Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life

Workshop series



Participant handout

Putting balance on the agenda: **creating change**



The results from employee input during the Creating awareness workshop on this topic should accompany this handout. If this piece is missing, please notify the workshop facilitator.

If you haven't already done so, please read through this handout before starting the workshop.

This session aligns with the recommendations of the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (Canadian Standards Association CSA z1003).



Process

- **Review** psychologically safe discussions
- **Recap** definition and statements
- **Align** employee input with evidence-based actions
- **Define** criteria for choosing actions
- **Complete** Creating change worksheets
- **Share** ideas
- **Vote | Refine | Commit**



Psychologically safe discussions

- **Focus** on moving forward and not on the past
- **Offer** constructive suggestions for improvement
- **Discuss** ideas, not individuals
- **Allow** everyone the chance to contribute

Guarding Minds at Work description of positive balance:

"In a work environment with positive balance, employees are supported to manage the demands of work, family and personal life."

People in this type of work environment would be able to say:

- My employer encourages me to take my entitled breaks.
- I am able to reasonably balance the demands of work and personal life.
- My employer promotes work-life balance.
- I can talk to my supervisor when I am having trouble maintaining work-life balance.
- I feel supported at work when I am dealing with personal issues.

In an organization with positive balance, employees might NOT say:

- I feel burned out in my job.
- My home life suffers because of my work.

Appendix

Evidence-based actions for creating change in balance
Adapted from Guarding Minds at Work

For an up-to-date list of actions, visit Evidence-based actions for balance.

Ensure leaders model positive work and life balance behaviour.

- Ensure messaging from leaders and management is consistent with their demonstrated behaviour or expectations.
- Provide training for managers and supervisors so they can support both themselves and their employees to manage work and life demands.

Consider organizational amenities and events that support balance.

- Provide healthy opportunities, such as on-site fitness space.
- Encourage the use of allocated time off and breaks by sharing Healthy break activities.
- Support employees who wish to share non-work-related accomplishments, such as:
  - The birth of children
  - Major anniversaries
  - Accomplishment of lifelong goals

Review policies that impact balance.

- Allow "personal time" off, like options for unpaid leaves.
- Offer opportunities to earn time off during peak work periods to use during periods with a lower workload demand.
- Offer personal and family supports for both child and elder care, like:
  - Comprehensive benefits
  - Daycare
  - Fitness facility access
  - Health education
  - Family responsibility leaves
- See Work-life balance, from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, for initiative ideas to boost work-life balance and guides on how to implement these changes.
- Remind and demonstrate to your team regularly that your organization's committed to balance as an important part of being healthy and productive.

Provide flexible work arrangements when possible.

- Consider:
  - Compressed work schedules
  - Working from home
  - Virtual conferencing
  - Part-time work
  - Contract opportunities
  - Job sharing
  - Longer days with more days off for those who find more balance with this schedule instead of the traditional 5-day workweek

- Provide appropriate support for shift-based employees. For example:
  - Limit split and rotating shifts
  - Provide advance notice of shift change
  - Permit shift trading
- Offer supports for employees who work from home or off-site, such as appropriate technology and resources.
- Ask employees what solutions will work best for them. Refer to Accommodation strategies to help employees who have disabilities to remain productive.

Provide educational opportunities to support work and life balance.

- Make available information on creating and sustaining balanced work-life demands. These may include enhanced resiliency, coping and problem-solving skills.
- Offer a range of educational internal and external opportunities on non-job-related topics. Consider ideas like "lunch-and-learn" sessions on childcare or eldercare issues.
- Ensure your team's aware of existing company and community resources or programs that support work-life balance.

Support employees who are struggling with their mental health.

- There are many tools and resources available to help:
  - Referring employees to resources includes tactful wording you can modify to refer employees to resources like EAP, support groups or online resources.
  - A tool to support employee success is a free tool to support employers in helping an employee create and follow a workplace plan that addresses performance and workplace stressors.

Support employees who are caregivers.

- Offer Caregiver resources to employees struggling with balancing caregiving with work. Caring for a family member, partner or friend can be distressing. You may feel stressed when you can't personally provide all they need to be comfortable and when you aren't sure where to turn to for help.
- Use Leader support for employees who are caregivers for strategies to support employees who are caregivers for family members or loved ones with mental health or other health issues.

Take steps to prevent burnout.

