Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life



Facilitator guide

Putting organizational culture on the agenda: **creating awareness**



Why are the resources created by Workplace Strategies for Mental Health free?

Since 2003, Canada Life has supported research and projects related to positive mental health in the workplace – including Workplace Strategies for Mental Health (Workplace Strategies).

Workplace Strategies develops free resources to foster positive mental health and protect psychological safety in the workplace. Through collaboration with experts from diverse places and professions, Workplace Strategies provides tools that are both evidence-based and user-friendly.

Extensive expert collaboration for this series came from Workplace Safety and Prevention Services. Many thanks to Andrew Harkness, Alexandra Petrisano, Janet Carr, and Krista Schmid. We're also grateful for the thoughtful feedback from David MacDonald and Phil Perczak.

Over the years, Workplace Strategies has developed high-quality resources including **Guarding Minds at Work**, **Working through it**, **Supporting employee success**, **Psychologically safe leaders**, **Psychologically safe interactions**, **Plan for resilience** and many more.

All are available to anyone free of charge, at clwsmh.com, compliments of Canada Life.

Canada Life has long recognized that psychological health and safety impacts overall employee well-being and performance.

Canada Life supports many initiatives aligning with their core values to benefit all Canadians, not just clients, from coast to coast. These include initiatives focused on education, health and wellness, community development and social services.

What other workshop topics are available?

We've drawn on what we've learned to offer this workshop series so you can facilitate in organizations of all sizes on a wide variety of topics such as:

- Implicit bias
- Resolving conflict
- Building resilience
- Team building activities
- Supporting task improvement
- Putting psychological health and safety on the agenda series

For a complete list of workshop resources go to clwsmh.com/materials.

Table of contents

Introduction to the On the agenda workshop series 1

Facilitating this topic 2

How to use this guide 5

Workshop

Slide 1 Putting organizational culture on the agenda 6

Slide 2 Process 8

Slide 3 Psychologically safe discussions 10

Slide 4 Defining organizational culture 12

Slide 5 People in my organization are held accountable for their actions 14

Slide 6 Employees and management trust one another 16

Slide 7 Organizational values are demonstrated at all levels 18

Slide 8 What words embody positive organizational culture? 20

Slide 9 Actions that improve our organizational culture 22

Slide 10 Criteria for effective action 24

Slide 11 Vote 28

Slide 12 Addressing challenges 30

Slide 13 More resources 32

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health resources 34



Introduction to the

On the agenda workshop series

The **National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace** drew on the psychosocial factors identified in Guarding Minds at Work. These factors range from organizational culture to psychological protection. They help employers identify what might impact employee psychological safety. The Standard recommends engaging all employees in developing strategies to improve psychological health and safety. This workshop series and the free downloadable materials described below provide a discussion framework to improve each psychosocial factor.

Creating awareness facilitator guide

The **Creating awareness** facilitator guide provides suggested wording you can modify to meet the needs of your audience and your personal and organizational style.

Creating awareness is the first workshop provided for each psychosocial factor and must be done before the Creating change workshop. In some cases, creating awareness may be all you need for your team to begin improvements in this area.

The **Creating awareness** workshop can be completed in as little as one hour. Spending more time discussing the topic can be valuable in supporting awareness and changes in attitude and behaviours.

Creating change facilitator guide

Creating change is a deeper dive into each psychosocial factor as described in Guarding Minds at Work.

Whether or not you've completed the Guarding Minds employee survey, this workshop will help your group focus on evidence-based approaches known to have a positive impact.

Creating change is optional but is dependent on completing the **Creating awareness** session first.

The **Creating change** workshop is meant to be at least a 2-hour session. If you have more time, you may discuss in more detail how you will take action in your workplace.

Facilitating team discussions

Facilitation tips for leaders is a guide that can help you increase your comfort level and effectiveness in managing participant responses and attitudes.

