Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life



Facilitator guide

Psychologically safe interactions

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.

We are grateful for the input and contribution of Joti Samra, Catherine Gordon, Laurel Mansfield, Worksafe BC and Allan Lee.

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 Psychologically safe interactions 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 all the questions in the presentation to decide if they're all appropriate for your audience. You can hide, delete or modify slides and pages from the participant handout as necessary.
- If you are in a unionized environment, consult with union representatives who are familiar with the collective agreement about introducing this process. 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 is suited for teams who regularly interact at work. It helps become more aware of how their interactions may be perceived by others and how they may misinterpret the actions of others.

Those who may be interested in participating in this workshop include all workplace stakeholders and any team, including sports or associations who want to improve how they work together.

You may also want to facilitate this session with just leaders. Participating in the entire workshop can help leaders improve their interactions with each other. It can also help prepare them to deliver the same workshop to their own teams.

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.

Psychologically safe interactions

We all deserve to have a safe working environment. This goes beyond physical safety to psychological safety. This means we interact and communicate in ways that do no harm to others. Together we will think about the type of work environment we want to create.
In this workshop, we will examine:

- The unintended consequences of what we say and do
- The assumptions we make about others
- The meaning of moral courage for our workplace

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 3-hour time frame with two 15-minute breaks. 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.

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 timeframe 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



Psychologically safe interactions

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 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 psychologically safe interactions.

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, "It's sometimes hard to know if bullying is happening at the workplace. Many studies acknowledge there's a 'fine line' between strong management and bullying."

Many workplace bullies, including those in management or union roles, are honestly not aware their co-workers or direct reports may experience their behaviour as harmful. They think they're being direct or passionate, or simply expressing frustration. Others may experience their behaviour quite differently.

Let’s think about how we may react to the certain behaviours of others. The goal in this session is to consider how behaviour or words may contribute to psychologically unsafe interactions which may or may not qualify as bullying. We don’t need to wait for interactions to reach that level.

Psychologically safe interactions won’t eliminate all conflicts or inappropriate behaviour and language. They do help to address and resolve them quickly, respectfully and consistently.

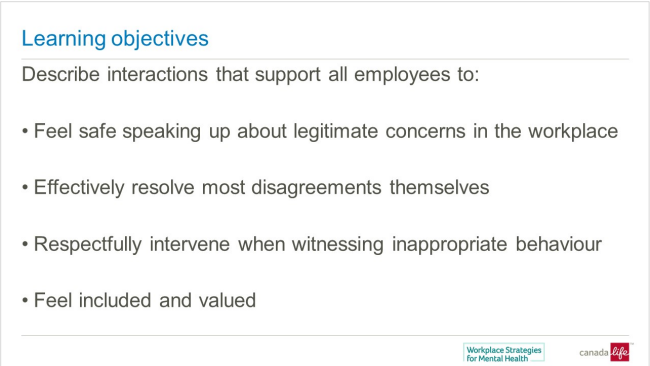
[If you’re using introductions, you can do that here.]

Transition

Before we start let’s examine our learning objectives.

Notes:

Slide 2 | 2 minutes



Learning objectives

Suggested wording

Psychologically safe interactions don't cause undue stress or fear in others, but support all employees to:

- Feel safe speaking up about legitimate concerns in the workplace
- Effectively resolve most disagreements themselves
- Respectfully intervene when witnessing inappropriate behaviour
- Feel included and valued

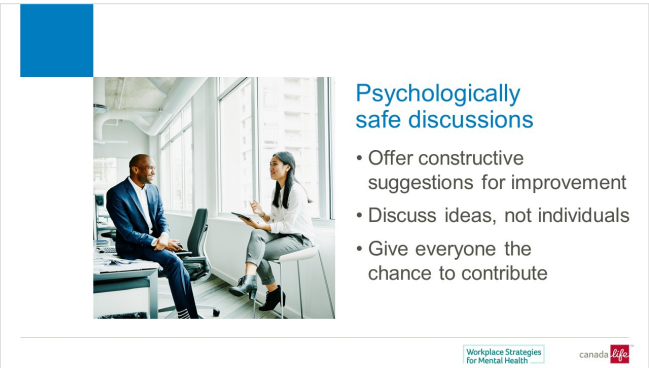
This doesn't mean that we will never disagree or that we won't occasionally have a bad day. It does mean that our disagreements and bad days will not have a significant negative impact on others.

Over the next few hours, we will define psychologically safe interactions for our workplace. We'll go through a series of questions to help you decide what this all means for our team. Finally, we'll decide what we want to do differently to have the type of workplace that is ideal for us.

Transition

We will start by agreeing to how we are going to discuss this issue.

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 is 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 Facilitating team discussions.

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. Today we only want to focus on constructive ideas for the future. If anyone has unresolved or past issues related to psychologically unsafe interactions, please come talk to me privately so that we can take steps to help you.

For today, let’s be both practical and creative with our suggestions for psychologically safe interactions in our workplace. 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 get started.

Notes:

Slide 4 | 10 minutes



Making interactions safer

Facilitator notes

Some ways we can make interactions psychologically safer could include:

- Someone disagrees with you by insulting your intelligence – acknowledge that there is room for difference of opinion, but ask that we stick to the issue rather than make things personal. For example, when someone else speaks, the person who was just insulted doesn't have to respond.

- A leader provides feedback that's negative – train leaders on constructive feedback. You could also ask specifically how you could do things differently to improve, rather than focusing on the negative feedback.

- Someone takes credit for your work – if you hear this about someone else, ask who else contributed to the work to give the person an opportunity to be more inclusive. If it's about you, ask for feedback on how your contribution helped or not.

- A client, patient or customer is upset – depending on the setting, you may not have the authority to do anything in the moment, but we can take de-escalation training to help us deal with confrontational situations so they're less harmful for us and others. We can also develop a process to help each other debrief after confrontational situations so we feel the support of our team.

Suggested wording

We're impacted by interactions with others every day. This could include when:

- Someone disagrees by insulting our intelligence
- A leader provides negative feedback that feels harsh or uncalled for
- Someone takes credit for our work
- A client, patient or customer is upset with us

Now let's take these same interactions and consider what might be necessary to make them feel psychologically safer to you.

