



Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada

Mental Health FIRST AID IN THE WORKPLACE



MANAGER'S
Guide

Canada

AN INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Managers from various federal departments and agencies have often expressed a need for tools to help them deal with mental health issues in the workplace.

To assist its managers in addressing this issue, the Canada Revenue Agency developed a workshop on mental health, based partly on an initiative developed by Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

This workshop was so successful that other departments requested training, a task that went beyond the resources and mandate of the organization. One department suggested summarizing the training in a practical guide for all federal public service managers.

Upon learning of the project, members of the Federal Workplace Well-being Network also expressed an interest in becoming actively involved in the initiative. This Network is made up of managers responsible for well-being in the workplace and internal employee assistance programs.

“Mental Health First Aid in the Workplace - Manager's Guide” is the result of this innovative interdepartmental partnership.

The Canada Revenue Agency would like to thank the following Departments for their contribution:

*Canadian Heritage
Justice Canada
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Department of National Defence*

The involvement of other organizations such as Health Canada, House of Commons, Statistics Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission, and the National Council of Federal Employees with Disabilities is also appreciated.

For more information on this guide, contact the Employee Assistance Program at the Canada Revenue Agency.

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Introduction

When dealing with mental illness in the workplace, your role as manager is to ensure a healthy work environment, to help the employee perform well at work, and to take care of yourself.

This guide is designed to help you achieve this goal. It is the result of extensive interdepartmental cooperation and demonstrates the federal government's commitment to being an employer of choice when it comes to mental health.

The Guide will help you to:

- Better understand mental health and mental illness
- Take action when warning signs appear
- Manage employees with mental health issues on a day-to-day basis
- Take the necessary action while the employee is away
- Facilitate the employee's return to work
- Learn about management practices that promote the performance and well-being of all employees

We hope that you will find this guide useful.



The information contained in this publication is intended as general guidance only. It may or may not reflect the position of qualified mental health care professionals. The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice and should not be interpreted as official government policy or direction. The applicable policies and guidelines of the Government of Canada, as well as those of each department and agency, should be consulted with respect to specific cases.

A shared responsibility

Some people might assume that mental health is an “individual” responsibility that has nothing to do with the workplace. This is not necessarily the case. Although each employee is, in fact, responsible for his or her own well-being and work performance, the organization also has an essential role to play in creating a healthy work environment that fosters well-being and productivity.

Part II of the *Canada Labour Code* clearly states that the employer is responsible for the occupational health and safety of employees. What is also important is that a healthy workplace must reflect sound management practices based on the internalization of ethical values in day-to-day operations.

How health is defined*

Health is defined as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease.”

Mental health exists where a person is “in balance physically, psychologically, emotionally, economically, and spiritually”. Being in good mental health means being generally satisfied with one's personal, family, social, and professional lives.

Mental health in the workplace is expressed as a feeling of balance, satisfaction and effectiveness in the work environment.

Resources available

Issues related to mental health in the workplace may be very complex and require the involvement of specialists. Since your role is not to become the confidante of the person in difficulty, but rather to help the person recover and perform well in a healthy work environment, you should consult as often as needed the employee assistance program counsellors as well as experts in the areas of

- labour relations;
- compensation;
- employment equity;
- occupational health and safety;
- informal dispute resolution; or
- other specializations available in your organization.

* These definitions are from, respectively, the World Health Organization, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and the *Revue des psychologues du Québec* (March 2001).



Taking Action When Warning Signs Appear



You are a manager and you are concerned about an employee whose performance has slipped and whose health is worrying you. Should you take action? The answer is YES, ABSOLUTELY.

As a manager, you are not required to take charge of the employee in difficulty or to become the employee's friend and confidante. Nor are you required to make a diagnosis. Only specialists can do this. Your role is to create a work environment that supports the employee's well-being and performance.

Early intervention means that the employee can remain at work or be absent for only a short time. The first thing you need to do is to assess the situation appropriately and to know how to recognize the signs of excessive stress that may be the forerunners of mental illness.

Risk factors

Imagine a tightrope walker balancing on a high wire. In good times, we are usually able to deal with daily difficulties. When the level of fatigue increases, or when we have to deal with internal or external stress factors, we are like a tightrope walker buffeted by high winds and we risk losing our balance.

The main factors threatening the physical and mental balance of individuals may be divided into four categories:



Illustration based on the mental health continuum - Canadian Mental Health Association.