Slide presentations

The Creating awareness and Creating change slide presentations are available from clwsmh.com/materials. You can also add slides related to your own organizational resources, policies, procedures or strategies.

Participant handouts

The **Creating awareness** and **Creating change** participant handouts are available to print at clwsmh.com/materials or can be used digitally.

Facilitating this topic

Preparation

Before you begin:

If you've done the Guarding Minds at Work survey, review the results of the organizational culture factor to understand how the employees responded.

- If you haven't completed the Guarding Minds at Work survey, seek understanding of the existing organizational culture. Organizational culture is the shared assumptions that were invented, discovered or developed by the group. These assumptions are used as behavioural and problem-solving cues. These could include:
  - **Values** – usually developed by leadership and adopted by others. They could include profits, ethics, morals or guiding vision. What are your current shared values?
  - **Beliefs** – often related to work ethic and trust in management and other employees. What are your current shared beliefs?
  - **Meanings** – a shared meaning is often grounded in the words, phrases and metaphors unique to an organization or group. It's also related to how we understand the values, beliefs and emotions associated with each of these. For example, in some organizations the word "leader" refers only to the person in the highest position. For other organizations, a leader is anyone who steps up to take charge of a project or event. When we've shared meaning, we have fewer opportunities for misunderstanding. What are your current shared meanings?
  - **Expectations** – shared expectations form an agreement of how we work together, resolve differences, align and hold each other accountable. Clarity, trust and fairness all contribute to shared expectations. What are your current shared expectations?
- If your organization has a vision, mission or values statement, you may want to add a slide at the beginning of the presentation to share this information.
- Review any existing policies and statements on values, vision, mission, ethics and respect in the workplace. Also review any existing communications to employees to pull out the type of messaging that's included. For example, do the messages convey values, beliefs, meanings or expectations?
- Be prepared to identify when participant suggestions might violate existing policy. You can still consider these suggestions. Explain that you need to take them to senior leadership first.
- If you'd like some tips for dealing with difficult conversations during your workshop, see Facilitation tips for leaders.
- If you're in a unionized environment, be sure to include relevant union representatives who are familiar with the collective agreement in this discussion. This is to ensure any suggestions developed don't violate the collective agreement and are acceptable to all parties.
- Talk to senior leaders about employee time and organizational budget limitations to increase improve organizational culture.

Suggested materials for an in-person workshop

- **Projector or monitor** – for the slide presentation from a laptop or USB
- **Cables and adapters** – if necessary for projection
- **Remote** – to control slides
- **Whiteboard or flipchart** – to record participant responses
- **Dry erase markers**
- **Sticky notes in medium and large sizes** – if available it can be easier to write responses on sticky notes at the tables and attach to a flipchart, whiteboard or the wall. Some sticky notes will have one sentence on them, but others will have more detail. You may use paper and pen or a flipchart if sticky notes aren't available.
- **Participant handout for each participant** – either digital or printed
- **Pens for participants**
- **Small stickers** – for voting at the end. You can also use pens to create checkmarks.

Check out **virtual team discussions** in Facilitation tips for leaders for help facilitating this workshop online



Your audience

This session is suited for all workplace stakeholders. It engages participants in creating awareness about how to improve organizational culture.

You may also want to facilitate this session with just leaders. Participating in the entire workshop can help leaders improve their understanding of what impacts organizational culture. It will also help prepare them to deliver the same workshop to their own teams.

There's no limit on the number of participants. We suggest groups of 3 to 4 to allow small group discussion either at a table or in an online breakout room.

You can provide the participant handouts digitally or have them printed.

Learn more about how to deal with difficult reactions from your audience in Facilitation tips for leaders.

Promoting this workshop

To help you promote the workshop to potential participants you can use the following description or modify as needed:

Mail

Reply all | Delete | Junk | Block | ···

Putting organizational culture on the agenda workshop: creating awareness



Improving psychological health and safety is a process of continual improvement. Everyone needs to be involved. This session is focused on discussing what organizational culture means for our team in a practical way.