Remember, people may be going through personal, health or financial stressors that may make it hard for them to always respond in the way you prefer. This isn't the expectation.
Professional and respectful interactions, even on a bad day is the expectation.

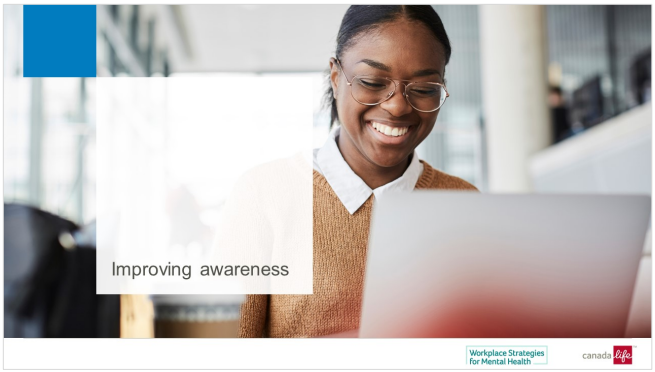
With your group, take each of the interactions on the slide and consider how to make these psychologically safer. This could include processes, training or procedures. For example, we could define constructive feedback, so that performance feedback feels less negative and is more likely to support improvement. Record at least one idea for each interaction on the slide. We'll take up your answers in 3 minutes.

[After 3 minutes, take up the answers looking for similarities. Point out to the group what each of the suggestions have in common. This could include respect, processes to deescalate or ways to respectfully point out what is inappropriate.]

Transition

These are some ideas of what we can do differently. Now we'll get into more specifics.

Slide 5 | 2 minutes



Improving awareness

Suggested wording

We are going to cover 3 main areas today. The first is perception versus intention.
We'll explore this by asking questions that help us think about how our own behaviours and reactions impact others. Sometimes, people experience behaviour as harmful even when it wasn't intended that way. In fact, it can be shocking to hear different interpretations of things we said or did. But there is a difference between our intentions and someone else's perception.

The next area is checking assumptions. We don't always realize when we make assumptions about others' intentions, which causes us to interpret their behaviour as hurtful.

We need to examine our assumptions and choose how we react to build resilience against the effects of psychologically unsafe behaviour.

The last area is moral courage. This is our ability to intervene in a respectful way.
When we witness psychologically unsafe behaviour, we may:

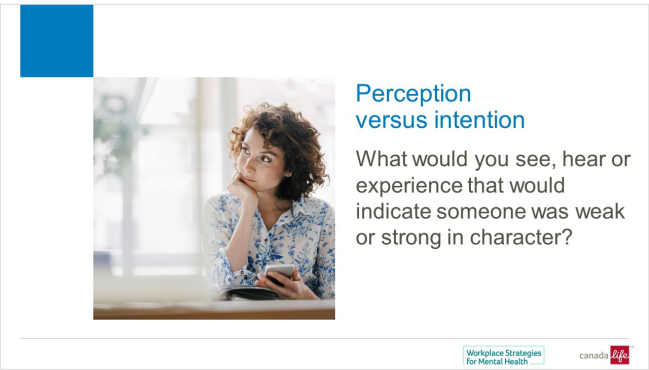
- Feel uncomfortable intervening
- Believe we don't have the authority to intervene. This is especially true when the person exhibiting the behaviour has more power or rank than we do.
- Fear the consequences if we choose to intervene
- Worry it could look like we're bullying the bully.

Transition

We'll be exploring each area in more detail. Let's start with perception versus intention.

Notes:

Slide 6 | 5 minutes



What would you see, hear or experience that would indicate someone was weak or strong in character?

Facilitator notes

This exercise can help people gain an understanding of how we judge others as weak or strong. There are no right or wrong answers here, but it's important to discuss how our judgments about strength or weakness may not be true. Consider the following:

- Strong people can show vulnerability
- Those that are vulnerable can also appear strong

Suggested wording

What would you see, hear or experience that would show someone was weak or strong in character? Ask someone in your group to create two columns – one labelled "weak" and one labelled "strong".

List the characteristics of a weak person and those of a strong person. Don't censor the answers. If someone says vulnerability is weak and someone else says it's strong, write "vulnerability" in both columns. Be ready to share these with the larger group. You have 3 minutes.

When you report back the answers, I want you to focus primarily on those items that went into both columns. There are no right or wrong answers here, as they're our perceptions. Let's consider how our impressions of people as weak or strong could be wrong. Most of us have seen the mighty fall and the quiet rise up when needed.

[After you've taken up the answers]

I'm not asking you to share this, but please reflect privately on how you might treat someone if you incorrectly judge them as weak or strong. How might they misinterpret your behaviour? For example, you may perceive someone in a leadership position as strong and challenge them on their ideas with the intention of showing your interest. They may actually not be very confident and experience your challenges as attacks. I'll give you one minute to think about or record notes on how your perception of somebody's strength or weakness may impact your words or behaviours.

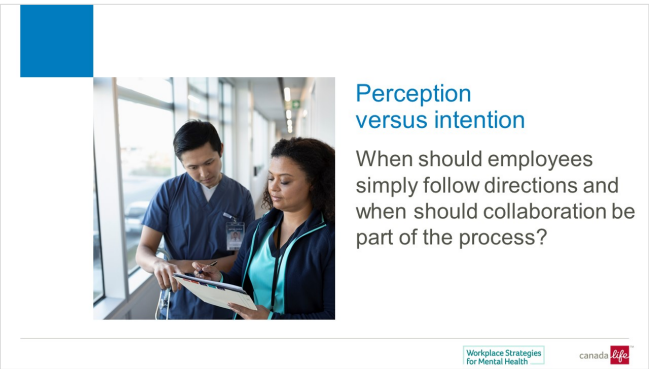
[After one minute.]

Transition

Let's move on to the next question.

Notes:

Slide 7 | 7 minutes



When should employees simply follow directions? When should collaboration be part of the process?

Facilitator notes

Depending on how much time you have, you can:

- Ask each group to share
- Ask for one example for situations that:
  1. Involve collaboration
  2. Require following directions
  3. Could be either

Wrap it up by commenting on how we may not be consistent in when we invite collaboration and when we don't. Mixed messages and unmet expectations can cause frustration in the workplace.