Traumas: difficult circumstances such as bereavement, separation or divorce, a serious accident, illness, rape, or abuse.

Genetic predispositions: a family history of diagnosed or undiagnosed mental illness.

Personal stress: internal attitudes or perceptions that can increase personal stress, such as perfectionism, difficulty in taking care of oneself or in saying no, lack of self-esteem, difficulty in “letting go”, and delegating.

Taking Action When Warning Signs Appear

Occupational stress: excessive stress at work that can be caused by

- an excessive workload
- lack of control over or knowledge of the tasks to be performed
- lack of recognition
- lack of consistency between the values of the organization and their daily application
- interpersonal or organizational conflict, including harassment

It is important to note that occupational stress is not caused solely by excessive demands: it also occurs when an employee does not have enough to do and, consequently, feels unproductive and undervalued. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the symptoms of excessive stress.

Excessive stress and mental illness - The warning signs

It has been proven that excessive stress can endanger a person's mental health. It is therefore important for you to be able to recognize the symptoms in the workplace.

Here are some signs to watch out for:

- unusual behaviour
- frequent late arrivals or absences
- unusual performance difficulties
- uncharacteristic signs of distraction, concentration, or memory problems
- marked loss of interest and desire to be involved
- strange or grandiose ideas
- excessively high or excessively low energy level
- unusual inability to make decisions
- rapid mood swings, angry outbursts, or weeping
- signs that could point to substance abuse

Attention: the presence of these signs does not necessarily mean that an employee has a mental health problem. Regardless, you should take action promptly if you see these signs.

Watch out for absenteeism

If an employee starts missing work regularly and gives only vague excuses or no reasons at all for these absences, you must take immediate action by talking to the employee and determining whether the absenteeism is due to a more serious problem. You also need to keep an eye out for employees who work longer than average hours or regularly take work home to make sure that they do not burn out.

Taking Action When Warning Signs Appear

Role of the organization

A growing number of employers are implementing well-being policies and programs. Most are based on organizational values and ethics, as well as a body of legal obligations pertaining to:

- labour relations
- employee assistance programs
- occupational health and safety
- employment equity and diversity
- informal dispute management
- harassment

Senior managers also have a role to play: through communication and concrete action they can support managers in demonstrating the importance of employee well-being.

Role of the person in difficulty

Employees who are showing signs of excessive stress or mental illness are responsible for seeking and obtaining professional assistance. Ideally, employees should discuss any well-being or work performance issues with their managers in order to find solutions.

"I knew that something was not quite right. I was almost at the end of my rope, but I did everything I could in order to stay at work. I appreciated the fact that my manager took me aside one day and asked me, in confidence, whether everything was OK, and pointed out that I no longer seemed to be myself at work. In a way, that forced me to face up to the situation and to get help."

Note: The statements reproduced in this brochure refer to the experiences of federal government employees.

Your role as manager

When you realize that an employee is showing one or more of the aforementioned signs, you should take the following action:

- Avoid assuming that the problems experienced by the employee will resolve themselves over time.*
- Take action as quickly as possible, but without assuming responsibility for the person.*

Taking Action When Warning Signs Appear

Meet informally with the employee and give reassurance that the conversation will remain confidential.

- Inform the employee of your observations about his or her behaviour and mood. Emphasize the facts. Use concrete examples, and ask open-ended questions that will allow the employee to freely express any concerns (see the section on effective conversations on page 10).
- Never try to obtain information about the employee's medical condition. Such information is private. If the person provides you with medical details spontaneously, treat this information as confidential.

- *Encourage the employee to get help.*

Tell the employee that you are concerned. Exercise discretion and judgement in suggesting that the employee contact the employee assistance program. Consult Appendix 2 for suggestions on how to respond to any objections the employee may raise in this regard.

- *Offer your help in maintaining the employee's well-being and work performance.*

Explore with the employee how you might, for example, adjust the employee's duties or schedule, increase motivation, and reduce absenteeism.

- *Do everything possible to address any prejudices concerning mental illness that may exist in your team (see Appendix 3).*

For example, you could organize an information session on mental health in conjunction with the employee assistance program, and encourage your employees to attend well-being activities within your organization.

When illness makes things difficult

Employees who have not come to terms with their illness or who are prevented from doing so because of the very nature of their disability may not take adequate steps to obtain treatment or seek accommodation. In fact, some forms of mental illness can impair the ability of employees to assess their own situation and to articulate their concerns, which may in turn prevent them from dealing effectively with representatives from management or their unions in finding reasonable accommodation.

