

Ideas and Suggestions for Supporting Healthy Minds at Work

healthy
minds

The culture of an organization plays a large role in setting the conditions that affect employees' mental health. As an employer, you can help build a psychologically healthy workplace for your employees and promote good mental health in your workplace.

Workplace Factors

Current research has shown that the points listed below affect the health of the work environment (this is not an exhaustive list).

Work-life balance: Promote work-life balance; encourage employees to take their allotted vacation time, implement policies that promote flexibility within day-to-day work days, create and model a corporate culture that does not expect employees to respond to emails 24/7.

Workload and role clarity: Clearly define employees' duties and responsibilities. Monitor workloads to ensure they're not excessive. Ensure there is sufficient staff to do the work required. Make sure your employees have sufficient knowledge, training, skills and resources to do their jobs well. Allow staff to set their own priorities as much as possible and to have some control over their work day.

Work scheduling: Look into flexible work arrangements. Where possible include flexible schedules, compressed work weeks and telework/tele-commuting.

Socially supportive work environment:

- Encourage and reward employees who support and encourage others.
- Develop a culture of trust, discourage gossip and rumours, and help employees to correct any mistakes.
- Offer social activities for employees to get to know one another and maintain workplace friendships.
- Consider using 360° feedback at all levels of management. Use the information to create opportunities for improvement.

Physical work environment: The physical environment of the workplace can also affect employees' mental health.

- Consider the noise and temperature levels.
- Make sure that office furniture is adjusted to the needs of each employee to reduce the risk of repetitive strain injuries.

Job security: There are no guarantees of lifetime employment, but you can help employees focus on career paths by providing opportunities to update their skills and learn transferable skills.

Leadership & Management style: Leaders are instrumental in creating and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace environment. They take the lead on allocating resources, managing workloads and dealing with workplace conflicts.

- Ensure managers are well trained and that they have excellent people management skills.
- Ensure there is open and effective communication between you and your staff.
- Provide ongoing feedback to staff regarding their performance and reward staff for a job well done.
- Encourage senior executives to be strong, effective leaders and to be role models to staff.
- Do not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination. Implement anti-bullying and workplace harassment policies and have conflict resolution practices in place.
- Train managers to be aware of mental health issues in the workplace and how to talk with and listen to employees, deal with performance issues and help employees with disabilities stay at work or return to work successfully. The following organizations offer training and services:
 - > [Mental Health Works](#) is an initiative of the Canadian Mental Health Association, a registered charity. It offers training for managers as well as free online resources.

National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

The Mental Health Commission of Canada and its partners released a [National standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace](#) (the Standard) in January 2013. It is a voluntary standard intended to provide systematic guidelines for Canadian employers that will enable them to develop and continuously improve psychologically safe and healthy work environments for their employees. Implementing a Psychological Health and Safety Management System (PHSMS) can assist workplaces with adhering to the standard. A Psychological Health and Safety Management System is similar to other management systems and can be integrated with existing policies and processes. For more information visit [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#).

[Guarding Minds @ Work](#) is an excellent resource for employers actively seeking to promote good mental health in the workplace and work towards the National Standard. It gives employers access to a free comprehensive set of resources to “assess and address the 13 psychosocial risk (PSR) factors known to have a powerful impact on organizational health, the health of individual employees, and the financial bottom line.”

Other Resources

[Mental Health First Aid](#) is run by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The program helps people who are “developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.” You may want to consider this training for your Occupational Health and Safety managers and supervisors.

[Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#), an initiative of the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, provides public resources including strategies and tools for Canadian employers who wish to address mental health issues in the workplace.

[Living Life to the Full](#) is the Canadian Mental Health Association’s mental well-being course (12 hours over 8 weeks) that has been successfully run on-site in workplaces. The course is a fun and friendly evidence-based program to help participants build concrete skills to boost low mood, solve problems, manage stress, be more confident, practice healthy thinking, deal with anger, reduce unhelpful behaviours and increase helpful ones.

[Safe and Sound: Building and Sustaining a Psychologically Safe and Healthy Workplace](#). This workshop provides insight into Bill 14’s revisions to the Workers Compensation Act relating to compensation for mental health disorders and the recent WorkSafeBC occupational health and safety policies to support that act. It also deals with addressing bullying and harassment, and how to support a psychologically safe and healthy workplace. This workshop is aimed at managers, supervisors, HR professionals and union representatives.

[Conference Board of Canada, “Building Mentally Healthy Workplaces: Perspectives of Canadian Workers and Front-Line Managers” \(June 2011\)](#). This report was based on a national survey of 1,010 employees (part-time and full-time), including 479 front-line managers. Its findings will give managers and executives the information they need to improve their management of employee mental health and wellness.

[Canadian Mental Health Association \(BC Division\), Bottom Line Conference resources](#). The resources include personal anecdotes as well as practical guidelines for employers.

[Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers](#). A tool from the Mental Health Commission of Canada that provides steps and actions which are accessible to all Canadian employers to protect the mental health of employees.

Sources:

[Canadian Mental Health Association](#)

[Conference Board of Canada, “Building Mentally Healthy Workplaces: Perspectives of Canadian Workers and Front-Line Managers”](#)

[Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#)