Suggested wording

It's not practical to seek consensus or sit down for a discussion about everything that needs to get done. Sometimes we're just asking for something to be done and sometimes we're open for collaboration. Problems arise when we expect one approach but get the other. When is collaboration possible, and when is it not? Please record your answer.

If you don't give directions as part of your job, consider your answer from your personal, family or volunteer roles. Think about how your state of mind influences you, as well as in specific situations.

[Continue after they've had a few minutes to record their answers.]

Collaboration can be a useful process, but sometimes we just need to be clear about directions and get the job done. Sometimes there's no room for negotiation because of policy, regulation, quality control or safety issues. We can feel dismissed or bullied when we share our opinion or ideas and get shut down or ignored. By being clear about which approach we're using, we can manage expectations and avoid some of these misunderstandings.

In your group, record a list of work situations that:

1. Should include collaboration
2. Should require following directions
3. Could be either situation

You have 3 minutes to do this and we'll take up your answers when you're done.

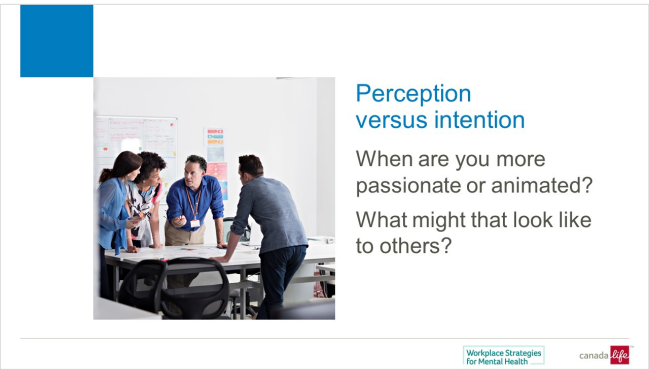
[After 3 minutes take up their answers for another 3 minutes.]

We often believe that others know our constraints and the reasons for our decisions. But, we need to realize that's actually not the case. We need to be aware of our own emotional states and how that influences our decisions. Once we know how others may interpret our inconsistency, we can be more intentional about sharing our reasons so that we can avoid misunderstandings.

Transition

There are many other ways our motives may seem obvious to us, but not to others.

Slide 8 | 7 minutes



When are you more passionate or animated?

Facilitator notes

This is another opportunity to explore the difference between our intention – to express passion – and the perception of others. Help your participants make that connection and develop strategies to be more aware in the moment.

Suggested wording

Many of us get excited about ideas or feel righteous about perceived injustices.
But how do others experience our words and behaviours when we feel passionate about something?

For example, when I get excited about ideas, I may blurt out or interrupt others. I see it as passion, but others may see it as rude, dismissive or aggressive.

Take a moment to record how you might behave when you're passionate about an idea or injustice. Again, record only what others might see, hear or experience rather than what you might feel or think. You have just 2 minutes and then please discuss in your group how others might misinterpret your behaviours.

[After 2 minutes.]

Now discuss in your group how others might misinterpret your behaviours when you are more passionate about something. In the example I gave, if I'm not able to contain myself, I can learn to recognize it, explain that I am excited and apologize for blurting out. This can help explain my intent.

Discuss in your group what each of you can do to lessen the likelihood of misinterpretation of your behaviour. I will give you 3 minutes to discuss.

[After 3 minutes.]

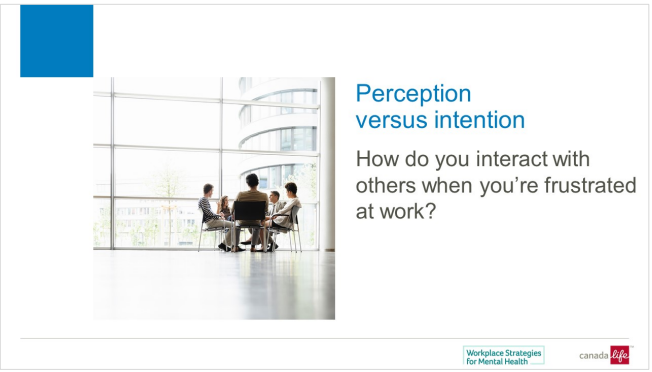
Recognize how easy it's for people to misunderstand our intentions.

Transition

Let's move on to the next question.

Notes:

Slide 9 | 9 minutes



How do you interact with others when you're frustrated at work?

Facilitator notes

You don't need every participant to share their answers. Some won't feel comfortable sharing. Don't force this. You can share any or all the following if these points weren't raised by the participants.

Others could interpret our behaviours when we are frustrated as:

- **Intimidation** – when we raise our voice or speak abruptly in exasperation
- **Bullying** – when we express frustration in ways that diminish others
- **Dismissive** – when we fail to pay attention to what others are saying because we're distracted
- **Isolating** – when we just disappear to deal with our frustration
- **Harassment** – when we take our frustration out on others by blaming

Point out that this is the difference between our intention and the perception of others.

Example: A frustrated person goes into their office and closes the door. Other people may feel shunned or isolated. They may also feel like the frustrated person is plotting against them behind closed doors.

Example: Some people may go into more detail when they're frustrated. Their intention may be to make sure things get done well. This may come off as micromanaging or lacking trust.

Example: Raising your voice – if it doesn't come up and you think it's relevant to your group, share that a raised voice can trigger some people. For example, it can relate to the following:

- Sensitivity to noise
- Childhood trauma
- The perception of intimidation or bullying

Potential follow-up discussion: "Is it ever necessary to raise your voice at work?"

If yes, when is it reasonable to do so?

Example: It may be necessary to yell if you're warning someone of an emergency or danger.

Do you have any tips that help reduce your impulse to raise your voice?

Suggested wording

In your handout, record your answer to these two questions as completely and honestly as you can. Please avoid writing or discussing how you feel or think while frustrated. Focus on what others, who can't read your mind, might see or overhear when observing or interacting with you.
I'll give you 2 minutes to record.

[After 2 minutes or when most people are finished writing.]

Now I want you to share your answers with others in your group and again ask how someone may personalize or misinterpret your frustration in a way that is uncomfortable to them.
Each of you can take a turn. I'll give you 3 minutes to discuss.

[After 3 minutes.]

Next, I'd like a couple of volunteers to share how their frustration may have been misinterpreted by others.