Draft internal Policy and Procedures on Accommodation of Mental Illness, Canadian Human Rights Commission

Managing Mental Illness in the Workplace

You have noticed that an employee is showing signs of excessive stress and that the employee's performance has slipped. You have intervened and encouraged the employee to seek help but the situation does not seem to be improving. What do you do?

As with any other employee living with a disability, you have a role to play in assisting employees with mental health problems so they can maximize their potential in a healthy work environment.

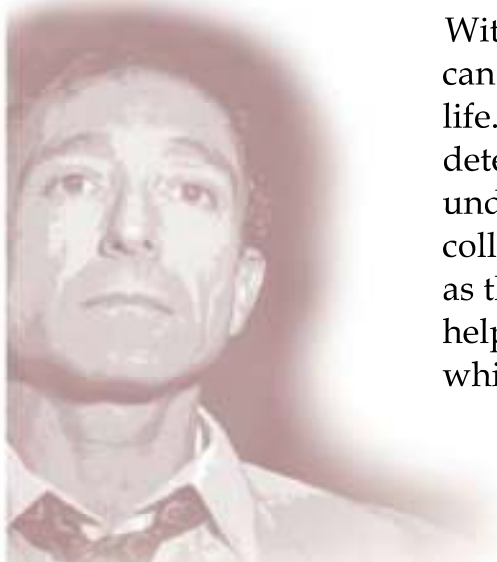
Mental illness is characterized by changes in thinking, mood or behaviour (or a combination of the three) associated with **substantial distress and general dysfunction.**

Thus, mental illness includes a variety of mental problems that may be diagnosed and that impair the well-being and functioning of individuals, such as

- anxiety disorders (panic attacks, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders, anorexia, bulimia, etc.)
- burnout
- depression
- bipolar disorder (previously called manic depression)
- schizophrenia
- paranoia
- substance abuse

"I had to have a mental illness myself in order to understand that being mentally healthy is more than merely feeling good about yourself. For me, it means having all my cognitive faculties, and being able to concentrate and think coherently and at a normal pace. It also means being capable of perceiving reality as it is and feeling emotions that reflect that reality. My illness has an impact on my work performance but, provided the necessary accommodation is made, I can be fully productive."

With appropriate treatment, people who have a mental illness can successfully manage their condition and lead a productive life. In order for this to happen, however, the illness must be detected and treated quickly. In this respect, never underestimate your role in convincing your employees, colleagues, and any other person around you to get help as soon as the first signs of distress are observed. Early intervention can help to prevent minor symptoms from growing to the point at which they become disabling.





Role of the organization

The organization must ensure that policies and processes are made available to managers to help them deal with mental health issues (e.g. disability case management measures). The organization must also help managers develop the skills they need in order to take appropriate action.

Role of the person in difficulty

Individuals who receive a diagnosis of mental illness are responsible for taking care of themselves by following the professional advice they are given. They should also try to maintain their work performance by making use, where necessary, of reasonable accommodations in consultation with the manager, human resources specialists or the employee assistance program.

Your role as manager

The following is the suggested approach to take action.

Before meeting with the employee in difficulty

- You are not alone in dealing with the situation*

Plan the meeting by tapping into expertise (employee assistance, labour relations, etc.).
- Take some time to reflect on your own experiences with mental illness*

You must ask yourself certain questions before meeting with the employee: are you comfortable dealing with mental illness issues? Have you ever experienced a mental health problem or helped someone close who was affected? If so, what happened? What aspects of your approach worked well? What would you do differently? The answers to these questions will help you develop the empathy required for your contact with the employee to be effective.

The link between stress and illness: an explanation

It has been scientifically proven that there is a clear relationship between stress factors and illness. "External and internally generated stress ... causes changes in brain chemistry which ultimately imperil the immune system's ability to defend the body against ... diseases. The effect of excessive stress and strain on brain chemistry is experienced as mood usually depression, anxiety or anger, depending on the individual and the situation. Even when such negative mood states do not produce immune system deficiencies, they are important in themselves because they are associated with poor morale, absenteeism and lower productivity."

Health Canada Website

Managing Mental Illness in the Workplace

- *Take stock of your own prejudices concerning mental illness.*

Everyone has prejudices. You simply have to be aware of your own prejudices, so that you can either curb them or set them aside to prevent a negative impact on your contact with the employee.

