

On the **Agenda**



Facilitator's Guide

Psychological Protection

Psychological Protection



Slide # 1

For this slide, you want to ensure that you have already introduced:

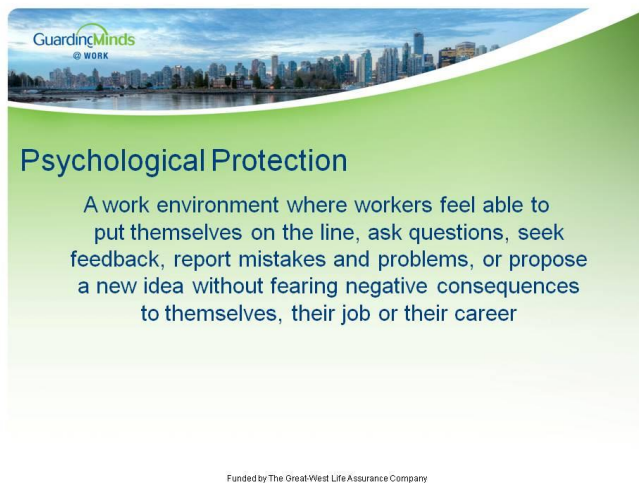
- yourself
- your role within the organization, if unknown to the group
- why you are engaging the group in this discussion
- the importance of addressing psychological health and safety in your organization

The importance of addressing psychological health and safety in your organization can be highlighted by stating the following:

1. Depression will rank second only to heart disease as the leading cause of disability worldwide by the year 2020, which can impact the workplace in areas such as bottom-line production and team work.
2. There are current and emerging legal requirements in Canada for the protection of employee psychological health and safety and the promotion of civility and respect at work.
3. Organizations that value and improve the health of the workplace can improve their organization profile. An improved profile can result in better recruitment and retention rates, enhancing the potential for growth. We want you and potential employees to know that we value your contribution to the organization, that you do good work and that we want to help you to continue to be successful at work.

After these statements, you might say: “The focus of this session is to discuss psychological protection in the workplace”.

On the Agenda



Slide # 2

This slide provides a definition of psychological protection in the workplace. We recommend starting with the proposed definition provided by *Guarding Minds @ Work*[™]: “Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when workers feel able to put themselves on the line, ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their job or their career. A psychologically safe and healthy workplace actively promotes emotional well-being among employees, while taking all reasonable steps to minimize threats to employee mental health.” Then open the floor for questions about the definition. An idea to get employees to start participating in your presentation is to ask a volunteer in the audience to read the slide. You may wish to share additional information such as:

1. What does psychological protection in the workplace mean?

Possible Answer: A psychologically safe workplace actively promotes emotional well-being among employees, while taking all reasonable steps to minimize threats to employee mental health.

2. Why is psychological protection in the workplace important?

Possible Answer: Psychological safety is important because workers who are psychologically safe feel able to put themselves on the line, ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their job or their career.

About PF12: Psychological Protection

What are Psychosocial Factors?

Psychosocial factors are elements that impact employees' psychological responses to work and work conditions, potentially causing psychological health problems. Psychosocial factors include the way work is carried out (deadlines, workload, work methods) and the context in which work occurs (including relationships and interactions with managers and supervisors, colleagues and coworkers, and clients or customers).

What is PF12: Psychological Protection?

GM@W defines PF12: Psychological Protection as present in a work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured. Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when workers feel able to put themselves on the line, ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their job or their career. A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is one that promotes employees' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to employee psychological health due to negligent, reckless or intentional acts.

Why is Psychological Protection important?

When employees are psychologically protected they demonstrate greater job satisfaction, enhanced team learning behaviour and improved performance. Employees are more likely to speak up and become involved. They show increased morale and engagement and are less likely to experience stress-related illness. Psychologically protected workplaces also experience fewer grievances, conflicts and liability risks.

What happens when employees' psychological safety is not protected?

When employees are not psychologically safe they experience demoralization, a sense of threat, disengagement and strain. They perceive workplace conditions as ambiguous and unpredictable. The organization is at a much greater threat from costly, and potentially crippling, legal and regulatory risk. This can, in turn, undermine shareholder, consumer, and public confidence in the organization.

How can Psychological Protection be improved?

