Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life




## Facilitator guide

# Emotional intelligence

# 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 Dr. Joti Samra R.Psych. We are grateful for the thoughtful feedback from Joanne Roadley, Christine Hildebrand, 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 workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com, compliments of Canada Life.

Canada Life has long recognized that psychological health and safety impacts overall employee well-being and performance. They support many initiatives that align with their core values and benefit all Canadians, not just clients, from coast to coast. These include 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
- Supportive performance management
- Putting psychological health and safety on the agenda series

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

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# Introduction to the Workshop series

## Each of the Workplace Strategies for Mental Health workshop topics includes at least 3 resources:

### Facilitator guide

Read through this guide and the participant handout before beginning to see where you might want to customize the workshop. The suggested wording is here to help. Modify it to meet your audience's needs and to suit your personal or organizational style.

If you have more than one hour for this workshop, you could spend more time talking about how to integrate these concepts at your workplace.

### Slide presentation

The slide presentation is available from clwsmh.com/materials. You can also add slides related to your own organizational resources, procedures or strategies.

### Participant handout

The participant handouts are available to print at clwsmh.com/materials or can be used digitally.

### Facilitating team discussions

Facilitating team discussions is a guide that can help you increase your comfort level and effectiveness in managing participant responses and attitudes.

### Facilitation options

- Project the slide presentations on a screen
- Present them through a webinar platform
- Use only the handouts

# Facilitating this topic

## Preparation

### Before you begin you may want to:

- Review the content at Building emotional intelligence before you facilitate this workshop. This will help you gain a broader understanding of the topic. You can also refer to the webpage to answer questions from your audience.
- Review tips for dealing with any challenging workshop conversations on Facilitating team discussions.

### Suggested materials

- **Projector or monitor** – for the slide presentation from a laptop or USB
- **Cables and adapters** – if necessary for projection
- **Remote** – to control slides
- Participant handout for each participant – either digital or printed
- **Pens** – for participants who haven't brought one
- Check out **virtual team discussions** in Facilitating team discussions for help facilitating this workshop online

## Your audience

**This session suits anyone who wants to improve their emotional intelligence.**

There's no limit to the total number of participants, but we suggest breaking into small groups of 3 – 4. This number allows discussion at tables if you're in person or in online breakout rooms if you're delivering the workshop by webinar.

You can provide the participant handouts digitally or have them printed. The participant handout is available at clwsmh.com/materials.

The slides for this topic are available at clwsmh.com/materials.

If you'd like to learn more about how to deal with difficult reactions from your audience, check out the helpful information in Facilitating team discussions.

# Promoting this workshop

Use the following description to promote the workshop to potential participants. You can modify it to fit your audience as needed.

### Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is our ability to identify and respond effectively to both our own and other peoples' emotions. After this workshop, you will be better able to:

- Understand your own emotional triggers
- Explore the functions of emotions
- Reflect on when behaviours are a symptom of emotions
- Respond more effectively to the emotions of others

**Location:**

**Date:**

**Start time:**

**End time:**

**To register:**

# How to use this guide

Throughout this facilitator guide, you'll see some or all 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 time frame. Some slides may 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.

If you're facilitating this workshop for the first time, we recommend you follow the 1.5-hour time frame as closely as you can. This can reduce your stress and allow you to decide how much time you need in the future.

### Facilitator notes

> This is a note to you, the facilitator, where we offer options or make suggestions. For example, discussing issues like conflicts or terminations may warrant more sensitivity. We may suggest alternative wording to help you stay focused on the topic at hand. This may also help you avoid getting pulled into challenges you can't solve in this time frame or setting.

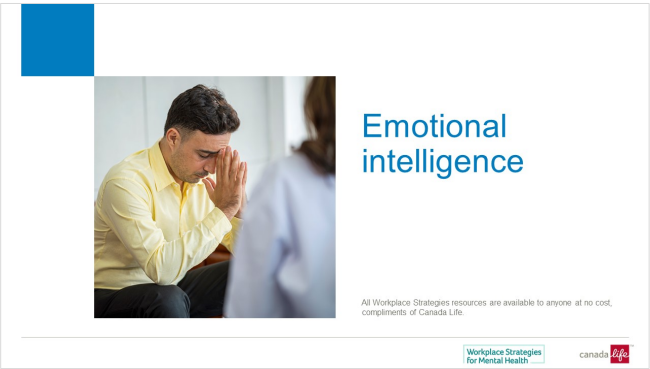
### Suggested wording

You can read this out loud as provided or personalize it for your style and audience.
Text in **[square brackets]** is a quick note to you about process. Don't read it aloud.