- *Familiarize yourself with your organization's human resources policies and reasonable accommodations.*
- *Have on hand a list of the resources available in your organization; for example how to reach the employee assistance program.*
- *Make sure that your conversation with the employee will be completely confidential by holding it either in a closed office or on "neutral ground".*

Mental illness can cause concentration or confusion problems. For this reason, the employee may choose to be accompanied by someone, such as a representative of the employee, a union steward, etc.

- *Be prepared to respond to any reactions and objections that the employee may have.*

The employee may appear reluctant to discuss the situation, especially if the employee has previously witnessed discrimination against a person living with mental illness. If the employee seems ill at ease, find out what you can do in order to increase the employee's comfort level and confidence (see Appendix 2 for more information).

In an emergency

Sometimes disturbing events can happen unexpectedly and be very upsetting for those who witness them. For example, an employee may suddenly exhibit inappropriate behaviour, become violent or undergo an emotional crisis. If this happens, you will need to call in the experts.

As soon as an employee poses a danger to his or her own safety or that of others, you must immediately seek outside help by contacting:

- *the security services of your organization and/or 911;*
- *the employee assistance program if professional counselors are available on site in your building.*

First and foremost, keep yourself safe. Never remain alone with an employee undergoing a crisis.

While waiting for assistance, tell the employee that you have called for help and that you have done this because you are concerned about him or her. Remain with the employee until help arrives.

If it is possible to take the employee to a closed office or conference room, do so. This will be more respectful of the employee's privacy and less traumatic for the employee's colleagues.



MODEL OF AN EFFECTIVE CONVERSATION

The following model is adapted from Marshal B. Rosenberg's "non-violent" method of communication. This method may be used at any time to promote good interpersonal relations and has proved to be particularly effective in difficult conversations. The basic principles for communicating with sincerity and empathy are as follows: Observing - Feeling - Needing - Requesting (O-F-N-R).

Make your observations

- Inform the employee of the observable behaviour you have objectively noted. Emphasize the facts.
- Pay attention to the words and tone you use, as well as your body language.

Express your feelings

- If you feel comfortable doing so, express your feelings concerning the facts noted. Avoid interpreting the facts or making judgments. This will allow the employee to feel that someone is listening and to have more confidence.
- Show empathy and understanding. Bear in mind that mental illness does not happen only to other people. One Canadian in five will be affected by mental illness during his or her lifetime. Someday, it could be you.

Clarify your needs and the employee's needs

- Explain your concerns, needs or values as they relate to the facts and your feelings, and pay attention to those expressed by the employee.

Make your request in a positive, concrete, and achievable way

- Clearly describe the change in attitudes or behaviour you are looking for in relation to what you have observed. Indicate what you want the employee to do in order for the situation to improve, from both your point of view and the employee's. Be clear about how this is to be done, the time limits for taking action, and the way in which the situation will be followed up (for example, by making an appointment for another meeting to discuss the situation).

Example: I have noticed that you were absent three days in the past two weeks (O). I am worried about you and I am concerned (F) because I need everyone on the team to perform their duties consistently (N). I would like us to discuss what can be done to prevent the situation from getting worse (R).

It is always a good idea to end this type of conversation by asking the employee to summarize what he or she has understood, so that you can rectify any misunderstanding. Make sure both parties are satisfied with the means to be used to improve the situation. It is also recommended that you summarize in writing the follow-up measures you have both agreed to (e.g., by sending an e-mail to the employee and to any other person concerned).

Follow-up after the meeting with the employee

You have come to an agreement with the employee about the action to be taken so that the employee can perform well and maintain his or her balance at work. You must now take the appropriate follow-up action to ensure that the employee's performance improves and that the employee's health does not get worse because of work.

- *First and foremost: take care of yourself!*
 - Have realistic expectations for yourself and for the employee
 - Avoid acting as a saviour
 - Limit the amount of time and attention you spend on the employee
 - Seek support for yourself
- *Make sure that the employee has enough leave credits.*

It is not a good idea to make informal arrangements with the employee to compensate for the employee's absences. Make sure that the employee understands his or her benefits. As soon as the employee goes on leave, have the employee contact the compensation specialists as soon as possible to make adequate arrangements in terms of leave or disability insurance.

- *Provide effective supervision.*

Make sure that the employee is carrying out the follow-up measures that were agreed upon. For example, you could schedule regular meetings in order to discuss the results achieved or to make adjustments. Use this opportunity to praise the employee's efforts and the objectives achieved, or to make changes based on how things are going.

