Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life




## Facilitator guide

# Implicit bias

**Notes:**

# 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.

This resource was based on the work of Mardi Daley. We're also grateful for the thoughtful feedback from David MacDonald, Joanne Roadley 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.

### Participant handout

The participant handouts are available to print at clwsmh.com/materials.
You can also use them digitally.

### Facilitating team discussions

Use Facilitating team discussions as a guide to 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 Implicit bias content before you facilitate this workshop. This will help you gain a broader understanding of the topic. You can also refer to this webpage to answer questions from your audience.
- Review, if available, existing strategies to improve diversity and inclusion as well as those to avoid discrimination and stigma.
- Consult with union representatives who are familiar with the collective agreement about introducing this process if you are in a unionized environment. This collaboration can support successful change.
- 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 would like to explore the implicit bias we all have to some degree, including:**

- **Employees**
- **Team leadership**
- **Managers**
- **Supervisors**
- **Union and worker representatives**
- **Human resources**

There's no limit to the total number of participants, but we suggest breaking into small groups of 3 – 5. 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.

### Implicit bias

Everyone carries bias. This workshop can help reveal areas for each of us to explore and improve. In this session, you will learn about:

- The definition of microaggressions and intersectionality
- Your own unconscious bias
- A 3-part plan to address all of the above

If you'd like to do a deeper dive before we begin, read Implicit bias.

**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.

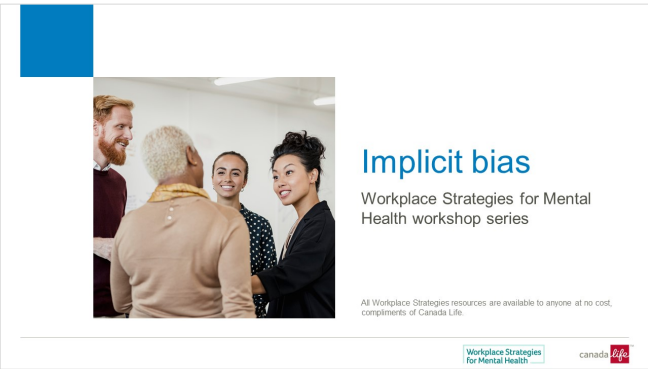
### Suggested wording

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**




# Implicit bias

## 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 implicit bias.

Everyone carries bias. What we hope to do today is make you more aware of how this might impact the way you interact with others and reduce the risk that you'll cause harm.

Implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that affect our actions and decisions for or against a particular person or group. We may explicitly endorse certain values such as inclusivity. Yet, we may hold an unconscious bias that doesn't align with this value.
A common example of implicit bias is favouring or being more receptive to familiar-sounding names than those from other cultural groups. Implicit bias doesn't mean that inclusivity is not one

of our values. It means that we are not aware of how our own implicit bias can impact our actions and decisions.

Each of you has a handout for taking notes. It includes the process and worksheet to use for this process.

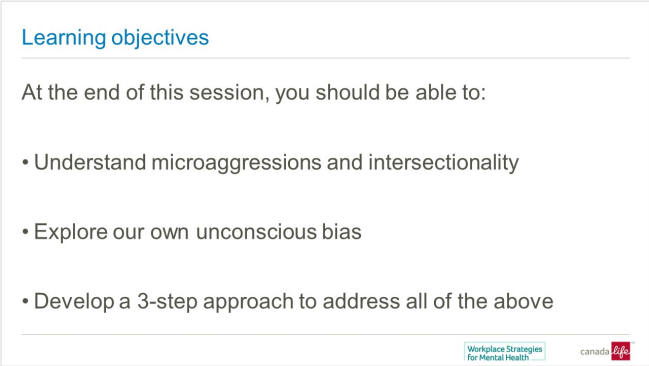
**[If you're using introductions, you can do that here.]**

### Transition

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

### Notes:

**Slide 2 | 2 minutes**




# Learning objectives

## Facilitator notes

In her book called White Fragility, Robin Di'Angelo speaks to those who claim to have colorblindness and see all people as equal. Her title White Fragility refers to the defensiveness that many people resort to when the topic of racism comes up. She says that the argument that race shouldn't matter actually prevents many white people from dealing with how racism actually impacts those of colour. The approach taken in this workshop is gentle self-reflection that we hope will lead people to discover for themselves that they indeed have implicit bias. It is specifically intended to help you avoid dealing with the defensiveness described in White Fragility by avoiding shaming, blaming or accusing participants of inappropriate behaviour.