- Review Burnout response for leaders to:
  - Help understand the issue
  - Recognize workplace factors
  - Be aware of signs and symptoms
  - Take pro-active steps to help reduce the impact of burnout on employees and workplaces
  - Consider facilitating an organization-wide workshop where each employee completes the Resilience. This self-reflection resource can help them identify effective strategies and resources to build resilience.
  - Consider sharing Burnout in the workplace: a focus on prevention. This free webinar explores workplace factors that cause the mental harm leading to burnout. It also discusses how to eliminate or control hazards that may lead to burnout.

Additional actions and resources

- Ask for employee input when making decisions about benefit programs. For example, provide flexible or “opt-out” options.
- Develop clear expectations around employee availability, communication and technology use during off-work periods.
- Review Psychological health and safety policy recommendations to see where you can improve psychological health and safety.

Adapted from Guarding Minds at Work



Creating change criteria:

- Honours the input of our employees
- Improves balance
- Is within our budget
- Is easy to implement now
- Minimizes risk to psychological safety

Up to 3 evidence-based actions chosen by our group

Why we feel this will create the change we want:

1

2

3



Creating change process

It can seem daunting to prioritize and choose those evidence-based actions most likely to improve psychological health and safety in the workplace. Use this Creating change process to help you think through the options and guide your decision making.

Psychological health and safety is a process of continual improvement. Trying to do too much all at once can create stress and put pressure on employees. Instead, consider implementing smaller changes over time. Focusing on one initiative at a time may be ideal. After you incorporate these initiatives, or when they're no longer necessary, you can add more.

Choose your evidence-based action. Then, use the Creating change worksheet to refine your plan.

Step 1: Assess potential actions

Weigh risks and benefits to help identify potential challenges and opportunities before you commit. Review each of the following points against your proposed action. Then write your response on the Creating change worksheet you've already started:

1. **Appropriateness** is the degree to which the action's relevant to our work situation and good for our organization.

   This would be an action compatible with our work demands and setting. Record on the Creating change worksheet why you feel the action's appropriate.

2. **Acceptability** is the degree to which the employer, union if applicable, and employees would agree to implement the action. Actions should be:

   - → Beneficial for all
   - → Easy to explain to decision makers
   - → Easy to communicate to employees
   - → Straightforward to implement

   Decision makers and employees may reject actions that are overly complicated or interfere with the ability to meet objectives. In unionized environments, the action should align with the collective agreement. Record on the Creating change worksheet why this action will be acceptable to all workplace stakeholders.

3. **Accessibility** is the degree to which everyone can participate regardless of ability or location.

   There are many considerations in terms of who can access the action. They include location, method of delivery and timing. Language, literacy level and format also can slow or hinder access.

   It's important to include and support employees with differing abilities. Record on the Creating change worksheet how this action will be accessible to everyone.

4. **Efficiency** is the degree to which we have the resources to implement and sustain the action.

   Do a cost-benefit analysis on the action. Estimate these costs:

   - → Material
   - → Delivery expenses such as transportation, venue or refreshments
   - → Time and expenses for developers, facilitators, participants and evaluators to participate

   Weigh the expenses against the value this action may achieve for each participant. Here's an example:

   - → The total cost is $5,000.
   - → 50 or more employees will become more aware of protecting their own mental health.
   - → The potential cost-benefit is decreased absenteeism and improved productivity for $100 per employee.

   Record on the Creating change worksheet why this is an efficient action.

5. **Effectiveness** is the degree to which the action will have a positive measurable impact and lead to the intended outcomes.

   Ensure anyone can see a link between the selected action and the intended outcomes. This is critical. This evidence can come from established workplace practices, evidence-based resources or academic literature. Record on the Creating change worksheet the evidence for why the action will be effective as well as how you'll measure success.

   Measurements of success could include the following approaches and metrics:

   - **Participation** – measure how many people take part in your action.
   - **Behaviour changes** – track the number of times participants do things differently. Give specific direction in advance. What behaviour change are you looking for? How do participants or their leaders report this action?
   - **Absenteeism** – track the number of days off in the months before and after implementing the action. Look for changes in trends. Look for ways to maintain confidentiality while tracking absence.
   - **Complaints, conflicts or grievances** – track the number reported in the months before and after the action.
   - **Awareness** – survey employees to determine the level of awareness about your action or the intended outcomes.
   - **Participant perception** – ask specific questions about the experience with the action.
   - **Supervisor perception** – survey supervisors about changes resulting from this action.
   - **Focus groups** – bring together participants to discuss how the action impacted them and suggestions for improvement.
   - **Stress satisfaction scan** – administer this 6-question survey before and after the action to measure changes in how employees feel about work.