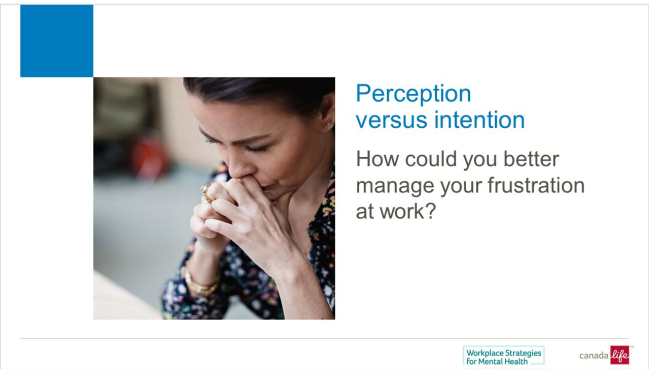
[Once you've had 2 – 3 examples, you can move on. This should take 3 minutes]

Transition

Let's move on to the next question.

Notes:

Slide 10 | 8 minutes



How could you better manage your frustration at work?

Facilitator notes

Give participants at least 5 minutes to discuss ideas. Ask each group to share their 2 answers. This may help everyone consider better ways to deal with frustrations. If you have time after each group has had their turn, ask if anyone has another idea they want to share.

Suggested wording

We all get frustrated at work from time to time. Here, we want to explore alternatives to behaviours that can have a negative impact on others. One example is to go for a walk to regain composure before speaking or acting. Another is to take a few minutes to record what you're frustrated about and search for a solution.

In your workbook, record as many answers to this question as you can in one minute. Make sure your ideas would work for you in your work setting. I'll let you know when the minute is up.

[After one minute.]

Thank you. Now please share your answers with the others in your group. In each group, please have someone ready to share your group's most innovative answer and, if it isn't the same one, the most practical or helpful answer.

[After 3 minutes.]

Now we will go from group to group and ask you to share the approaches to managing frustration which are most innovative and most helpful.

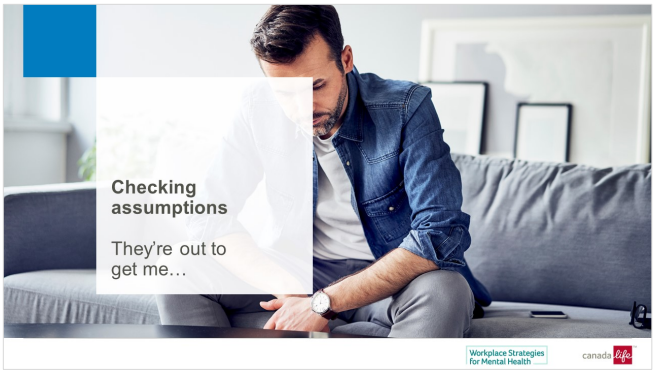
[After 5 minutes or whenever everyone has answered.]

Transition

We can all be more aware of the unintentional impact our behaviours may have on others and choose psychologically safer ways to interact.

Notes:

Slide 11 | 1 minute



They're out to get me…

Suggested wording

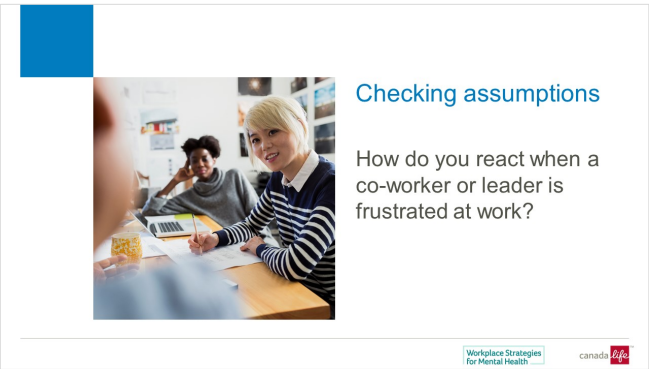
We've examined how others may perceive our behaviours quite differently from how we intended.

Transition

Now we'll look at how we may have assumptions about how other people behave.

Notes:

Slide 12 | 6 minutes



How do you react when a co-worker or leader is frustrated at work?

Facilitator notes

Once the participants have had enough time to discuss, take up the answers to this question from those who volunteer, rather than forcing anyone to answer.
Some may find this question difficult. You want to demonstrate our various reactions such as anger, fear, pity, disgust, ridicule, humiliation, defensiveness or curiosity.

Potential follow-up question: Would you respond differently if it was your boss?

Potential follow-up question: What are the most psychologically safe responses to someone who appears agitated?

Suggested wording

For this discussion, we're talking about how we respond to others who express their frustration. Think of a time when a co-worker was flustered or overwhelmed. What did you think and how did you react? Then think of a time when a leader was flustered or overwhelmed. Did you react differently to a co-worker than you did to a leader?

It may take you a couple of moments to remember these incidents. We want you to record how you responded as accurately as you can.

We don’t want to know what the other person did. This is only about your reaction to their frustration. Record your answer to this question in your workbook. It could be a few descriptive words or a description. I’ll give you 2 minutes.

[After 2 minutes.]

Now that you have your answers, please share in your group the differences or similarities between your reaction to your coworker and your reaction to a leader.

[After 3 minutes.]

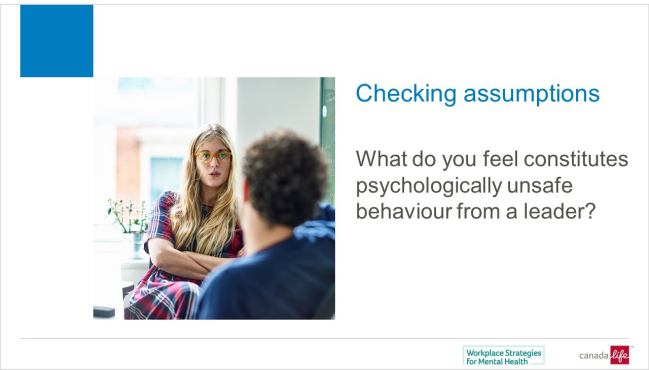
Just as our frustration can be misinterpreted by others, we can also misinterpret the frustration of others. We may assume their frustration is aimed at us when it really isn’t.

Transition

Your boss and all leaders are human and will have times of frustration, but when does their behaviour cross the line?