## Suggested wording

Our agenda for today is to create a shared understanding of what implicit bias is, including the concepts of microaggressions and intersectionality. Through a series of questions, you'll explore your own unconscious bias and then we'll look at a 3-step approach to reduce the negative impact that implicit bias can have.

Because this workshop is about uncovering our own implicit bias, you will not be asked to share any of your answers with anyone else. Be as honest with yourself as possible.

We will have some opportunity to discuss the concepts in general, but what goes into your workbook is for you alone.

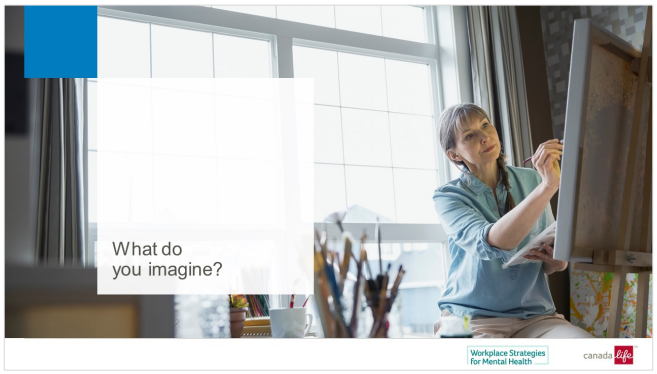
Everything we discuss today is available in more detail from the Workplace Strategies for Mental Health website. You won't need to take detailed notes unless you want to. The web address is in your handout if you want to learn more.

### Transition

Let's get started.

### Notes:

**Slide 3 | 10 minutes**




# What do you imagine?

## Facilitator notes

In the participant handout is the following list of -isms and phobias:

- Ableism (directed at people who may exhibit or seem to show signs of mental or physical disabilities)
- Ageism (based on age)
- Homophobia (targets those who are attracted to members of their own gender)
- Racism (based on a person's skin colour or cultural identity)
- Religious prejudice (based on a person's system of beliefs, practices and worship)
- Sexism (focused on a person's gender)
- Sizeism (based on a person's weight and outwards appearance)
- Transphobia (heteronormism) (targets transsexual or transgender people)
- Xenophobia (focuses on people from other countries)

In this section you are going to ask for participants to come up with any others. Some that are not in this list include:

- Elitism (Based on status or level of education)
- Classism (Based on socio-economic status)
- Genderism (Based on the belief that there are only two genders)
- Cronyism (Based on favoring those who are family or friends)
- Ethnocentrism (Based on belief that your culture is superior)

## Suggested wording

I'm going to describe a person, place or thing and I want you to close your eyes or just imagine what I describe. Record what you first see in your mind's eye on page 3 of your participant handout. Don't overthink this, just describe what first pops into your mind. There's no right or wrong. You're tapping into where your mind first brings you.

Close your eyes if you are comfortable to do so for the first prompt.

I want you to imagine a financial sector CEO. What do they look like?

In your handout under prompt one, describe as many details as you can about what the CEO looked like.

**[Allow one minute to complete the prompt.]**

Close your eyes for the second prompt.

I want you to imagine you're invited to a new friend's family dinner. Describe who you would expect to be seated around the table?

In your handout under prompt 2, describe in as much detail as possible what each individual looked like. Be honest with yourself and write exactly what you first imagined.