It's looking forward to constructive actions that will help create the type of organization we want to have. We all deserve a healthy work environment. Please come prepared to make a positive contribution by thinking about what would help improve our organizational culture.

Location:

Date:

Start time:

End time:

To register:

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

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How to use this guide

Throughout this facilitator guide, you'll see some or all of the following with the corresponding slide:

X minutes: This is the estimated amount of time to spend on this slide if you want to keep within a one-hour timeframe. Some slides involve just a statement or two from you. Others engage the participants in discussion. Of course, if you have more time you can ignore these guidelines.

Facilitator notes

This is a note to you, the facilitator, where we offer options or make suggestions. For example, discussing events like downsizing, collective bargaining, injuries or terminations may warrant more sensitivity. We may suggest alternative wording to help you stay focused on solutions. This also helps you avoid getting pulled into past challenges.

Suggested wording

You can read this out loud as provided or personalize it for your style and audience.

Where you see text in [**square brackets**] it's a quick note to you about process. Don't read it aloud.

Transition

Each slide ends with a sentence or 2 that helps you transition to the next slide.

Slide 1 5 minutes



Putting organizational culture on the agenda

Facilitator notes

There isn't much time for introductions in a one-hour session. To begin, ensure that you've already introduced:

- Yourself, if there's anyone who may not know you
- Your role within the organization, if unknown to the group
- Why you're engaging the group in this discussion
- The importance of addressing psychological health and safety in your organization

Suggested wording

[If this is the group's first On the agenda workshop]

Our organization's committed to continual improvement for a psychologically safe workplace. This means you're supported to do a good job in a healthy work environment. It also means you can leave at the end of your day with your mental and physical well-being intact.

We need your help deciding how we best accomplish this goal. How we interact with each other is as important to our work experience as the policies and programs we offer.

[If you've previously facilitated On the agenda workshops with your team]

Thank you for coming together once again to help us improve psychological safety for our team.

Transition

The focus of this session is organizational culture in the workplace, which comes down to our shared values, beliefs, meanings and expectations.

Notes

Slide 2 2 minutes



Process

Facilitator notes

If you've done an On the agenda workshop before, you can quickly show this slide and say your process will be like the last Creating awareness workshop.

Suggested wording

Today's goal is to reach a better understanding of what organizational culture means to us. Specifically, we'll explore what we want it to look and sound like in our workplace.

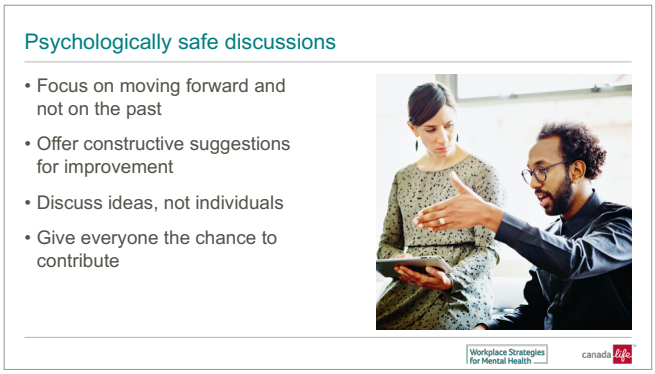
We'll start by agreeing to the principles of psychologically safe discussions. Then we'll review the definition of organizational culture. This includes statements that expand on what it would look like in the workplace. We'll list words that represent positive organizational culture to us. Next, we'll brainstorm specific workplace behaviours that show these words in action. We'll then choose one approach we wish to adopt and consider criteria to make sure it's successful. Our final task will be to commit to improving organizational culture in our workplace.

Transition

Before we begin, let's agree on how we will discuss our ideas in a psychologically safe way.