Notes:

Slide 13 | 12 minutes



What do you feel constitutes psychologically unsafe behaviour from a leader?

Facilitator notes

Recording the answers from the participants could help leaders understand how others may perceive their actions. If you have time, consider sharing the list of directives with all leaders in your organization.

Suggested wording

Most of us don't appreciate someone telling us we're doing something wrong. Yet it's part of the job for leaders to provide us with feedback to correct or grow our performance. We wouldn't welcome this type of critical feedback or interaction from most people in our lives. Leaders must walk a careful line. They must ensure a balance between driving individual and organizational performance and protecting psychological safety. We're asking you to identify behaviours you feel cross the line between managing people, even when we may not like it, and engaging in psychologically unsafe behaviour. This doesn't need to meet the threshold of harassment, but it shouldn't include the occasional show of frustration either.

Record your answer to what you feel constitutes psychologically unsafe behaviour for leaders in your workbook. I'll give you 2 minutes.

[After 2 minutes.]

Now I'd like you to share your answers with your group and together decide which ones really do create the potential for psychological harm and which ones are just annoying. We will take up the ones that your group decides crosses the line in 3 minutes.

[After 3 minutes.]

Let's review the answers that each group came up with and we will record them to share with leaders. Of course, we won't include any names but hope that this information is helpful to your leaders as they strive to provide a psychologically safer work environment.

[After you've taken up the answers or about 5 minutes.]

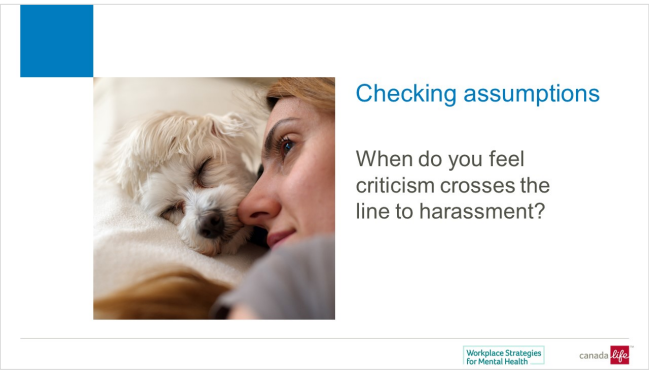
Our view of what feels like psychologically unsafe behaviour for leaders can vary based on many factors, including our current health, emotional state, stress levels and our past history with the individual. We want to avoid making assumptions about the motives of others, especially when we're dealing with our own stressors. In fact, pausing and considering what they might be going through is often a good way to re-frame so we can have a conversation seeking a solution.

Transition

We also want to share what we feel crosses the line with all leaders, so everyone can manage expectations and behaviours in a way that supports psychological safety.

Notes:

Slide 14 | 5 minutes



When do you feel criticism crosses the line to harassment?

Suggested wording

Criticism isn't just for leaders. We all may comment on others' work, style or personality in a critical or negative way. But, there's a difference between constructive criticism and psychologically unsafe interactions. Record your answer to this question in your workbook. You'll have one minute.

[After 1 minutes.]

Now share your answers with your group and look for differences and similarities in what each person describes as psychologically unsafe.

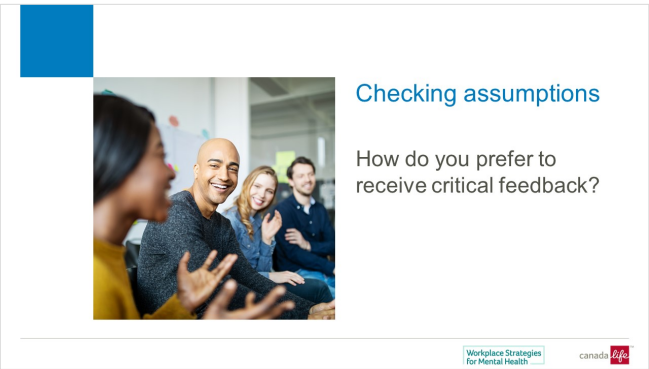
[After 3 minutes.]

What feels like psychologically unsafe feedback can be different for everyone.
We're influenced by our upbringing, current emotional state, health and our history with the individual.

Transition

So, if we feel differently about unsafe feedback, how do we help create more psychological safety for ourselves? We need to be explicit about our needs.

Slide 15 | 10 minutes



How do you prefer to receive critical feedback?

Facilitator notes

After you've recorded the answers, comment on the variety of responses. Point out that we need to be aware that people have different preferences and sensitivities. Also, consider sharing the list of similarities with all leaders, along with a note that points out the need to find out what each person prefers in terms of receiving critical feedback.

Potential follow-up questions for participants:

- Have you ever shared your preference for receiving feedback with your leader?
- Has your leader ever asked you how you want to receive their feedback?

Suggested wording

Many of us don't like receiving criticism. Yet criticism is inevitable in the workplace. Think about an approach that would work best for you.

Consider this question: How do you prefer to receive critical feedback?

It should be that anyone could follow your directions and provide you with critical feedback without you becoming defensive or hurt. By being explicit about your preferences related to the words that are used, where and when feedback is given, body language, tone of voice, and type of feedback you make it easier for someone to provide supportive feedback for you.

In your workbook is the Feedback Preferences form. Please complete it now. You've got 2 minutes.

[After 2 minutes.]

Now within your groups, I want you to share your preferred approach and look for similarities that most, or all of you share. Please record these and have somebody assigned to share them with the larger group. You've got 3 minutes.

[After 3 minutes.]

Now let's look at the similarities. Which group wants to go first?

[After 3 minutes.]

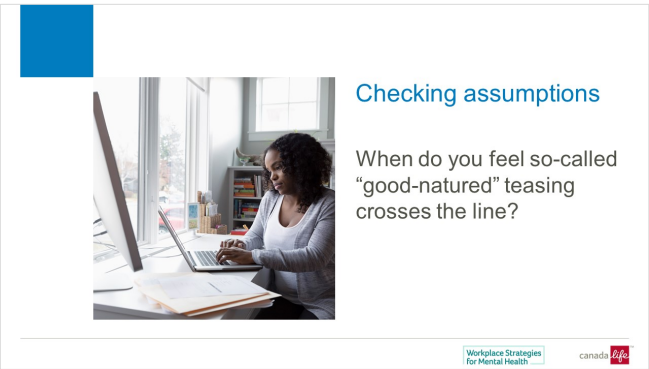
We're able to identify what we have in common, but that still leaves us with unique individual preferences. Leaders can implement all or most of the things that we have in common, but they will only know what works best for you if you tell them. Feel free to share the Feedback Preference form with your leader.

