Would your organization think they need this workshop material to be

| worst that can happen? | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| A: | | | | |
| Date of Evaluation: | | | | |
| B: | | | | |
| Date of Evaluation: | | | | |
| C: | | | | |
| Date of Evaluation: | | | | |
| 04 Creating | | | | |
| In what NEW ways can you evolve the workshop material from the information gathered through the evaluations to further meet the needs of your organization? | | | | |
| Ask: How does the workshop material connect to your organization's goals? What will you do in the future to foster a continuing connection between the workshop material and your organization's goals? | | | | |
| A: | | | | |
| B: | | | | |
| C: | | | | |

ACHIEVE Workshops and Services

TRAINING

Our training is available through open enrollment **public** workshops that anyone can attend virtually or in-person, **private workshops** held on-location or virtually for your group, and through **on-demand** and **webinar** formats. What follows is a sample of the 45+ workshop topics we offer. For a complete list, please visit our website.

Leadership Development Workshops

Coaching Strategies for Leaders – Conflict, Performance, Change Leadership Development – Learn, Grow, Achieve Leadership and Culture – How to Create a Workplace Where People Like to Work

Management Development Workshops

Performance Management – New Perspectives and Best Practices Management and Supervision – The Crucial Skills Managing Mental Health in the Workplace

Communication and Conflict Resolution Workshops

Assertive Communication
Conflict Resolution Skills
Dealing with Difficult People

Workplace Culture and Performance Workshops

Diversity and Culture – Strategies for Working with Differences Happiness at Work Mental Health Awareness and Support

Safety and Violence Prevention Workshops

De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations™
Psychological Safety in the Workplace

WORKPLACE CULTURAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT TOOL

Our free online assessment tool evaluates your organization based on six key elements of a healthy workplace. Complete the questionnaire to receive an 8-page report, or contact us to receive a quote to have us facilitate an assessment for your whole organization. This information will help you evaluate, understand, and discuss how your organization can create a healthier workplace culture.

CONSULTING SERVICES

Our consulting services help organizations and individuals manage issues related to planning, change, conflict, and stress using a strengths-based approach.

- Coaching
- Mediation Conflict Resolution
- Workplace Climate Assessments
- Facilitation
- Strategic Planning

FREE RESOURCES

Visit our website to check out our free resources, including a monthly webinar, printable handouts, video insights, audio exercises, and more. ACHIEVE also has a regular podcast and blog.

BOOKS

We have books that focus on strategies and insights in the areas of leadership and workplace culture available through ACHIEVE Publishing:

- The Culture Question: How to Create a Workplace Where People Like to Work by Randy Grieser, Eric Stutzman, Wendy Loewen, and Michael Labun
- Don't Blame the Lettuce: Insights for Helping You Grow as a Leader and Nurture Your Workplace Culture by Eric Stutzman, Wendy Loewen, and Randy Grieser
- A Little Book About Workplace Culture by Randy Grieser, Eric Stutzman, Wendy Loewen, and Michael Labun
- The Ordinary Leader: 10 Key Insights for Building and Leading a Thriving Organization by Randy Grieser

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES, LUNCH & LEARN, MINI-WORKSHOPS

Sometimes you don't need a traditional workshop. The next time you require a shorter presentation, consider using an ACHIEVE speaker. Our speakers provide engaging, inspirational, and humorous 30-90-minute presentations.