

Employee Wellness

Be proactive about creating a workplace that supports overall wellbeing and inclusion for all. Here are some ideas to help employees learn about wellness and disability topics:

- Hold lunch and learns on different wellness topics
- Participate in initiatives such as Mental Health Awareness Week
- Offer wellness perks such as discounts at a local gym or yoga studio
- Provide 5-minute mindfulness moments in the morning or afternoon for your employees
- Post resources in a common area so employees have easy access to help, if needed

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH & SAFETY

A Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace

Like physical health, psychological (mental) health is a continuum and everyone is on it! There are many things that can impact our mental health, both in our personal life and at work. A psychologically healthy and safe workplace promotes employee mental health and works to prevent harm.

Poor employee mental health impacts job performance and overall business effectiveness. Here are some statistics about mental health in the workplace from the Mental Health Commission of Canada:

- 1 in 5 Canadians experience a psychological health condition or illness in any given year and is the number one cause of disability in Canada.
- Psychological health problems cost the Canadian economy \$51 billion per year, \$20 billion of which results from work-related causes.
- 47% of working Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of daily life.



Supportive Employer Top Tip

“Deliver on your employment promise! If you hire someone knowing that they have barriers, then follow through. Understand and accommodate those barriers. Honour that promise.”

Fostering a psychologically safe and healthy workplace can boost employee engagement, increase productivity and reduce health costs, employee turnover, and lost work time due to mental illness and stress. Here are some strategies to promote psychological health and safety in your workplace and bring it to life:

EMPLOYEES

- Be supportive of coworkers who are experiencing stress
- Ask for help and offer help in situations of workplace abuse
- Report any incidences of workplace abuse, violence, discrimination or harassment
- Take the opportunity to rest during designated breaks and holidays
- Build a healthy lifestyle by practicing wellness

EMPLOYERS

- Lead by example with respectful workplace behaviours
- Recognize workplace stressors and changes in an employee's behaviour or performance
- Accommodate employees who need flexible work arrangements
- Provide training on mental health in the workplace
- Recognize and reward employee contributions
- Listen to employees' concerns and respond accordingly
- Create opportunities for team building, stress-reducing activities and fun at work
- Involve employees in the development of workplace mental health programs
- Connect employees with resources for mental health, including addiction
- Establish peer support and/or a counselling network
- Establish an incident-reporting and a conflict resolution system

As you will notice from the list above, the bulk of the responsibility for a psychologically healthy and safe workplace falls on employers. You will find additional resources at the end of this section that may be helpful to you as an employer.



Inclusion Tip *Stressful Encounters*

After a stressful encounter with an angry customer or colleague, it's important to support your employee who has had to deal with the situation. Ask them how they are feeling, provide an opportunity for them to talk about the experience and to take a break or leave work early, if the experience was traumatic. If your company has an Employee and Family Assistance Provider (EFAP), encourage them to contact the provider and access counselling support.





Employer Case Study: *Union Gospel Mission*

Union Gospel Mission is in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Committed to transforming communities "by overcoming poverty, homelessness and addiction one life at a time", the employees at UGM work in a rewarding yet psychologically challenging environment. And sometimes this work takes a toll on their mental health and overall wellbeing.

*UGM took an innovative approach to supporting those employees who needed a break from emotionally taxing work on the streets of Canada's poorest neighbourhood. **They created a respite program that provides employees with the opportunity, if they need it, to transfer to a one-year position that works inside UGM.** This program gives employees who are deeply committed to the work and mission of UGM a sometimes much needed chance to "catch their breath." In addition, this practice leads to higher employee retention, as opposed to the employee leaving due to burnout, which can often be the #1 reason for people who work in caring occupations to leave their employer.*

*Taking employee health and self-care seriously is a priority. All UGM employees also receive nonviolent crisis intervention training, which equips them with the knowledge and skills to safely handle difficult situations. This type of training acts as a preventative measure because it **decreases the likelihood of them becoming overwhelmed with stress or even fear** if such situations arise in the future. UGM also runs a coaching program, where **employees can meet with professional coaches in a safe space to talk through or receive professional insight on various matters.***