Transition

Most of us are sensitive to criticism. Yet, we're all required to receive it as part of our job. It's important to know what motivates us to do better and what triggers us to feel defensive. This helps everyone.

Notes:

Slide 16 | 10 minutes



When do you feel so-called "good-natured" teasing crosses the line?

Facilitator notes

When you take up the answers, be sure to comment on how everyone is different, but teasing directed at a person or group of people is potentially going to be hurtful to someone.

We can also consider how we interpret or respond to humour when we're feeling great. What's less funny when we're stressed or hurt?

It's probably best to avoid teasing altogether and use different forms of humour. On the other hand, we need to question our own assumptions that teasing is intentionally trying to hurt us. We can tell the person it feels like an insult and ask them to stop.

Suggested wording

It should be obvious when teasing crosses the line to discrimination. This would include any teasing or jokes based on gender, race, disability or religion. But let's consider when it may be less obvious. For example, someone may think they're just kidding around when they punch your arm or joke about someone being crazy. If you're someone who has experienced physical violence or someone whose

family member lives with serious mental illness, this so-called “good-natured teasing” may be hurtful. Think about when and how actions or words can be harmful or unwelcome to you or others. Record your answers to this question in your workbook. I’ll give you 2 minutes.

[After 2 minutes.]

Take a few minutes now to share your answers. For example, jokes about old people may seem funny until you’re dealing with a grandparent with Alzheimer’s. There are no right or wrong answers to what may be hurtful to you. The purpose of this exercise if for each of us to become more aware of how we may unintentionally be hurting or offending others.

One person needs to take notes in the workbook to record the topic of humour and when someone might be sensitive to that topic. The example I have just given is making fun of the elderly may be a sensitive topic to those who are elderly or those who are caring for them. Are there any questions?

[Field any questions.]

You’ve got 3 minutes for this exercise.

[After 3 minutes.]

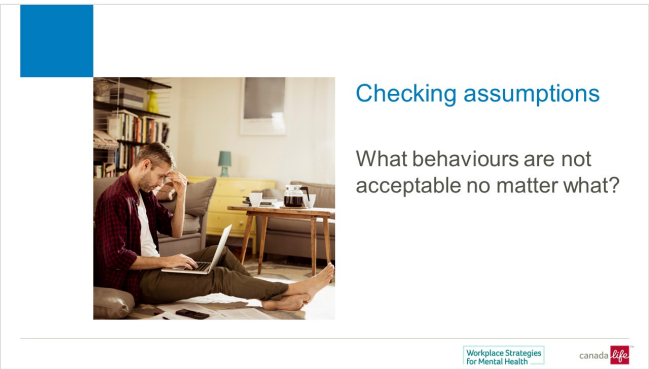
Let’s take up your answers by just having each group reading the topic and who would be sensitive to it.

[After the answers have been taken up or after 4 minutes, whichever comes first.]

Transition

We’d hate to lose our sense of humour at work. But when humour crosses the line to make others feel uncomfortable or ridiculed, it’s not psychologically safe.

Slide 17 | 10 minutes



What behaviours aren't acceptable no matter what?

Facilitator notes

Record the answers of what constitutes unacceptable behaviours.

Suggested wording

For this question, record behaviours you would report or stop without hesitation. For example, threats of violence or physical aggression. I'll give you one minute.

[After one minute.]

Now share your list with your group and have someone record in the participant handout which behaviours are sometimes excusable and why, and which behaviours are never excusable. You've got 3 minutes and then we'll take up your answers.

[After 3 minutes.]

Let's go from group to group to take up the behaviours that you all agreed are never excusable. If another group had a reason for why this behaviour may be excusable in some situations, they can speak up.

[After the answers have been taken up or after 5 minutes, whichever comes first.]

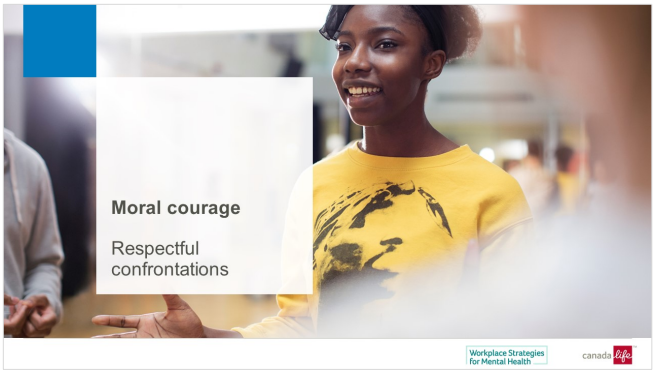
Thank you for this. It is, as you just demonstrated difficult to make consistent decisions about behaviours without knowing the whole story.

Transition

This list will now be shared with leadership to consider reviewing against existing protocols and policies.

Notes:

Slide 18 | 2 minutes



Moral courage

Suggested wording

We've looked at how others may misinterpret our intentions. We've also considered that we may make assumptions about the behaviour of others. This awareness can improve our emotional intelligence and our working relationships.

But what do you do when you witness someone else's inappropriate behaviour?

Do you speak up?

Do you get angry and confrontational yourself?

Or do you remain silent?

And do you offer support to the person that is being targeted?

Any of these reactions may allow the negative or harmful behaviours to continue or even worsen. Using the same confrontational behaviour you're trying to stop is NOT a psychologically safe approach.

Having the courage to speak up is only half of the skill set needed here. The other half is to confront the situation in a respectful way using what we refer to as "moral courage."