**[Allow one minute to complete the prompt.]**

Close your eyes for the third prompt.

Someone's being arrested for a violent crime by a police officer. What do they look like?

In your handout under prompt 3, describe what the criminal looked like and what the police officer looked like.

**[Allow one minute to complete the prompt.]**

Close your eyes for the fourth prompt.

You are watching a superhero movie, describe the hero in the story.

In your handout under prompt 4, describe as much as you can about the hero.

**[Allow one minute to complete the prompt and read the following very slowly.]**

Now I want you to review what you've written. In any of the scenarios you imagined, did any of the people have facial piercings, tattoos, physical disabilities, mental disabilities? Were they rich or poor? Were they confident or shy? Was English their first language? Were they tall or short? Large or thin? Happy or sad? What was their sexual orientation?

The point is, we do have built in implicit bias towards certain types of people and that's not necessarily a problem. We are likely to imagine people we are familiar with in each of the roles described. The issue arises when we're not aware of this bias and inadvertently exclude or diminish those who are not as familiar to you.

Implicit bias stems from the various types of stereotypes or fears that lead to prejudice, discrimination and/or negative attitudes. In your handout is a list of common "isms" and phobias. Take a couple of minutes now to identify other isms and stereotypes that could lead to implicit bias. The list is on page 4 of your handout You have 2 minutes.

**[After 2 minutes.]**

What other ones did you identify?

**[Give 2 minutes for taking up the answers.]**

### Transition

Now let's look at how implicit bias can lead to microaggressions.

### Notes:

**Slide 4 | 2 minutes**




# Microaggressions

## Suggested wording

At their core, microaggressions can feel like a subtle form of discrimination. Yet they are usually indirect and unintentional and therefore unlikely to meet the criteria for discrimination under human rights legislation. We are not learning this today as a form of risk management. We are learning this today to improve civility and respect for everyone.

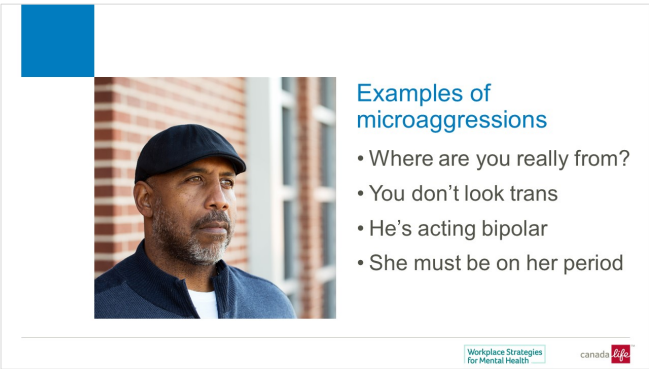
Microaggressions are often based on differences in skin colour, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation. Implicit bias can occur without face-to-face interaction. For example, the choice of images or written language can show bias. Microaggressions are more likely to occur through passive remarks and actions.

It's completely possible that we could unintentionally engage in microaggressions. This is especially true when we're unaware of our own implicit bias. We may think our comments or actions are harmless when in fact they can have a significant negative impact on others.

## Transition

Let's look at some examples of actions that may be perceived as micro aggressions as well as consider some potential solutions.

**Slide 5 | 8 minutes**




# Examples of microaggressions

## Facilitator notes

For this activity you want participants to come to their own conclusion about how these microaggressions may become problematic and what they may do about it. When you take up the answers, you want to reinforce the ideas below.

- Asking, "Where are you really from?" after someone has told you where they're from
  - **What to do instead**: Nothing
- Assuming you know a person's language or their racial identity based on their appearance
  - **What to do instead**: Ask, "Do you speak any other languages?" or say nothing
- Assuming gender expression, mis-gendering (even if unintentional) or stating, "You don't look trans."
  - **What to do instead**: Ask for the person's preferred pronouns and honour them at all times.

- Mispronouncing a person's name or using a nickname (unless agreed on)
  - **What to do instead**: Ask the person what they like to be called.