A case history

“One of my employees who was on sick leave as a result of burn-out unexpectedly appeared in my office one day in a state of extreme agitation. In a fit of anger, he started speaking incoherently and threatening to take it out on his immediate supervisor. Security services were called. They knew what to do so that the employee got immediate medical attention, and made him understand that our actions were not designed to shut him out or to interfere in his personal affairs but rather to protect him and his colleagues. We also made him realize that making threats was serious and unacceptable behaviour.”

Managing Mental Illness in the Workplace



- *Be aware of the impact on the team.*

If the employee needs to be absent for an extended period or if temporary accommodations are put in place, inform the other employees of this, as appropriate, without revealing any confidential information.

If a critical event has taken place, you can request the employee assistance program to hold a debriefing session with the employees.

- *If the employee continually refuses to cooperate, seek assistance immediately from your employee assistance program and labour relations.*

While Your Employee is Away

Occasionally, an employee living with a mental illness may need to be away from work for an extended period in order to, for example, adjust to a new medication or to receive intensive treatment.



Is it appropriate to contact an employee who is absent for an extended period? Some managers are reluctant to do so. However, occasional telephone calls will help the employee feel supported during the convalescence period and will give you a heads-up on the arrangements that may be needed to facilitate the employee's return to work.

Steps to be taken

- *Call the employee for news from time to time.*
 - If you are not sure how to go about this, consult the experts;
 - Emphasize that the employee's recovery is of primary importance;
 - Avoid giving detailed answers to the questions the employee may ask about work but give the employee general reassurance;
 - Do not push the employee to return to work as it could create feelings of guilt related to his or her absence;
 - Keep the employee informed of any major changes that could take place in the organization.

While Your Employee is Away



- *Obtain assistance in planning the employee's return to work.*

Do not wait until the last minute to prepare for the employee's return to work. Discuss it as soon as possible with the appropriate resource persons. This will allow you to offer the employee various options for returning to work that meet your operational requirements, the employee's needs, and employer obligations.

- *Consider the climate in the organization.*

If there is reason to believe that an unhealthy work environment, a workplace dispute, harassment or any other organizational cause is an influencing factor in the employee's absence, seek help in taking quick and effective action on both individual and organizational levels.

- *Seek advice on how you can improve your own management practices if you wish to expand or update your knowledge.*

Returning to Work

It is never easy to return to work after an extended absence, particularly if the person's customary abilities are affected for a time because of the illness. It is especially difficult for a person living with mental illness, given the prejudices and the discrimination that are still common in our society today.

An employee living with mental health problems often needs to return to work gradually in order to avoid a relapse and to ensure that he or she is fully recovered.

Reasonable accommodation must therefore be made that reflects both the employee's capacities and operational requirements. Typically, this accommodation may be adjusted as the employee gradually recovers.

Role of the organization

The employer must comply with the law and policies governing employment equity, which set out reasonable accommodations for individuals who have a disability, including mental illness (which is often described as an "invisible" disability).

Role of the employee

The employee is responsible for following the professional recommendations made respecting his or her return to work. To the greatest extent possible, and depending on the employee's condition, the employee should also communicate his or her needs, abilities and limitations to management, as clearly as possible, so that the employee can meet performance expectations during the recovery period.

The "return-to-work" interview

A good management practice is to hold a "return-to-work" interview with any employee who has been absent for a fairly extensive period. If the absence was only for a few days, this can be done informally. This will allow you to always have an idea of who is absent within your team and to take the pulse of the unit in terms of what is going on. It is important to hold an interview of this kind for ALL absences, not only in cases where employees have been absent because of excessive stress or mental illness.

Line Managers' Resource



Your role as manager

- *Contact the employee at least two weeks before the scheduled return to work.*

Keep in mind that the person in difficulty is often in the best position to determine exactly what he or she needs in order to be productive. Take these preferences into account, but do not forget your own operational requirements and any advice you have received from the specialists (see Appendix 4 concerning possible accommodations).

- *Invite the employee to meet with you the week before his or her return to work.*

This meeting is useful for the employee to “break the ice” because it will allow the employee to meet some colleagues and regain contact with the workplace. During this meeting, clarify the plan for the employee's return to work. Make sure that expectations on both sides are realistic.

- *Ask the employee how he or she would like to be welcomed by the team.*

Most of the time, employees who have a mental illness like to be welcomed in the same way as any other person returning after an extended absence. Ignoring the employee “because we don't know what to say” is often devastating and creates feelings of isolation. A warm and natural welcome is encouraged.