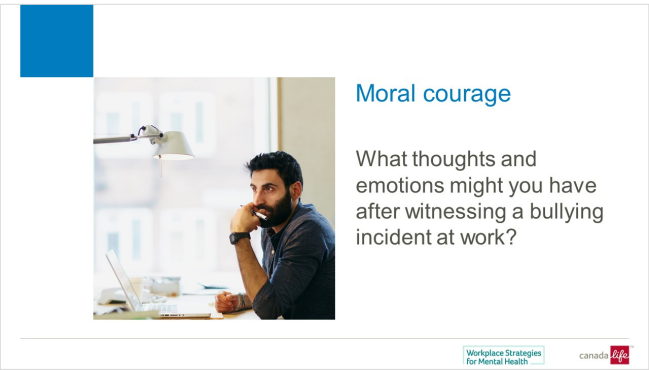
This means speaking up in a way that is respectful to all parties. It's human nature for us to make assumptions about what we're witnessing. But, the intention of either party may not be what you think it is. When we practice moral courage, we are objective and respond in a supportive, open manner.

Transition

This can help turn potentially harmful situations into ones that reinforce good working relationships.

Notes:

Slide 19 | 4 minutes



What thoughts and emotions might you have after witnessing a bullying incident at work?

Suggested wording

Think about a times when you saw someone being unkind or intimidating. Record your reaction to situations in which you felt unsafe to intervene. Also, please include your reaction in situations in which you were able to intervene.

No one will be forced to share their answers to this question, so please be as honest and specific as you can when you record your answers in your workbook. I'll give you 2 minutes to record the words that describe how you felt in each situation.

[After 2 minutes.]

When people witness what appears to be bullying, emotional responses can vary among people. Some may feel angry or outraged. Others may feel sad or embarrassed for one or both people. And some people may feel helpless or afraid. Not reacting at all may leave us regretting that we didn't do more to intervene.

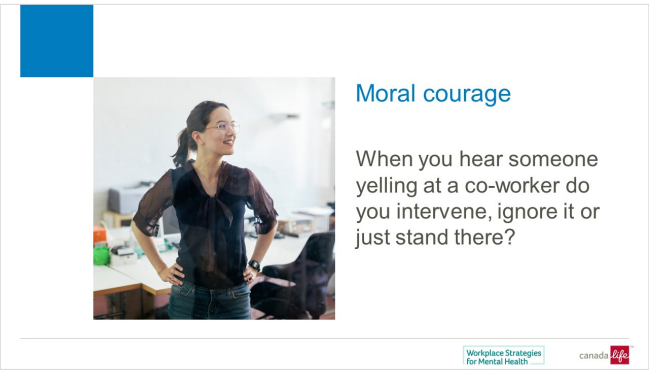
But intervening may not leave us feeling much better. We may worry that we'll become the target of the bully or be shunned by either or both individuals if they didn't appreciate our intervention. We may even be accused of making the situation worse.

Transition

The point is inappropriate behaviour in the workplace can affect us all. It can negatively impact the mental well-being and safety of everyone, not just those involved.

Notes:

Slide 20 | 3 minutes



When you hear someone yelling at a co-worker do you intervene, ignore it or just stand there?

Suggested wording

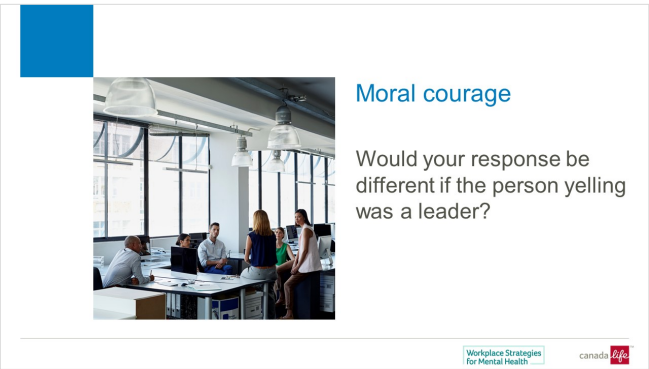
Record your answer to this question in your workbook as honestly and objectively as you can. When everyone's done, put down your pen. You won't have to share your answer, but please record how you actually respond and consider why. You have one minute.

[After 1 minute.]

Transition

It's not unusual for us to sit in frozen silence when we don't know what else to say or do. Or we may react emotionally when we witness bullying. What we hope to create together today is a more respectful way to intervene.

Slide 21 | 12 minutes



Would your response be different if the person yelling was a leader?

Facilitator notes

The information that comes from this exercise can be used to help leaders develop more effective responses to psychologically unsafe interactions among co-workers. If your intention is to share, be sure that you record the responses from the groups and let them know beforehand that you'll be doing this.

Suggested wording

Like the last question, we won't ask you to share your answer. Please record in your workbook how you would or wouldn't respond if a leader engages in inappropriate behaviour. Be as honest and objective as you can. You have 1 minute.

[After one minute.]

It may feel even more challenging to intervene with someone who has more power or authority. If we learn to intervene in a non-confrontational way, using moral courage, we can do so no matter who the other person is. Developing an approach we all agree on will make it easier to intervene respectfully with everyone, including leaders.

Let’s start by considering how you think leaders should respond if they witness one co-worker yelling at another. Discuss and decide on a process your group believes is appropriate and psychologically safe.

Remember, the person doing the yelling may be going through a personal, work, health or family stressor. It’s not an excuse for yelling, but it’s important to not immediately assume they’re bullying for the sake of being mean. Take this into account in your approach.
We’ll ask each group to share their response. Assign someone to report back.
You have 5 minutes to discuss.

[After 5 minutes, take up the answers, for another 5 minutes.]

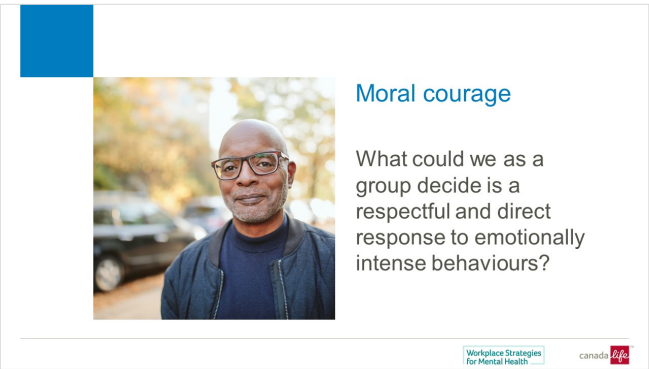
Thank you for these ideas. They can help leaders develop a more effective approach to intervening with moral courage.

Transition

Let’s try to come up with an approach that will work for those of us who aren’t leaders.