Notes

Slide 3 2 minutes



Psychologically safe discussions

Facilitator notes

It's important that all participants agree to follow these guidelines for psychologically safe discussions. If this may be difficult because of existing tension or past problems, consider a seating plan to avoid cliques or confrontations. You may want to explain that everyone at work doesn't need to be your good friend, but everyone's expected to work together professionally. One way to get consensus is to ask if anyone is unwilling to honour these guidelines. No hands raised indicates implicit agreement. If you're concerned about handling a difficult situation, please see Facilitation tips for leaders.

In the suggested wording, you'll offer to speak privately with anyone who has a more serious issue. If you're not the person who can help, be clear that you'll pass this on to someone who can.

Suggested wording

We want this discussion to be psychologically safe for everyone. Our current organizational culture may not be ideal and we'll always have room for improvement.

Today we want to focus on what we can do to create the organizational culture we want. There may be unresolved issues right now. Anyone who's dealing with those should speak to me privately so we can take steps to help you with that.

Let's be both practical and creative and come up with suggestions to improve organizational culture for our whole team. Please don't single out any one person or group. Make sure everyone in your group has a chance to contribute to the discussion.

Transition

Let’s now discuss what organizational culture means.

Notes

Slide 4 2 minutes



Defining organizational culture

Suggested wording

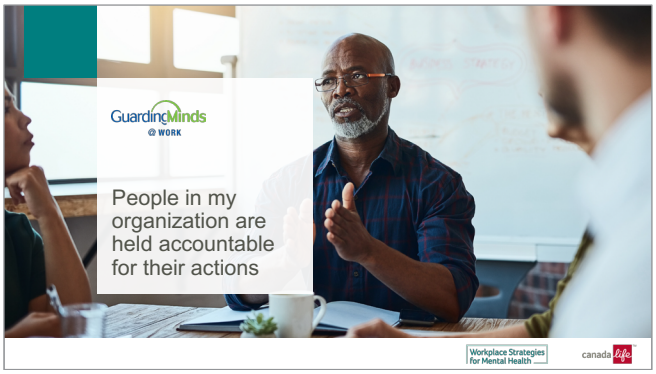
Guarding Minds at Work defines “In a work environment with positive organizational culture, there are shared values of trust, honesty, fairness and accountability.”

Transition

According to the research from Guarding Minds at Work, a workplace with positive organizational culture would be able to state that:

Notes

Slide 5 15 seconds



People in my organization are held accountable for their actions.

Suggested wording

People in my organization are held accountable for their actions.

Notes

Slide 6 15 seconds



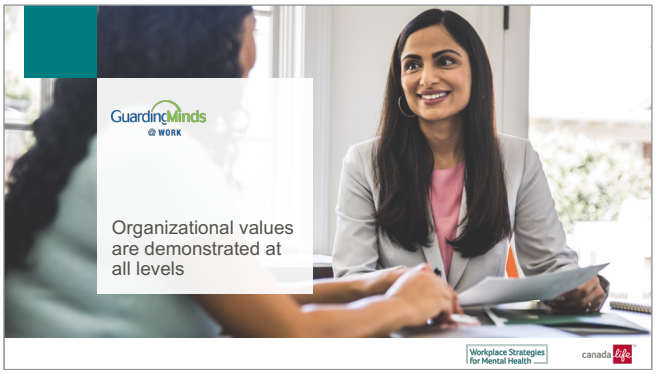
Employees and management trust one another

Suggested wording

Employees and management trust one another.

Notes

Slide 7 15 seconds



Organizational values are demonstrated at all levels

Suggested wording

Organizational values are demonstrated at all levels.

Transition

Now let’s consider what organizational culture looks and sounds like in the ideal workplace.

Notes

Slide 8 7 minutes



What words embody positive organizational culture?

Facilitator notes

In this exercise allow the group to come up with any words they want. This is to get them thinking about what this concept means to them.

Suggested wording

In your group, brainstorm words that represent organizational culture. You have 2 minutes to write down as many as you can. You can get ideas by referring to these examples on the slide and the definition and statements in your handout.