### Transition

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

**Slide 1 | 2 minutes**




# Emotional intelligence

## Facilitator notes

There isn't much time for introductions in a one-hour session. If you have extra time and a group of 12 or fewer, each person can introduce themselves. For larger groups, participants can introduce themselves to those at their table only.

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 this discussion matters in your organization

## Suggested wording

Welcome and thank you for taking part in this session on emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence enables us to monitor the impact of our actions, manage our own stress and respond more effectively for others.

The good news is that emotional intelligence can be learned. Higher levels of emotional intelligence can reduce our own stress and positively impact those around us. Emotional intelligence alone

however is not enough. Psychopaths can have high levels of emotional intelligence and use it to manipulate people. What we are striving for is a balance between integrity and emotional intelligence.

Today, we are going to engage in a few activities that are aimed directly at improving your emotional intelligence.

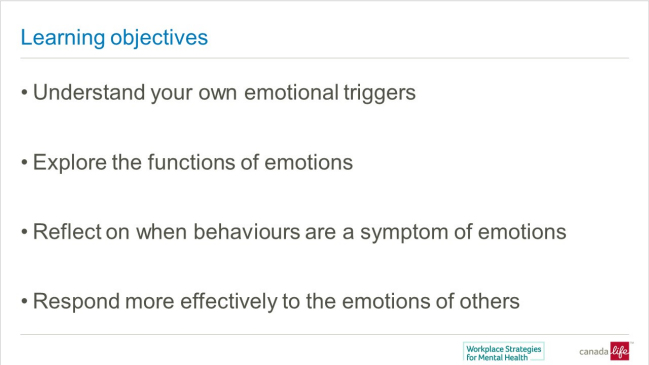
**[If you're using introductions, you can do that here.]**

### Transition

At the end of this session I'll ask you to write and share one thing you will do differently as a result of what we discuss today. Please keep this in mind as we go.

### Notes:

**Slide 2 | 2 minutes**




# Learning objectives

## Suggested wording

The objectives of this session are to:

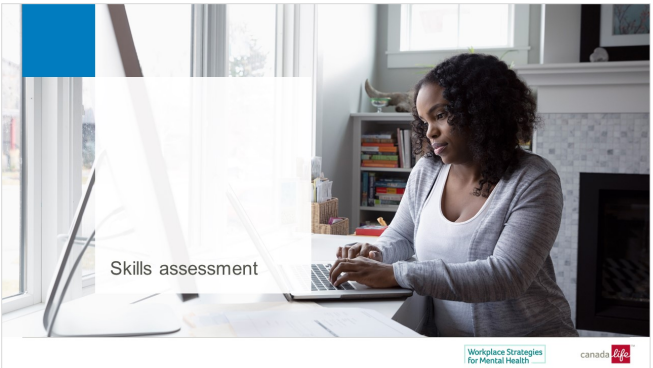
- Understand what triggers certain emotions for you. We are all different because of our genetics, history, experiences and situations. What makes me angry may make you laugh.
- Explore the functions of emotions. There's actually a lot of wisdom in the emotions we think of as negative. For example, if I'm feeling sad, there is probably something I need to let go of. If I'm feeling anxious, there is probably something I need to face or address. If I'm feeling angry, there is probably something that I feel is not fair, and I need to identify that. In each case, if I deny or shove away the emotion, I will not be able to tap into the information that the emotion provides me. It's also likely that I will have a harder time moving on.
- We will reflect on when behaviours are a symptom of emotions. The example we're going to use is looking behind the behaviours of acting out or expressing frustration to the emotion that may be fueling them.
- We will have another activity to help us to respond more effectively to the emotions of others.

Each of you has a handout with the activity instructions, but we'll review them as a group before you start.

## Transition

Let's get started.