Notes:

Slide 22 | 15 minutes



What could we as a group decide is a respectful and direct response to emotionally intense behaviours?

Facilitator notes

You may choose from among these ways to vote on the approach 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

Any approach we all agree on in advance as being respectful and supportive is less likely to be misinterpreted. Psychologically unsafe behaviours can range from frustration or rudeness, to bullying or harassment. In your workbook, record some potential responses to such behaviour. Try to recognize that the person behaving inappropriately may feel overwhelmed or upset. Give them the benefit of the doubt by respectfully bringing their attention to the possibility that their behaviour could be hurtful.

For example, if I raise my voice because I'm passionate about my idea, what could you say to remind me that I may be unintentionally intimidating others? The idea here is to give me the benefit of the doubt that I'm not intending harm. Next, allow me an opportunity to try a different approach.
Some ideas may include:

- "Can you re-frame this?"
- "Should we take a quick break?"

Everyone will know what we're doing – reminding me of my behaviour may not be ideal – but I also get a chance to save face and start again.

Consider the most respectful way to remind each other of this. Think of words that are least likely to feel sarcastic or patronizing to you. Think of words you would hear as respectful and neutral.
I'll give you 2 minutes now to record your response and then you'll share your answers with your group. I'll let you know when the 2 minutes is up.

[After 2 minutes.]

Now you're going to share your answers with your group. Have one person at a time share their preferred answer and discuss how each of you would respond to someone saying those words to you. Would you feel supported or like you were being attacked? Make sure each person gets a chance to share. Try to find a response that's unlikely to trigger defensiveness and would be received as supportive by everyone in your group. We'll take up each group's preferred answers when you're done.

Each group should be ready to share their best answer with the rest of us. I'll record these so that we can come back to them and vote on one that we want to try.

**[Take up the answers and share them all so that everyone is ready to vote on them.
This should take about 5 minutes, but a greater number of groups will require more time.]**

[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's **[read it aloud]**. Remember that the other ideas can also be considered at a later date if we find this one isn't as effective as we want.

Here are the rules of engagement for using this approach going forward:

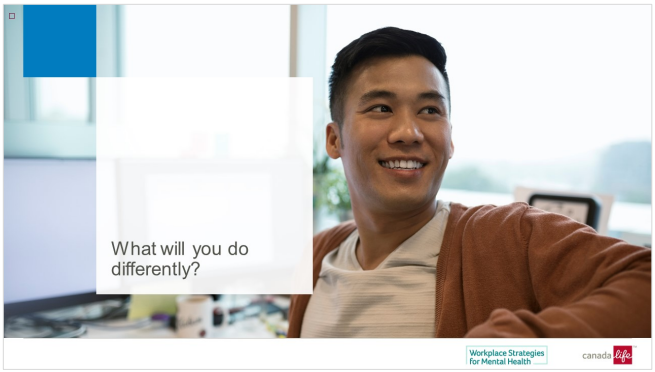
- We must be consistent and immediate in using this response every time we witness behaviour that may be inappropriate.
- We must agree that our intention in using this is to support psychologically safe interactions for everyone.
- Our approach must be to give someone the benefit of the doubt and allow them to try again by restating what they were trying to say.
- Our approach should sound and feel supportive and respectful rather than accusatory.
- We should avoid becoming defensive if someone uses this approach with us and recognize that they have our back. In other words, they're trying to save us from having our intentions misinterpreted. We should respond with, "Thank you, let me try that again."

Transition

Next, we want to make a commitment to ourselves and each other about how we will apply what we've learned today.

Notes:

Slide 23 | 5 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

If there is anyone who isn't able or willing to adopt the approach that we've agreed on I would like you to speak to me privately. For the rest, we will assume that you'll start to use this in all interactions immediately.

Next, please record at least one thing in addition to this approach that you'll do differently at work as a result of today's discussion. It could relate to how you'll communicate, how you'll check your own assumptions about people or how you'll respectfully speak up when you witness unsafe behaviour. It could be something from the workshop or something discussed in your group. I'll ask you to share your answer when the time's up. You have one minute to record.

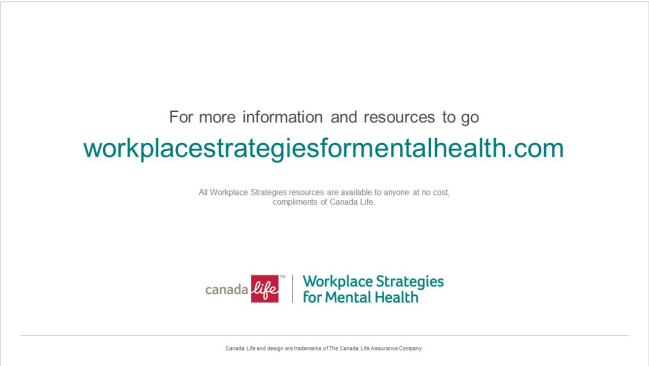
[After one minute, ask as many people to share as time allows.]

Transition

Thank you. If all of us can be more aware of our words and actions, we'll be able to create a psychologically safer work environment for everyone.

Notes:

Slide 24 | 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:

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:

Before you say no, ask why

Discover the need behind the request before saying no. You may be able to meet the need without agreeing to the original request.

Being a mindful employer

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.

Burnout response

Learn the steps that can help you identify, prevent or reduce the impact of burnout for employees or yourself.

Employee resources

Use the many tools and resources provided to help employees at work with personal well-being and in their support of family and friends.

Helping troubled coworkers

This article discusses how employees can support co-workers through any life stressors, including mental health problems, without becoming stressed themselves.

Ideas for resolving conflict at work

Use these ideas to help individuals resolve their own conflicts at work.

Protecting ourselves against bullying

People targeted by bullying need to cope until the issue is resolved. These strategies can reduce stress, improve perceptions and increase self-care.

Significant life stressors

Use this practical resource for coping with significant life stressors including divorce, finances, being a caregiver and experiencing abuse.

Stress management tool

Help identify and address the source of your stress with Stress strategies – a free online tool with practical, problem-solving methods.

Why blame and shame don't work

Learn to avoid blame and shame to reduce negativity and conflict.

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

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

Contact us through social media or at clwsmh.com

Twitter LinkedIn YouTube

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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