- Making comments on someone's perceived mood. For example, "He's acting bipolar," or "She must be on her period."
  - **What to do instead**: Be sympathetic or say nothing.

- Assuming or commenting on someone's sexual preference or family structure
  - **What to do instead**: Use gender-neutral terms like "partner" or "spouse"

### Suggested wording

In your handout on page 5 are a series of potential microaggressions. Consider how each action may feel like discrimination or cause someone to feel uncomfortable. Also decide what you could do or say instead to get the intended message across with less likelihood of offending. I will give you 3 minutes to work on this individually and then I'll ask if anyone will volunteer some of their answers.

**[After 3 minutes.]**

Is there anyone who would like to share an idea from any of the examples that would be especially effective at avoiding a microaggression?

**[After 3 minutes, or you have no more volunteers, move on. If no one wishes to share, you can use the examples in the facilitator notes to give some suggestions.]**

As you can see, some of these microaggressions are things that we might not identify as potentially harmful, but as the author Maya Angelou said, "When we know better, we can do better."

### Transition

Next we will learn how to question our implicit biases.

**Slide 6 | 1 minute**




# Intersectionality

## Suggested wording

Intersectionality focuses on the overlap of the various social identities one person would hold. This can include skin colour, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class.

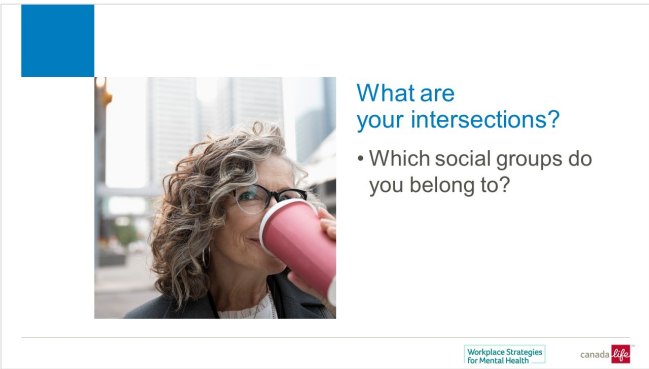
Different combinations may increase or decrease the likelihood that you will experience systemic oppression and discrimination.

For example, you may consider a white male to be in the majority in your workplace, but if a white male is also gay, the intersection of his sexual orientation may increase the likelihood that he will face discrimination.

## Transition

Let’s identify the social identities that you belong to.

**Slide 7 | 5 minutes**




# What are your intersections?

## Facilitator notes

The following is the list of intersections found in the participant handout:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Culture
- Skin colour
- Income level
- Job role
- Age
- Family status
- Religion
- Ability
- Body type
- Political affiliations
- Education level
- Other?

## Suggested wording

In your handout on pages 6, 7 and 8, there is a list of social identities.

Focusing only on the first column, I'd like you to name your intersection in each group.
For example, under gender, state the gender in which you identify. In skin colour, put down how you would describe yourself. You will not be asked to share any of this, it's simply to help you identify your own intersections.

**[You can ask participants to let you know when they're finished. If you're doing the workshop face-to-face you can ask the participants to put down their pens. If you're facilitating this virtually, you can ask participants raise their hands or whatever method is available through your platform.]**

### Transition

Next you're going to consider how unique you really are.

### Notes:

**Slide 8 | 4 minutes**




# Which of your social identities are part of the majority at work?

## Suggested wording

In the next column also on pages 6 – 8 in your handout, identify which of your social identities are part of the majority at work. Consider those you interact with on a regular basis and count if there the number of people who have the same intersection as you are more or less than 50%. If the majority share that particular intersection, check the box in that row. You have one minute.

**[After one minute.]**

Whenever an intersection is shared by the majority, it's easier for implicit bias against those not in this group to go unnoticed.