- *Take the time to welcome the employee back.*

For example, go and see the employee to welcome him or her back to work. At the end of the employee's first day, ask the employee, in confidence, how things have gone and whether you can do anything to help. In the following days and weeks, continue to pay particular attention to the employee and to the employee's performance and well-being.

“Two weeks before I returned to work, my manager called me to ask what I needed to make my return to work easier. I told him that my greatest fear was that my colleagues would treat me like a crazy person and would no longer trust me. I told him that I would like my colleagues to treat me as they would if I were returning to work after a physical illness, and I gave him permission to pass this message on to my colleagues. When I arrived, I found on my desk some flowers and a welcome-back card signed by everyone on the team. That did me a world of good”.

THE DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE WITH RESPECT TO MENTAL HEALTH

The “duty to accommodate” refers to the obligation of the employer to take steps to eliminate disadvantages to employees and prospective employees resulting from a policy, rule, practice, or physical barrier that has or may have an adverse impact on individuals or groups protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act, or designated groups under the Employment Equity Act.

Just as individuals with physical disabilities may require physical aids in the workplace, individuals living with a mental illness often require organizational accommodations to be made. All efforts must be made to explore accommodation options without undue hardship taking into consideration operational requirements.*

When an employee has a learning disability or a physical disability such as a hearing, visual or motor impairment, the employee is sometimes more prone to depression (for example, because of the social isolation that may result from the employee's disability or an additional stress caused by inadequate accommodation). You have a role to play in making sure that the employee has genuine support and has everything required to carry out his or her work.

** Based on the draft internal **Policy and Procedures on Accommodation of Mental Illness**, Canadian Human Rights Commission.*

Staying Healthy at Work



How do you ensure that an employee living with a mental illness remains comfortable and productive at work and an asset to your organization?

Good management practices

Here is some good news: the practices required here are exactly the same as those that already form part of your job as manager. In fact, if you adopt sound management practices at all times, you will be able to prevent excessive stress in the workplace and increase the well-being and commitment levels of all your employees.

By promoting a work environment based on values and ethics, emphasize the following four points* so that you and your team will enjoy a healthier and more productive work environment.

Ensure that your demands are realistic, both for your employees and for yourself

- Clarify work priorities and the roles and responsibilities for each task to be performed;
- Eliminate some of the activities and roles that are not essential;
- Help people to say “no” without feeling guilty, and do so yourself!
- Negotiate schedules with senior management where appropriate.

Increase employee control over their work

- Delegate, where possible, decision-making to individuals;
- Clearly indicate the difference between work that is essential and work that can wait (not everything is “urgent”!);
- Where necessary, encourage the use of additional resources during busy periods or consider sharing the work with other teams.

*Excerpt from *Best Advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace* by Dr. Martin Shain.



Reduce effort and tension

- Pay attention to perfectionist tendencies, both your own and those of your employees!
- Take vacations and make sure that your employees take theirs;
- Facilitate work-life balance, both for yourself and for your employees, by promoting the use of flexible work schedules or other work options such as telework where operationally feasible;
- Allow your employees and clients to be involved in designing new work procedures when possible;
- Invest in technology, training and professional development in order to enhance the skills and competence of your staff;
- Encourage open communication and, when needed, make use of informal dispute resolution services available in your organization.

Increase rewards

- Support those employees who receive interesting assignment or promotion offers;
- Where possible, structure your organization to allow employees to develop professionally;
- Regularly give positive feedback when work is done well;
- Learn to recognize what each of your employees considers to be rewarding in his or her work.

Jobs that promote mental health

The following are the main characteristics of jobs that contribute to the mental health of the people who do them and the role that managers can play to this end.

- *Encourage good relationships among the members of a team*
- *Help employees feel that their work is useful and that they are making a major contribution to the team and the organization*
- *Ensure that the work done is morally and ethically justifiable in the employees' eyes, in terms of both its results and the way in which it is done*

Promouvoir la santé mentale au travail, Morin and Forest (2007)

Conclusion

Sound management practices are the best way to prevent problems of excessive stress and mental illness in the workplace.