Write one word per sticky note.

I'll let you know when time's up. Then, I'll ask each group to share their responses and place their sticky notes on the wall. Please start now.

[When the time's up, allow a representative from each group to share their ideas as they place them on the wall.]

Transition

Thank you for these ideas. We'll build on them in the next activity.

Notes

Slide 9 13 minutes



Actions that improve our organizational culture

Facilitator notes

If some groups are struggling to come up with ideas, provide them with one or 2 from this list to get them started.

Diversity – We encourage diverse points of view that contribute to considering all issues from a variety of perspectives

Community – We host activities and events that help develop community at work

Trust – Leaders build trust with employees through transparency

Inclusivity – People from all backgrounds are encouraged to participate equally

Values – All employees and leaders strive to demonstrate our organizational values

Accountability – We have an approach to respectfully hold each other accountable to live our values

Suggested wording

Now, let's come up with specific behaviours or actions that would positively demonstrate each word you came up with in the last activity. Be creative.
For example, you can have a positive impact on diversity by ensuring each person is encouraged to give their perspective and taught how to do so in a respectful manner. Please write as many examples as possible with at least one behaviour for each word. Each behaviour or action should be on a separate sticky note.

You have 5 minutes. I'll let you know when the time's up. Then, I'll ask each group to share their answers with the larger group.

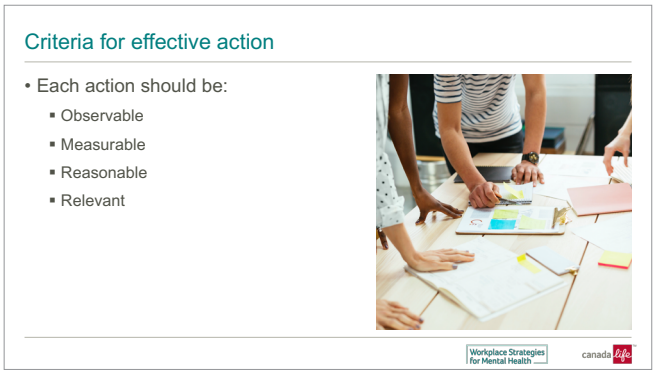
[**When the time's up, allow a representative from each group to discuss their ideas as they place them on the wall.**]

Transition

Thank you for all these ideas. Next, let's consider what action is most likely to have a positive impact on organizational culture.

Notes

Slide 10 15 minutes



Criteria for effective action

Facilitator notes

During this exercise, you're helping the participants think more critically and practically about their ideas. When they present their ideas at the end, be sure to identify when an idea may:

- Need approval from senior leaders
- Need funding you don't currently have
- Contravene a collective agreement, policy or contract

These should be placed in a separate section as future considerations. Don't discourage those who propose these ideas. Acknowledge that they require more consideration than today's workshop allows. Suggest these ideas can be shared with senior leadership afterwards. Focus instead on the ideas that are within budget and easy to do right now.

Suggested wording

The plan for today is to think critically about these actions and choose one we agree to recommend. We'll use the example of making sure it's safe to speak up and share ideas. Saying we encourage people to speak up but not making it safe to do so may not result in positive change. In organizations where there's fear of repercussion, it may appear that everyone's always in agreement. What may be happening instead is that people don't feel comfortable voicing their opinion. While we need to learn to offer our opinions and perspective in a respectful and thoughtful way, we also need to make it safe to do so.

First, we must consider the extent to which the action is observable, which means we must be able to see or hear it. In our example, to be observable means we can witness the contributions and participation of every team member.

If the action's measurable, we can establish that it will make a positive difference on organizational culture. In this example, we could measure each time a team member provides their perspective, concept or idea.

The action also needs to be reasonable. This means we have the time and resources to do it. Let's look at the example we're using. For some people, it could be stressful to be put on the spot to respond to an idea or concept they haven't previously thought about. Maybe it's because of their personality. The discussion may not be in their native tongue. Or, perhaps the subject matter isn't familiar to them. We can make this action more reasonable by providing the questions a day or more in advance of the meeting.

