



**Workplace  
Mental Health**



# Mental Stress Claims:

## Practical Strategies to Support Successful Return to Work

**Presented by:**

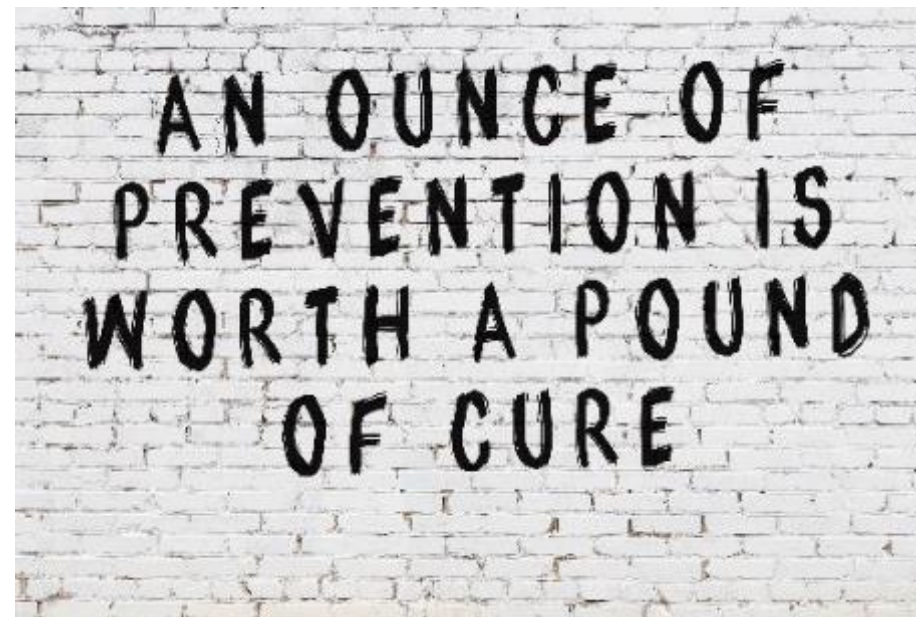
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**Schedule 2 Employers Conference, April 22, 2021**

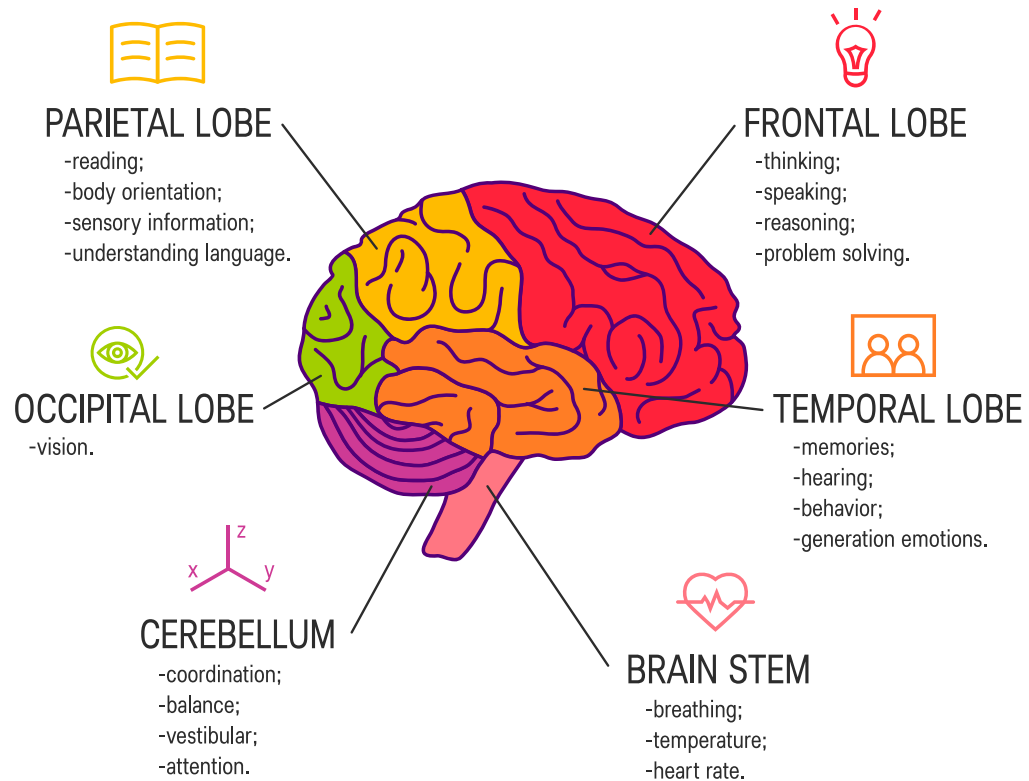
# Objectives

1. Why practical strategies are essential for managing mental stress claims
2. How to create successful strategies to help workers SAW or RTW
3. What success looks like and what you can do