6. **Safety** is the degree to which all potential risks to both physical and psychological safety are eliminated or managed.

   Unintended consequences can happen at an individual or organizational level. For example, we may trigger or stigmatize employees when we discuss mental illness. Come up with potential risks to physical and psychological safety. This will reduce the likelihood of them happening. In the Creating change worksheet, record the risks you identified and how to prevent or mitigate them.

   Once you've added your ideas to the Creating change worksheet, you may need to get approval.

Step 2: Choose actions that meet criteria

Prioritize the actions that meet your criteria, identifying what will be done first. This can include one or more actions.

Step 3: Choose the action planning team

Assign people to the various responsibilities found in the Committing to our success form.

Step 4: Implement the action(s)

Be sure to use the methods of measurement to assess the effectiveness of your action.

Step 5: Evaluate the outcomes

Analyze your measures of success to report on the extent to which the action(s) were able to reach the intended outcomes.

Step 6: Use a continual improvement approach

Your evaluation can support a process of continual improvement. Take what you learn from the action and consider how you can do it better or if the best course of action is to continue as is.



Creating change worksheet

Relevant psychosocial factor: balance

Group members: _____

Date: _____

Description of action proposed:

Appropriateness is the degree to which the action is relevant to our particular work situation and good for our organization.

Relevance to our organizational or team objectives:

Acceptability is the degree to which the employer, union if applicable, and employees would agree to implement the action.

The chosen action will be acceptable to our employees (and union if applicable) because:

The chosen action will be acceptable to our employer because:

Approval may be needed for:

Accessibility is the degree to which everyone can participate regardless of ability or location.
(Indicate how those with any of the disabilities below would be supported to participate.)

- Language
- Sight
- Mobility
- Hearing
- Mental illness

Description of method:	Location and timing of the action to allow everyone to participate:

Efficiency is the degree to which we have the resources to implement and sustain the action. Create a cost-benefit analysis – be as detailed as you can.

Estimate costs including any:

- Staff time for planning, development, delivery and participation
- Materials including copies
- Equipment or technology
- Refreshments or meals
- Venue
- Other

Describe resources available without cost, such as:

- Volunteers
- Repurposing or recycling existing materials

Describe potential benefits, such as:

- Reduced absenteeism
- Fewer grievances
- Less injury or illness
- Improved employee energy
- Improved well-being
- Increased engagement
- Boosted morale
- Increased productivity

Effectiveness is the degree to which the action will have a positive measurable impact and lead to the intended outcomes.

State your intended outcomes:	Evidence that this action will lead to each of the intended outcomes:

How we'll measure success: see the Creating change process for examples of ways to measure success. Choose one from there or describe your own.

Safety is the degree to which all potential risks to both physical and psychological safety are eliminated or managed.

Identify all potential risks and list strategies to address them:

Notes about potential actions

Use this space to record any questions or comments about the actions presented.

Refining our top action(s)

This space is for notes about potential challenges, solutions to those challenges and ways to improve the effectiveness of the actions chosen.

Committing to our success

Improving balance in our workplace – potential implementation team

Recommend names and emails, including your own, of who should be involved in:

	Name	Email
Leading the project		
Finalizing the action plan		
Developing measurement tools like surveys or interviews		
Researching, securing or creating resources to use for the action		
Communicating about and promoting the action		
Managing registration if necessary		
Facilitation of the action		
Participation in the action		
Facilitating the completion or analysis of measurement tools		
Presenting on the outcomes of the action to senior leaders		
Evaluating the outcomes against the objectives		
Authorizing continual improvement		

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:

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.

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.

Guarding Minds at Work
Provides a comprehensive set of free resources to help assess and address the psychological health and safety of workplaces. It was used as a reference for the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

Mental health policies and programs
Helps inform policies and programs related to Accommodation, return to work, EAP, stigma, suicide prevention and peer support strategies for organizations.

Psychologically Safe Leader Assessment
This free resource helps leaders become aware of the impact they can have on the psychological health and safety of employees at work. It helps leaders improve communication, social intelligence, fairness and problem-solving.

Strengthening leadership skills
This booklet of activities can help you build leadership skills, including emotional intelligence, resilience and communication strategies.

All Workplace Strategies resources are available to anyone at no cost, compliments of Canada Life. To learn more, visit clwsmh.com.

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