**Slide 3 | 2 minutes**




# Skills assessment

## Suggested wording

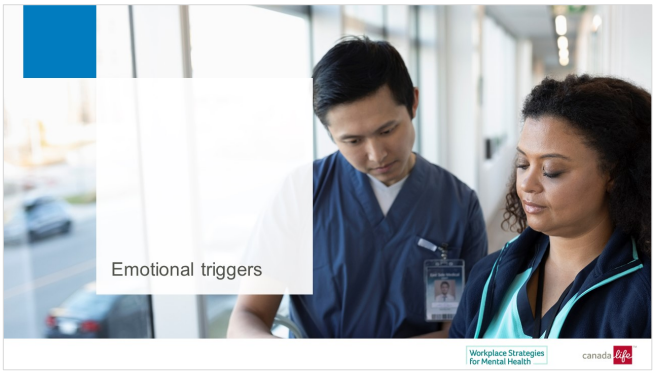
If you're interested in building your emotional intelligence or want to test your skills, there is a link to the Emotional intelligence skills assessment in your handout. This assessment takes about 15 minutes to complete. The statements cover a range of topics about reacting to and managing negative emotions. The results will highlight your strengths as well as areas where you can benefit from additional skills training.

## Transition

Now let's look at what kinds of situations trigger our emotions.

## Notes:

**Slide 4 | 12 minutes**




# Emotional triggers

## Suggested wording

We all have certain reactions that are more likely to trigger our emotions. Most of us are relatively comfortable with encountering certain types of negative emotional states or behaviours, and quite uncomfortable with others. For example, you may find it relatively easy to interact with someone who is sad and tearful, but find it nerve-wracking to deal with someone who is hostile. For others the opposite could be true.

There is a list of potential emotional triggers in your handout. Please put a check mark beside any that are likely to stir emotion for you. That emotion could be anger, frustration or disgust, but it could also be pity, sadness or anxiety. There is also space to add your own. Try to add at least two personal triggers that are not listed. You have one minute.

**[After one minute.]**

Emotional triggers happen because of our thoughts and experiences related to the person, behaviour or situation that causes them. Our reactions are actually more connected to our thoughts than to the person, behaviour or situation. For example, if you were frightened by a clown when you were younger, seeing a clown now can trigger the emotion of fear. It's less to do with the particular person in clown face than it is with your previous experience of being frightened. In this case, when you see a clown, you remember a particularly scary experience and that is what brings up your emotion.

When we are triggered, our reactions may be difficult for us and others to handle. There is a list in your handout of emotions that may be difficult for some people. Identify those in the list you find most challenging or add your own. You have 30 seconds.

**[After 30 seconds.]**

Anticipating our reactions to emotional triggers helps us plan ahead for how to address different situations. When we are unaware that a behaviour or situation is an emotional trigger, we are also unaware that it will likely cause us to react. We are more likely to blame the situation or person if we don't understand why we are reacting the way we are.

Next, on page 3 in your handout is a table with 3 columns. In the first column, identify 2 or 3 of your emotional triggers. In the next column, describe your reaction. For this exercise, you want to choose your most problematic emotional triggers. These are the ones that result in the most challenging reactions for you. You have 2 minutes.

**[After 2 minutes.]**

Think about what specifically makes the challenging emotions more difficult to deal with. Record your thoughts about that emotion. Consider previous experiences that might contribute to those thoughts.

**[After one minute.]**

In your group, I want you to ask if the emotion you find challenging is easy for anyone else, and if so, to ask them to share their thoughts about that emotion. For example, you may find sadness difficult because it triggers a feeling of helplessness based on being unable to help someone in your life who was sad. For someone else, sadness may remind them of the people they have watched go through a time of sadness and come out the other end stronger and more appreciative of life. Therefore, to them, sadness is a temporary state that can lead to personal growth. You have 5 minutes.

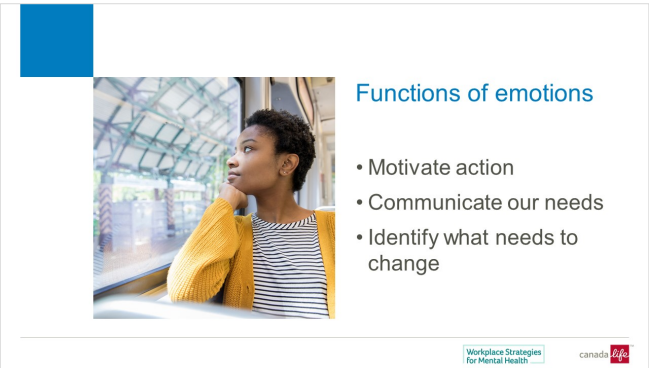
**[After 5 minutes.]**

Before our emotions arise, there is always a thought about whatever we're experiencing. Our thoughts are influenced by our memories and past experiences. When we identify the thoughts that lead to our emotional reaction, we have the opportunity to change them. When I understand that not everyone is afraid of clowns, I can step back and question my own fear. This is the intelligence part of emotional intelligence: to critically think about emotions, rather than being a victim to them.