Start by conducting the GM@W Organizational Review and/or the GM@W Survey and reviewing the results. If **Psychological Protection** is identified as an area of concern or relative strength, refer to the GM@W Action Resources for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggested actions that can improve **Psychological Protection**. It is also important to discuss the findings with employees to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input into possible interventions. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the undertaken interventions over time to ensure they are effective and to take corrective action where needed. Consider reviewing the resources below. Finally, refer back to the GM@W website on occasion for new ideas about how **Psychological Protection** can be enhanced.

Further information about Psychological Protection:

- American Psychiatric Foundation. (2012). *Partnership for workplace mental health*. Retrieved from <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario. (2012). *Mental health works*. Retrieved from <http://mentalhealthworks.ca>
- Gilbert, M. & Bilsker, D. (2012). *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*. Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG.pdf
- Government of Canada (2012). *Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccohs.ca/>
- May, D., Gilson, R., & Harter, L. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 77(1), 11-37. Retrieved from <http://zonecours.hec.ca/documents/H2007-1-1046395.Douglas.pdf>
- Roussin, C. (2008). Increasing trust, psychological safety, and team performance through dyadic leadership discovery. *Small Group Research*, 39(2), 224-248. doi: 10.1177/1046496408315988
- Schepers, J, de Jong, A., Wetzels, M., & de Ruyter, K. (2008). Psychological safety and social support in groupware adoption: A multi-level assessment in education. *Computers & Education*, 51(2), 757-775. Retrieved from [http://jijlsite.onward.nl/pdf/JeroenSchepers.nl%20-%20Schepers,%20De%20Jong,%20Wetzels,%20De%20Ruyter%20\(2008\).pdf](http://jijlsite.onward.nl/pdf/JeroenSchepers.nl%20-%20Schepers,%20De%20Jong,%20Wetzels,%20De%20Ruyter%20(2008).pdf)
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2012). PF12: Psychological Protection. In *Centre Resources by GM@W Factor and On the Agenda*. Retrieved from <http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com>

www.guardingmindsatwork.ca



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What does psychological protection in the workplace look like?

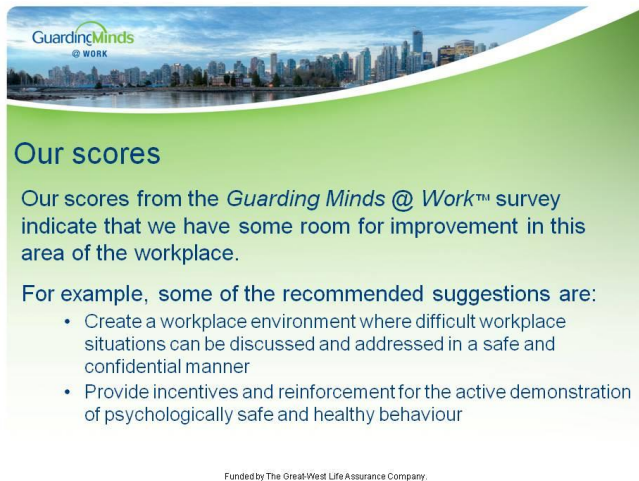
- Reduced conflict
- Fewer job-related errors, incidents, accidents and injuries
- Enhanced compliance with legal and regulatory requirements
- Bullying or harassment is not permitted

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Slide # 3

This slide details what a psychologically protected workplace may look like. Simply read the points on the slide. If you would like to expand on the information, we suggest elaborating on what a non-psychologically protected workplace may look like. You can suggest the following and why you don't want this for your group:

- Employees may feel a sense of disengagement, stress and job strain
- Employees may report feeling threatened to participate in workplace endeavors and change strategies
- The organization may see a rise in legal and regulatory problems



Our scores

Our scores from the *Guarding Minds @ Work™* survey indicate that we have some room for improvement in this area of the workplace.

For example, some of the recommended suggestions are:

- Create a workplace environment where difficult workplace situations can be discussed and addressed in a safe and confidential manner
- Provide incentives and reinforcement for the active demonstration of psychologically safe and healthy behaviour

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Slide # 4

If your workplace or a sector in the workplace completed the *Guarding Minds @ Work* (GM@W) Survey, you may wish to review the scores now. Let your employees know that there is always room for improvement, and it is also important to recognize and retain what is already working.

- Review the suggestions on the slide and let them know that putting psychological health and safety on the agenda is an active step to increase workplace psychological protection.
- If your workplace has not undertaken the GM@W Review or Survey, ask the employees if they feel the suggestions on the slide would be helpful, and why or why not.