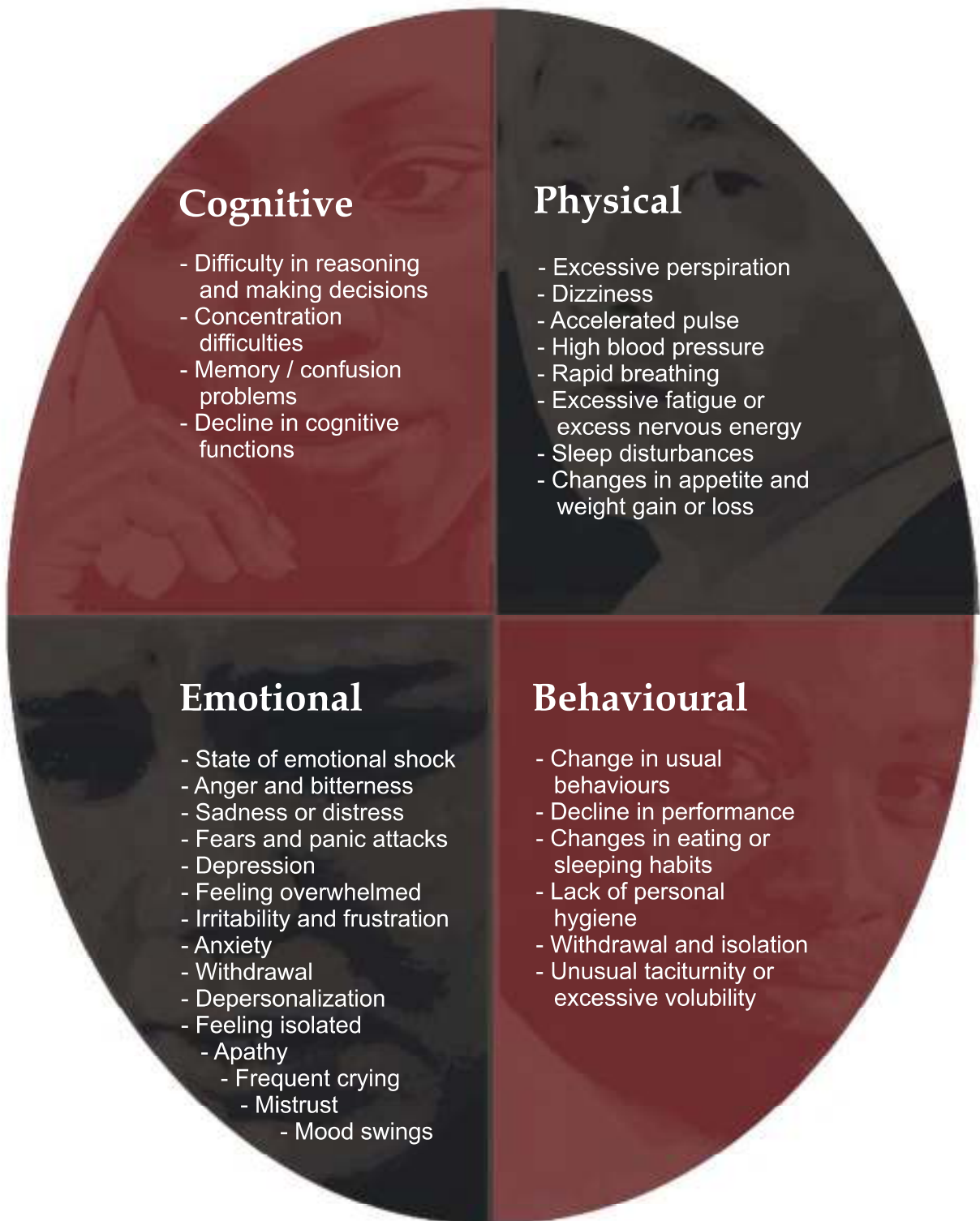
Research has shown that the key factor that determines workplace well-being is participation by employees and their level of commitment to their work. This also applies to you as manager.

No policy or program will ever demonstrate better than you can the importance of a healthy work environment. **As an individual and as a manager, your first responsibility is to look after yourself.** If you pay attention to your own balance in the workplace, you will set an example for your employees and be better able to pay attention to their needs. Respecting yourself and others, keeping an open mind, and showing empathy and authenticity are all winning attitudes that go a long way towards promoting workplace well-being and performance.

Be well!