## Transition

Emotional intelligence isn't the absence of emotion. It is the ability to tap into the wisdom that emotions contain and choose our reaction effectively.

**Slide 5 | 16 minutes**




# Functions of emotions

## Suggested wording

Emotions, even those that feel unpleasant or seem negative, can serve several important functions. Emotions can motivate us to take actions that are essential to our survival. For example, a fight, flight or freeze response. If we are faced with an injustice, our anger may motive us to fight against it. If we encounter a bear, our fear may motivate us to run. If we work with a difficult boss, our anxiety may cause us to freeze before we say or do something that could cause us to lose our job.

Emotions can communicate to ourselves and others that we may need support.

Emotions can also help us to identify when something needs to change. The change may be to our own thoughts or attitudes. The change may also be to relationships, or environment.

In all cases, our task as emotionally intelligent individuals is to look for what the emotion is telling us and choose our reactions accordingly. This will help prevent inappropriate or ineffective emotional reactions. Next, we will look at 3 emotions: anger, fear and sadness. In your handout, I want you to record a time when you felt each of these emotions and critically think about the function the emotion served at that time. It could be that the emotion motivated you to take action, helped communicate your needs or identified a change in your life. I'll give you 5 minutes. When we're done, I'll ask you to share just one example with others in your group. I'll let you know when the 5 minutes are up.

**[After 5 minutes.]**

I'd like you to start with each person in your group sharing an example of how one of these emotions was functional for them.

**[After 5 minutes.]**

Can I get someone to share how one of these emotions was functional for them?

**[Take up answers for 3 minutes and then continue.]**

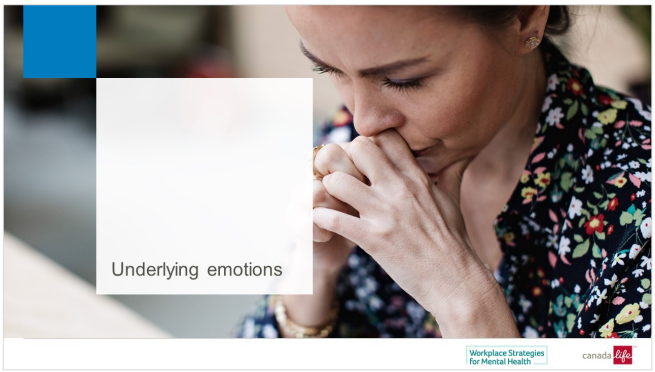
Sometimes, we find that ignoring negative emotions means that they come back again and again. When we examine the message our emotions are trying to teach us, we will be more likely to move on. For example, you may be surprised to find yourself reacting angrily when invited to a special event. You now understand that anger is the reaction to an injustice. Upon further reflection, you may realize that your anger is telling you that you feel overextended and should reconsider your work-life balance, at least temporarily. Adding just one more event may feel like an injustice, but you are able to understand that the injustice is actually the unreasonable demands you place on yourself. This will allow you to respond to the invitation much more graciously than you might have otherwise. It'll also allow you to take the wisdom of this emotion and apply it to make healthy changes to your work-life balance.

### Transition

Let's take a deeper dive into what the emotion of anger might be indicating to us.

### Notes:

**Slide 6 | 9 minutes**




# Underlying emotions

## Suggested wording

As we discovered in the previous exercise, anger can be a normal, healthy and useful emotion. Anger ranges from minor annoyance, irritation or frustration, all the way to fury or rage. Anger serves a useful function when we are being threatened, attacked or treated unfairly. But, sometimes we experience anger when we are not under any type of actual or perceived threat.

In these situations, anger may be a symptom of a less obvious underlying emotion, like resentment or fear. For example, if you tease someone about slacking off at work and they respond with unusual anger, they may feel taken advantage of at work or are fearful of losing their job. They may therefore interpret your teasing as a threat or attack even when it wasn't intended that way. For some people, it's easier to react with anger than to admit insecurity or fear.

Think about situations when you've reacted with anger. Try to recall a time when, with the benefit of hindsight, you recognized that your anger was a symptom of another emotion. If you can, try to generate one example for each of the primary emotions found in the table in your handout and reflect on reasons why anger may be a more comfortable emotion for you in certain situations. You have 4 minutes to fill out the table.