GM@W Suggested Responses

Please consult the *Selection of GM@W Suggested Actions* and *Selection of Effective Actions: Applying a Quality Framework* documents to help you select GM@W suggested actions to undertake for Psychological Protection.

PF12: PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured.

PF12: GM@W Survey Results (check rating, if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> SERIOUS CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> MINIMAL CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE STRENGTHS
PF12: GM@W Organizational Review Results (check rating, if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> SERIOUS CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> MINIMAL CONCERNS	<input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE STRENGTHS

Serious Concerns = 5 to 9 **Significant Concerns = 10 to 13** **Minimal Concerns* = 14 to 16** **Relative Strengths** = 17 to 20**

* Although this is a Minimal Concern, it is important to attend to it and review the GM@W Organizational Review Results and the GM@W Survey Results for any additional or individual-identified areas of concern.

** Although this is a Relative Strength, it is important to review the GM@W Organizational Review Results and the GM@W Survey Results for any additional or individual-identified areas of concern.

The list below contains actions that you can take to respond to actual or potential concerns related to **Psychological Protection**. Many of these actions have been found to be effective in research studies, have been recommended as best practices, or have been found valuable in applied settings. Some have been informed by emerging case law and regulatory requirements. *Psychological Protection is an area of particular importance from this perspective (see also: PSR1, 4, 5 and 9).* The actions are drawn from diverse industries and sectors, and not all may be applicable or feasible in your particular workplace. This list is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be prescriptive. Rather, these are suggestions for possible courses of action.

If **Psychological Protection** has been flagged as a **Relative Strength** in your workplace, it is important not to overlook this finding. You can do this by developing policies that protect this relative strength and engaging staff in discussions of how this strength can be enhanced by implementing the suggested actions below.

If **Psychological Protection** has been flagged as an area of concern in your workplace, consider which of these actions might be appropriate. In making your decision, it can be helpful to keep the following six key quality dimensions in mind: Appropriateness, Acceptability, Accessibility, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Safety (see *Selection of Effective Actions: Applying a Quality Framework* for more information).

The actions below fall into four main categories: (1) norms, values and practices of the work environment; (2) training and development initiatives; (3) communication strategies and approaches; and (4) formal policies and programs. You may have already initiated some of the actions – but consider the others. You may also have other ideas for actions you could implement – there is a space for writing these down at the end of this document. **Remember, not every action that might enhance Psychological Protection in your workplace is listed here. Implementing the following actions, however, will provide a strong foundation for building a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.**

Work Environment (Norms, Values & Practices)

- Create a culture where psychological health and safety is valued, encouraged and promoted
- Ensure organizational justice across all facets of the workplace: ensure fairness in how workplace decisions are made and how procedures are carried out (“procedural justice”); ensure fairness in the outcomes of workplace decisions, such as promotion decisions (“distributive justice”); and communicate explanations for decisions in a respectful manner, with sincerity, care and empathy (“interactional justice”)
- Create a process where difficult workplace situations can be discussed and addressed in a safe and confidential manner
- Recognize that the assurance of psychological safety is more than just a policy – it involves an ongoing process of education, implementation and evaluation, with revisions as needed
- Provide incentives and reinforcement for the active demonstration of psychologically healthy and safe behaviour

Training & Development

- Provide ongoing orientation and training on organizational/union policies and programs on harassment, discrimination, violence at work and conflict management
- Orient and train managers/supervisors, human resources providers, and union personnel to be knowledgeable and accountable for ensuring a psychologically healthy and safe workplace
- Provide training on identifying and dealing with psychosocial stressors in the workplace (e.g., training in assertiveness, problem-solving and stress management)

Communication

- Provide ongoing awareness and communication about existing policies on harassment, discrimination, violence and conflict management (using both formal and informal communication networks)
- Provide safe opportunities for employees to identify and participate in the remediation of psychological safety concerns
- Communicate the availability of resources, educational material and supports available to manage stress

Formal Policies & Programs

- Comply with the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
- Develop policies and programs that assess and address harm to employees (i.e., harassment, discrimination, violence)
- Regularly review and modify policies and programs to reflect emerging case law and regulatory changes
- Create company ethics, values and employee privacy statements with participation from all levels of staff
- Provide internal programs and benefits, as well as information on external resources, that support employees who have experienced work-related harassment, discrimination or violence (e.g., Employee and Family Assistance programs, access to psychologists or other regulated mental health professionals, community services)
- Conduct regular risk assessments and reviews to help understand and monitor factors that may negatively affect employees' psychological health and safety
- Provide programs and services for those working in vulnerable situations/hours (e.g., debriefing, peer support, "safe-walk" programs, secure parking access)
- Provide employees with adequate rest/break or job rotations for particularly burdensome mental or physical tasks (e.g., rest period for night-shift workers)

Additional resources have been created to help you take action, including: presentation slides and supporting materials (freely available at www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/ota) and a new resource - *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*, developed on behalf of the Mental Health Commission of Canada Workforce Advisory Committee, that is a practical tool designed to help employers develop implementation plans on the basis of GM@W findings (freely available at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG.pdf).