SIGNS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS





ANSWERS TO EMPLOYEES' CONCERNS ABOUT USING THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

If the employee says...	Your answer could be...
1. I don't have time. / It's too far.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can have access to EAP during and after work hours. You can talk with someone by telephone. Arrangements can be made to suit you in terms of time and place.
2. It's none of your business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That is true, but I am worried about you. I only want to remind you that the EAP is available to you if you need it. You are right, but your work performance is (or your attitude at work is).
3. Why don't you worry about your own problems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We're not here to talk about me. I'm worried about you. I only want to remind you that the EAP is available to you. <p>NOTE: Do not let yourself get caught up in a discussion about yourself and try not to be on the defensive. Show empathy but suggest that the meeting be postponed if emotions are too intense.</p>
4. The employee wants to tell you all about his or her problems, and does so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think you have a lot on your shoulders. Let's focus right now on how I can help you with your work-related problems. I think the EAP would be more helpful with your personal problems.
5. You can't force me to use the EAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That's true, but why not try? It cannot hurt. It's up to you. I only want you to know that the EAP is available to you.
6. Are you saying that I have a problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't know if you have a problem or not, but I have noticed that... (Describe the attitude or work performance) and only want to remind you that the EAP is available if you want to talk to someone.
7. I don't think the EAP is confidential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The professionals at the EAP are bound by professional privilege. They strictly respect the confidentiality of clients.
8. I have the situation under control. I don't need any help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't doubt that you're able to get through this alone. Sometimes getting some help and support can make things easier.
9. The employee becomes emotional (crying/anger).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can see how much this affects you. Maybe you could take the time to speak with someone at the EAP. I can see that this is a sensitive topic for you. Maybe you could take the time to go through it with the EAP.



RESOURCES

Consult the following resources for more information on mental health and illnesses and on ways of creating and maintaining a healthy work environment.

Canada School of Public Service

A Fine Balance: A Manager's Guide to Workplace Well-Being

http://www.myschool-monecole.gc.ca/Research/publications/pdfs/workplace_e.pdf

Canadian Human Rights Commission - Overview of the duty to accommodate (*Note: the Commission is available to discuss specific accommodation with you.*)

http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/preventing_discrimination/toc_tdm-en.asp

Canadian Mental Health Association

<http://www.cmha>

Health Canada - Mental Health

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/mental/index_e.html

National Quality Institute (*specializes in the development and sustainability of excellence through quality and healthy workplace environments*)

<http://www.nqi.ca>

Public Health Agency of Canada - Mental Health

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/mh-sm/mentalhealth/index/html

Université Laval (*Chair in Occupational Health and Safety Management*)

[Http://www.cgsst.com/sante/eng/default.asp](http://www.cgsst.com/sante/eng/default.asp)



ACCOMMODATION *

Flexible scheduling

- Flexibility in the beginning or end of working hours to accommodate effects of medication or for medical appointments.
- Part-time work (which may be used to return a worker to a full-time employment).
- More frequent breaks.

Changes in supervision

- Modifying the way instructions and feedback are given. For example, written instructions may help an employee focus on tasks.
- Having weekly meetings between the supervisor and employee may help to deal with problems before they become serious.
- Allowing extra time to learn tasks.
- Setting and monitoring reasonable, objective standards of performance, providing clear instructions and expectations, realistic deadlines, discretion over the day to day means and methods of work.
- Ensuring that the employee is treated as a member of the team and is not excluded from social events, business meetings, or other activities relevant to the job.
- Encouragement and praise of job performance but only if warranted and not obviously excessive.
- Recognizing contributions.

Changes in training

- Allowing the person to attend training courses that are individualized.
- Modifying job duties.
- Exchanging minor tasks with other employees.

Using technology

- Providing the employee with a tape recorder to tape instructions from a supervisor, training programs, and meetings if they have difficulty with memory, with the authorization of any individual concerned.
- Allowing an employee to use head phones to protect them from loud noises.

Modifying work space or changing location

- Allowing an employee to relocate to a quieter area where they can better concentrate.
- Allowing an employee to work at home.

* Based on the draft internal *Policy and Procedures on Accommodation of Mental Illness*, Canadian Human Rights Commission.

References

In addition to the references already cited, the following documentation was consulted in the preparation of this guide.

Line Managers' Resource, A practical guide to managing and supporting mental health in the workplace, Mind Out for Mental Health, Department of Health, U.K.

Marshal B. Rosenberg, *Les mots sont des fenêtres (ou des murs): Introduction à la communication non violente*, Jouvence Éditions, 1999

"Mieux comprendre les troubles anxieux," Canadian Mental Health Association

A Tool for Managers - What You Need to Know About Mental Health, The Conference Board of Canada