Finally, the action needs to be relevant to our work environment. This means it makes sense to us and everyone can adopt it. In our example, it may be there's not enough time at team meetings for everyone to be heard. If so, there needs to be a different approach to sharing opinions and perspectives.

Let's stay with our example and incorporate our criteria. Our recommended action would be to incorporate a process that allows employees to provide input for planned organization-wide changes. Each employee would be asked to contribute a list of pros and cons related to the proposed change. The questions must be provided at least 24 hours in advance and every employee would be required to provide their response in writing or in person. All contributions would be recorded without criticism and used to inform and guide decision makers. There could also be confidential follow-up with individual contributors. Decision makers would be responsible to share how employee contributions helped guide their decision. This would be a complete single action using the criteria on
the slide. Of course, it's only our recommendation and it would have to align with organizational policy and/or get approval from senior leadership.

In your groups, compare the actions you came up with against these 4 points. Use the worksheet in your handout to refine your actions. Make sure they include each of the criteria.

Choose your top one to 3 actions to present to the larger group. You have 5 minutes starting now.

[**After 5 minutes**]

Each group can now present their chosen actions. If another group chose a similar idea, you can share that you agree and only describe any differences.

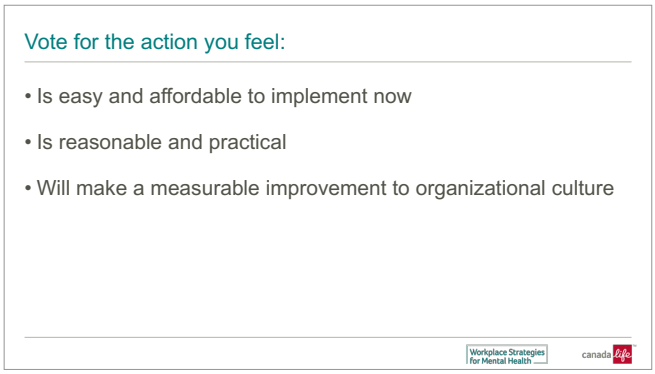
[You'll want someone to record these on a flip chart because the group will be voting on the action to take first. As you go through the ideas, point out which ones would need approval or funding or may go against policies or contracts. Place these ideas in a separate section for future consideration. Be sure to collect the ideas or take a picture of them so that you can record and share these with leadership or review them later on to explore what's possible.]

Transition

Those are some great ideas. Next, we're going to vote on which action we'd like to recommend for our workplace.

Notes

Slide 11 7 minutes



Vote

Facilitator notes

You may choose from among these ways to vote on the first action to recommend:

1. Provide one to 3 small stickers to each person. Explain they can place one, 2 or 3 of the stickers on the actions they most want to see recommended.
2. Ask them to put a check mark or sticky note on the action.
3. Number the displayed actions, grouping similar ones together. Ask them to write their vote on paper and place it in a container.
4. Use online polling technology if you're delivering this remotely.

In all cases, the action with the most votes wins. We don't recommend a show of hands because the peer pressure may be too great.

Suggested wording

Today, we're looking for a quick win. You'll now vote to recommend one action you believe will best improve organizational culture in our workplace now. The action must meet these criteria:

- Be low cost or no cost
- Be easy for everyone to adopt
- Not violate any organizational policies or contracts
- And, have the impact we want it to have on organizational culture

Other actions you've come up with could form part of our continual improvement approach. We can seek funding and approval as necessary for those actions.

Each proposed action will be displayed for you to review over the next 2 minutes so you'll be ready to vote. Please remember you're choosing based on what you feel:

- Would make a difference
- Is low cost or no cost
- Doesn't need approval
- And is relatively easy for everyone to adopt

Does anyone have any questions?