**[After 4 minutes.]**

What did you learn about yourself or your reaction to these situations from this activity?

**[Field answers and move on after 2 minutes.]**

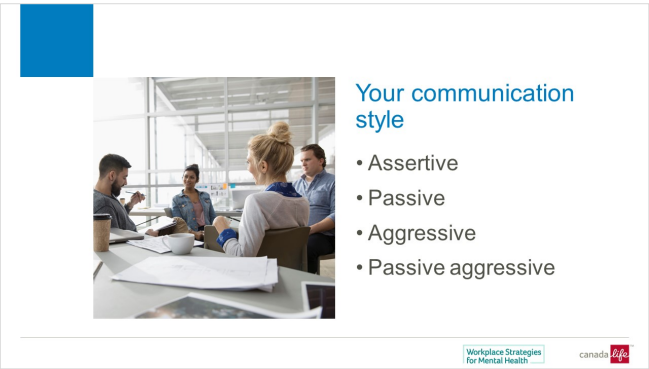
You can apply this activity whenever you feel angry. As we discussed previously, anger is a reaction to an injustice and can serve an important function when we take the time to identify what we feel isn't fair. Anger is only problematic when we allow it to dictate our behaviours rather than using the wisdom of the emotion to choose our behaviours.

### Transition

Being able to reflect on our own emotions is important for our quality of life. Being able to recognize and respond to others' emotions is important to the impact we have on them.

### Notes:

**Slide 7 | 9 minutes**




# Your communication style

## Suggested wording

Most of us have a primary communication style, one that we use most of the time. I'm going to describe 4 common communications styles, and I want you to choose the one you use most of the time.

The first one is assertive communication. This means that you say what you mean in a straightforward way.

The next communication style is passive, which means that you do not express many of your ideas and feelings to others.

The third communication style is aggressive, which means that you are sure to get your ideas and feelings across, sometimes in a passionate manner.

The fourth communication style is passive-aggressive. This style often uses sarcasm and non-verbal communication, such as eye-rolling, gesturing or ignoring others.

I will give you 30 seconds to write down the style that you use most often.

**[After 30 seconds.]**

Next, I want you to understand that we all use every one of these styles sometimes.
For example, I may be passive in my communication when I feel that whatever I have to say will be dismissed anyways. I may be passive-aggressive when I am frustrated with someone but don't feel safe

to disagree with them. I may use assertive communication when I feel confident about whatever I am talking about. I may be aggressive when I feel passionate and misunderstood.

When we know in advance why we use these other communication styles, we are also able to recognize when we have been triggered. While my passionate side was always seen by me as trying to make a point, once I understood that it could be seen by others as aggressive, I was able to step back and choose a more effective communication style to get my point across.

Record what you are probably feeling or thinking when you use each of the communication styles. When you are done, discuss this with the others in your group. You have 4 minutes. I will let you know when the time is up.

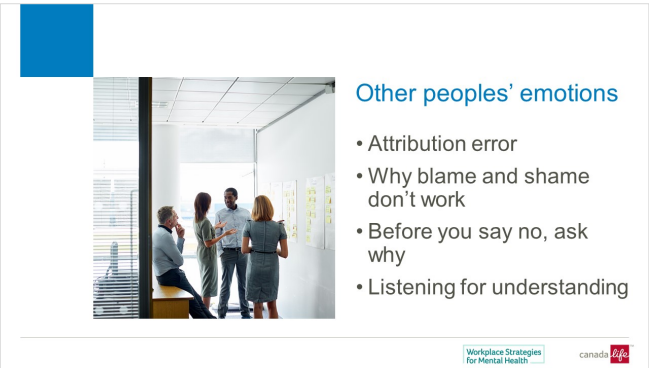
**[After 4 minutes.]**

### Transition

Being aware of your communication style at any given moment can go a long way to improving your emotional intelligence.

### Notes:

**Slide 8 | 4 minutes**




# Other peoples' emotions

## Facilitator notes

Each of these are covered in our Supportive communication workshop. If you have a half day to work with the same group, you might want to just go right into the Supportive communication workshop at this point. You will still finish with "What will you do differently" and that will apply to both workshops.

## Suggested wording

As you can likely already tell, emotional intelligence requires good communications skills. But the other side to emotional intelligence is being able to recognize and respond effectively to other peoples' emotions. The truth is, we can never fully understand someone else's emotions unless we have lived their life, thought their thoughts and experienced their experiences.