In one workshop, a participant said they would not know if anyone at work is gay because they would never ask. Since there were approximately 1000 employees in the workplace, statistically speaking there would have been around 100 people who were gay. The participant was asked if people at work ever talked about heterosexual experiences related to husbands, wives, wedding anniversaries or pregnancies. Of course, the answer was yes.

In this workplace, it's likely that those who are gay just remained silent and excluded from these conversations. By thinking more inclusively, we can expand our conversations to validate and acknowledge other social identities.

In this example, simply talking about a same sex wedding that you attended or a same sex couple with children can make the conversation more inclusive. It doesn't mean that everyone within that social identity will speak out but it does mean that they are more likely to feel included in the conversation.

### Transition

Now we're going to look at the predominant identities in your workplace.

### Notes:

**Slide 9 | 6 minutes**




# What could constitute implicit bias towards those who are in the minority at work?

### Facilitator notes

If you have the time and your participants have any influence on policy decisions (example leaders), you may want include a discussion about how could this be fairer. In the suggested wording, we skip over this.

You can also use Putting involvement and influence on the agenda as a separate workshop to develop solutions.

### Suggested wording

By now I hope you have some idea of what implicit bias and microaggressions are.

In the next column, I want you to think about potential acts of implicit bias towards the social identities in your workplace that are not part of the majority. This requires you to first identify the minority social identities in each category and then to list a few potential microaggressions or acts of implicit bias. You do not have to have witnessed this, just imagine what they might experience.

While there may be several other social identities in each category, you are thinking generally about those at work who are in the minority. Let me give you a few examples:

An Asian person who was third generation Canadian had people move away from them during the pandemic because they were assumed to be more contagious than others. The implicit bias was being shunned or excluded and presumed to be a foreigner.

A Canadian of East Indian descent was detained at the airport 9 times out of 10, while the average is less than 3 times out of 10 for random selection. The implicit bias resulted in having to always spend more time at the airport because someone thought they looked like a person who might be engaged in criminal activity.

A highly qualified person who is non-binary and dresses differently than the majority is told they are not management material because they won't command respect. The implicit bias is being judged by their looks rather than their capabilities. You now have 3 minutes to complete this column.

**[After 3 minutes.]**

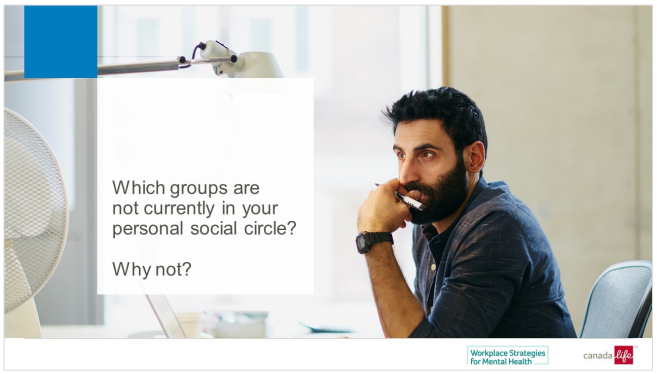
Hopefully this exercise helped you to think through some of the experiences of those in the workplace who are in the minority. If you have a relationship with any one in these groups ask them what their experience has been with implicit bias or microaggressions. You may be surprised.

### Transition

Now we are going to shift from the workplace to your personal social circles.

### Notes:

**Slide 10 | 5 minutes**




# Which groups are not in your personal social circle? Why not?

### Suggested wording

Now I want you to think about the people you hang out with when you are not working.
For each of the categories, record the various social identities that are not part of your social circle.

To be included in your social circle means you interact with them at least 6 times a year outside of work. Also ask yourself why nobody from these particular identities are included in your social circle. As with the rest of the questions, you won't be asked to share your answers. You have 3 minutes.

**[After 3 minutes.]**

Hopefully by now you will have more awareness of the unconscious bias that is unique to you.

### Transition

If we have a better understanding of implicit bias the question is what will we do with this knowledge?