We encourage you to review these resources for additional suggested actions.

Other Actions:

- _____

- _____

- _____

There won't be a perfect set of actions – often it's a matter of choosing the actions most likely to accomplish positive outcomes while generating the fewest potential problems.

Once you have selected one or more actions to undertake, enter them into the corresponding *GM@W Action Planning Worksheet*, pick your start date, identify who will be involved – your Action Team, and get started!



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Activity

Review actions recommended by research or best practices

Choose the recommended actions that:

- a) Are most likely to be effective in protecting psychological safety
- b) Are low cost or no cost in terms of both time and expense
- c) Will have a measurable benefit to the workplace as a whole

Slide # 5

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- Review the recommended actions in the GM@W Suggested Responses document or choose those that you wish to share with the group as possibilities.
- Ask the employees to work in groups of three or more to review the suggested responses and discuss what each of these may mean for your workplace in regards to practicality, profit, cost and challenges.
- Ask that someone keep notes, and let them know that their group is to report back to the larger group in 15 minutes.
- Ask for a group to volunteer to start the report back and begin the discussion to choose which initiative(s) to begin with.
- Check out the Centre website at www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com for free resources related to psychological protection.

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Activity

Consider the first plan of action:
Choose or vote on the most valuable recommendation and develop a cost-benefit analysis for this team

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Slide # 6

- Ask the employees to vote on the most important recommendation that they heard from the previous exercise. Ballots, Post-it Notes, stickers or raised hands are all ideas that could be used for voting.
- If there is a discrepancy, see if you can narrow the options down to two and discuss the potential pros and cons of each option and then re-vote, or consider implementing more than one option at once if this would be practical.
- Develop a statement with the group about why the chosen recommendation is important.



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Activity

Create a plan to implement

Use the handout provided to:

- Describe the action
- Assign tasks to individuals on the team
- Create a start date
- Develop an indicator to determine if the action had the desired effect
- Create a date to evaluate

Slide # 7

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- Hand out the Action Planning Worksheet to each employee so he or she can follow along.
- Identify each step required to implement the chosen action(s).
- Review the steps and ask for volunteers to take on different actions. If individuals feel uncomfortable taking on an action by themselves, suggest working in pairs or groups.
- Set a follow-up date to review progress on the action items together, as well as an expected completion date.

GM@W Action Planning Worksheet

Name: _____

Position: _____ Date: ____/____/____

PF12: PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured.

PF12 GM@W Survey Results

PF12 GM@W Survey Score: _____ (5 to 20)

Date administered: ____/____/____



PF12 GM@W Organizational Review Results

PF12 GM@W Organizational Review Score: _____ (5 to 20)

Date administered: ____/____/____



Serious Concerns = 5 to 9 Significant Concerns = 10 to 13 Minimal Concerns* = 14 to 16 Relative Strengths = 17 to 20**

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** Although this is a Relative Strength, it is important to review the GM@W Organizational Review Results and the GM@W Survey Results for any additional or individual-identified areas of concern.

	Selected Action(s) (What exactly are you planning to do?)	Starting Date (What is a realistic date to begin?)	End Date (Is the action ongoing or will it end? If so, when?)	Action Team (Who is involved? Be specific.)	Indicator(s) (What changes do you expect to result from this Action?)	Evaluation Date (When will you determine if the Action was successful?)
Action Priority 1:						
Action Priority 2: <i>(if applicable)</i>						
Action Priority 3: <i>(if applicable)</i>						



Slide # 8

For this slide, we suggest encouraging your employees to check out the *Workplace Strategies for Mental Health* website at www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com. The website features a number of employee-specific resources they can access for free:

- Self-assessment tools to check their current state of mental health
- Information about mental health, addiction and mental illness
- Approaches to mental wellness and coping with workplace stressors
- *Working Through It*, which is a video-based series of video clips by, and for, those struggling while at work, off work or returning to work