But, we can stop ourselves from jumping to conclusions and making assumptions. If we learn how to ask someone what's happening for them, we are much more likely to respond in an emotionally intelligent way.

While we are running out of time to cover this extensively today, I'd like to highlight some strategies that could help.

- Attribution error helps us understand the assumptions we make when we attribute others' behaviours to character flaws or external influences.
- Why blame and shame don't work helps us recognize the ways we might unintentionally make others feel defensive or angry.
- Before you say no, ask why to discover the need behind the request before saying no. You may be able to meet the need without agreeing to the original request.
- Listening for understanding to learn ways to hear what someone means beyond the words they say.

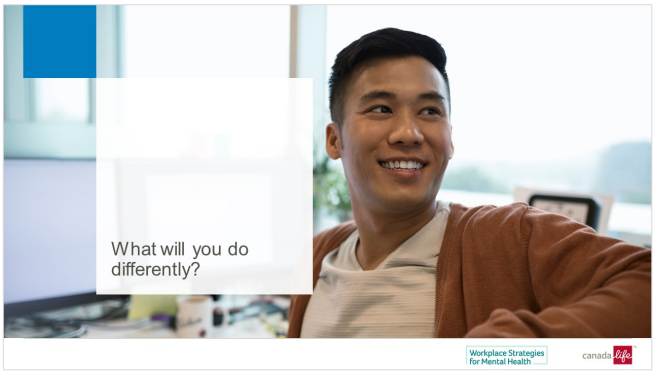
### Transition

You can go to the Workplace Strategies for Mental Health website for additional tips and strategies like these ones to refine your approach.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I'm going to ask you to think about at least one thing you'll do differently.

### Notes:

**Slide 9 | 6 minutes**




# What will you do differently?

## Facilitator notes

It's nice if everyone can share, but time may not allow it. If you have limited time, ask people to record their answer, share in their small group and then ask a few people to share their answer with the larger group. It's important for each person to record their answer so they're more likely to commit to doing something differently.

## Suggested wording

Take a couple of minutes now to record one thing you'll do differently at work as a result of today's discussion. It can be something from the presentation or something discussed in your group. I'll ask you to share your answer when the time's up.

**[Once time's up, ask as many people to share as time allows.]**

## Transition

Thank you for sharing what you'll do differently.

**Slide 10 | 1 minute**




# More information and resources

## Facilitator notes

On the back of the participant handout, there's a short list of some of the many free resources available. If you want your audience to read or use a particular resource, you may want to point it out at the end of your session. If you're short for time, you can skip this.

## Suggested wording

Go to Workplace Strategies for Mental Health for more information about strategies to resolve workplace issues or create a psychologically safe workplace. Everything on this site is available at no cost in both English and French. There are some examples of what they have to offer at the back of your handout.

Thanks again and enjoy the rest of your day.

**Notes:**

**Notes:**

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life

**Workplace Strategies for Mental Health resources are:**

- For all employers, people leaders and employees
- Available in English and French
- Evidence- or practice-based
- Available to anyone at no cost

Examples of the resources available at clwsmh.ca/materials include:

### Addressing co-worker reactions

Effectively respond to co-worker concerns, fears or reactions – even if you feel they're unfounded – to help support a psychologically safe work environment for all.

### Building stronger teams

Use this free, downloadable workbook to help strengthen leadership skills and build team resilience. You can complete many of the activities in less than 15 minutes.

### Leadership development

Improve the comfort and effectiveness in resolving workplace issues to enhance psychological health and safety for all. These resources can help.

### Leadership crisis response

Use this research to guide an effective response to a crisis, while reducing stress for everyone involved.

### Personal development

These activities can help develop your emotional intelligence, including monitoring your impact on others, managing your stress and responding more effectively to others.

### Personal well-being

Use these tools and resources to help improve employee well-being.

### Plan for Resilience

Use this resource to help improve your ability to bounce back if faced with a health, personal or work crisis. It will help you identify effective strategies and resources to draw on when needed.

### Psychologically safe leadership assessment

Identify and support leadership strategies that are psychologically safe for you and all leaders in your organization.

### Supporting Employee Success

Use this free tool to help employers help an employee create and follow a workplace plan that addresses performance and workplace stressors.

### Supportive performance management

Focus on solutions and employee success instead of problems and failings to help those dealing with life stressors, including mental health issues.

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

canada life™

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

Contact us through social media or at clwsmh.com

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