[**Field any questions and then explain the voting method you'll use and facilitate the vote. There are options described in the Facilitator notes above.**]

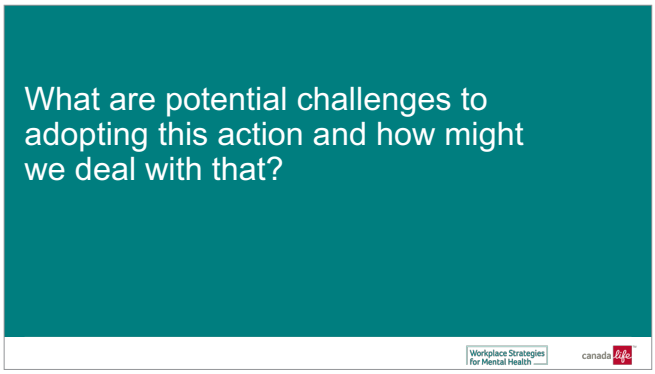
We now have a winner and it is [**read it aloud**]. Remember that the other actions can also be considered at a later date.

Transition

Now that we have our action, let's explore any potential challenges.

Notes

Slide 12 5 minutes



Addressing challenges

Facilitator notes

It's nice if everyone can share, but time may not allow it. Ask for volunteers to share. This provides an opportunity to voice any concerns before recommending the action. If no challenges are shared, you can just move on.

Suggested wording

Take a moment to answer this question individually in your handout on page 6. We'll go around the room and consider any potential challenges before they arise. If you're not sure how to deal with the challenge you identify, the group may be able to offer helpful ideas.

[Provide time to complete their responses and then address any challenges one at a time. When the challenges are adequately addressed move on.]

With the challenges addressed, we're now ready recommend our action. Does anyone need anything further before recommending this action?

[Address any needs and if there are no needs expressed, continue.]

Great. Thank you for that. In the coming months, we'll monitor how this action we've recommended impacts our team. Then, we'll regroup to review the results and consider next steps. We'll save all your ideas for future planning.

Transition

For those who want to learn more about psychological health and safety at work, there's a list of relevant resources at the back of your handout.

Notes

Slide 13 15 seconds



More resources

Facilitator notes

Once you've thanked the participants you can leave this slide up for those who want the website address for more free resources.

Suggested wording

I'll leave this slide up for anyone who wants to find more information on today's topic.

Notes

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health



Workplace Strategies for Mental Health resources are:

- For all employers, people leaders, employees and facilitators of workplace psychological health and safety
- Available in English and French
- Evidence- or practice-based
- Available to anyone at no cost

Examples of the resources available at clwsmh.com include:

Managing co-worker reactions to accommodation
Strategies to deal with employee fears, concerns or resentments about their co-worker's accommodation. Unresolved issues can impact the success of disability accommodation.

Before you say no for leaders
Learn how all employee requests or behaviours are attempts at meeting a need. Learn how to ask "why" before you say "no" and get to the root of the issue.

Employees' role in psychological health and safety
Free online learning modules for employees to learn how to contribute to a mentally healthy workplace. This orientation to psychological health and safety in the workplace is for individuals.

Resources for employees
Resources to support well-being for employees and their families.

Discrimination prevention and inclusivity
Address discrimination and promote inclusivity through your policies and processes. This creates a positive environment and supports all employees to thrive and succeed.

Indigenous teachings for leaders
Indigenous elders and professionals helped to adapt the Seven Sacred Teachings and the Medicine Wheel to benefit your workplace culture and all employees.

Listening to understand for leaders
This approach can help you understand the perspective of someone who is upset.

Leader support for newcomers
Strategies to protect psychological safety for employees who are new to the country. Learn about the value immigrants can bring to your workplace and how to support their needs.

We’d love to hear how you used this free resource!

Contact us through social media or at clwsmh.com

All Workplace Strategies resources are available to anyone at no cost, compliments of Canada Life.

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