**Slide 11 | 3 minutes**




# Addressing bias and microaggressions

## Suggested wording

This 3-step approach is to help you respond if you witness bias or a microaggression in the workplace. First you need to identify what you saw or heard and state it in a respectful way to those involved. For example, if you heard “where are you really from?” you might say, “they just told you.”

The second step is re-framing why you think the exchange may be hurtful to others without shaming the person who said it. In this example, you might ask, “Why don’t you believe their first response?” Give people the benefit of the doubt. They may not be aware of their own bias.

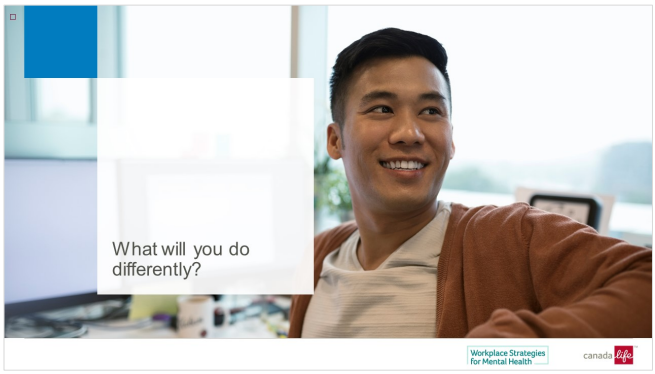
The third step happens after the exchange to help everyone better understand the issue.
This could be done privately with the person who spoke up or as a general education opportunity with an entire team without singling anyone out.

If you’re interested in doing more work in this area, check out Implicit bias on the Workplace Strategies for Mental Health website. There is a link in your handout.

## Transition

We’ve covered a fair bit about implicit bias, intersectionality and microaggressions.
None of us will be able to implement all of those perfectly. So, lets instead focus on at least one thing that we can do going forward.

**Slide 12 | 11 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

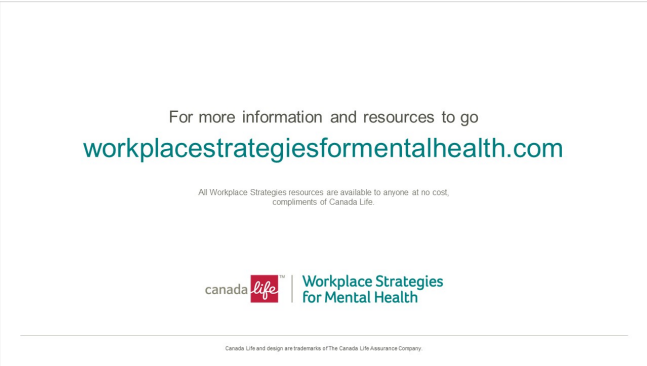
Take a couple of minutes now to record one thing you'll do differently at work as a result of today's discussion. It can be something from the presentation or something discussed in your group. I'll ask you to share your answer when the time's up.

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

### Transition

Thank you for sharing what you'll do differently.

**Slide 13 | 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:**

**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.

### Being a mindful employee

Help employees understand their responsibility and opportunities to contribute to a mentally healthy workplace as described in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety.

### Harassment and bulling prevention

Address aggression or unresolved conflicts among co-workers before they escalate into a crisis in the workplace.

### Inclusivity and discrimination

Identify approaches to address potential discrimination and promote inclusivity. Help create an environment where all employees are supported to thrive and succeed.

### Indigenous teachings at work

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

### Psychologically safe interactions

Use this slide presentation, facilitator guide and participant handout to engage your team in a workshop that increases awareness of how our behaviours may be interpreted as bullying, even when that wasn't our intention.

### Responding to issues

Use these practical and action-oriented guidelines to address work issues, including:

- Conflict
- Performance
- Accommodation
- Impairment
- Return to work
- Violence

### Supporting newcomers

Help protect the psychological safety and facilitate the success of employees new to this country.

**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

Twitter LinkedIn YouTube

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