# FUNCTIONAL AREAS OF THE BRAIN

LATERAL VIEW



“New evidence that chronic stress predisposes brain to mental illness”

Berkley News

University of California

# Pre-Covid-19

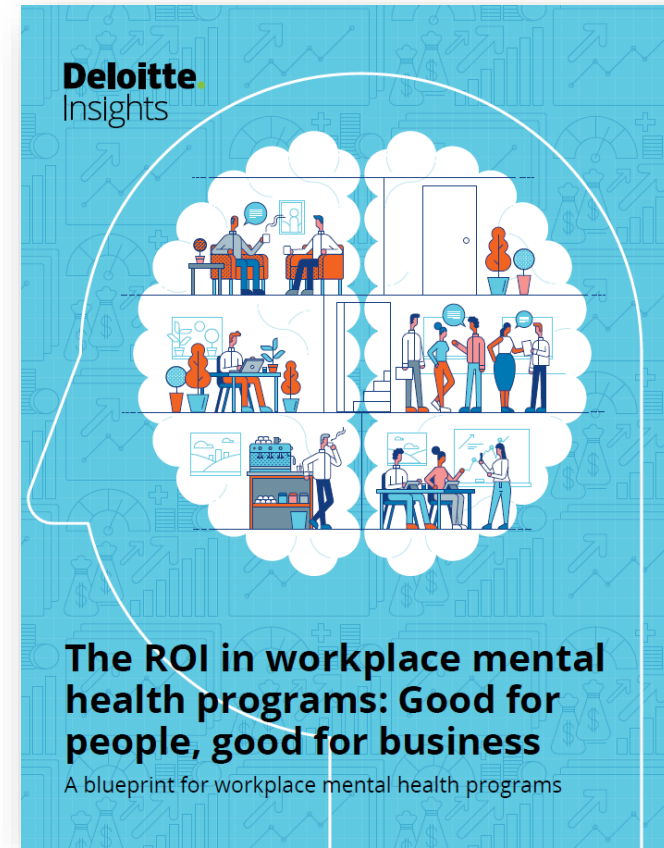
- Mental illness **indirectly affects all Canadians** at some time through a family member, friend or colleague.
- In any given year, **1 in 5 people** in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness
- **By age 40, about 50%** of the population will have or have had a mental illness.
- **Suicide is one of the leading causes of death** in both men and women from adolescence to middle age.
- MH issues account for **30 to 40% of STD and 30% of LTD claims** in Canada and is **climbing by .5 to 1.0 % every year.**



# Mental Health Disability

- Mental illness claims:
  - Fastest growing disability claim type
  - 2x longer in duration
  - More costly
  - Greater-than-average relapse rate
- Presenteeism costs triple

*Source: The ROI in workplace mental health programs: Good for people, good for business, Deloitte, 2019*



# What is Disability?

## **Impairment**

a problem of body function or structure

*plus*

## **Activity limitation**

a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action

*plus*

## **Participation restriction**

a experienced by an individual in life situations

*Source: The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*



# Mental Health

A **state of well-being** in which the individual realizes his or her own **abilities**, can **cope** with the normal stresses of life, can **work** productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a **contribution** to his or her community.

In this positive sense, mental health is the **foundation of well-being and effective functioning** for an individual and for a community.



# Pandemic Effect on Mental Health

The second wave of the pandemic has intensified feelings of stress and anxiety, causing alarming levels of despair, suicidal thoughts and hopelessness in the Canadian population.

<https://www.med.ubc.ca/news/new-national-survey-finds-canadians-mental-health-eroding-as-pandemic-continues/>

## Impact more pronounced among marginalized groups:

- Indigenous people
- People with disabilities
- Racialized groups
- People who identify as LGBTQ2+
- Those with a pre-existing mental health condition
- Those with high levels of exposure to COVID-19
- Parents with children under 18
- Younger people





**Manage  
Workplace  
Factors**



**Self-care  
and  
Resiliency**



**Creating  
Support  
Systems**



**Using  
Helpful  
Resources**

# Workplace Factors

## Basic Human Needs at Work

Self-efficacy

Accomplishment

Autonomy

Esteem

Self-worth

Social justice

Belonging

Physical and psychological safety



# Reduce Stigma

Click or tap on the indicators you see in yourself to help guide a self-check using the Mental Health Continuum.

This is not a diagnostic tool. Refresh the page to clear.

Mental Health Continuum Self-Check				
	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Ill
Changes in Mood	Normal mood fluctuations	Irritable	Angry	Easily enraged
	Calm	Impatient	Anxious	Excessive anxiety/panic
	Confident	Nervous	Pervasive sadness	Depressed mood, numb
		Sadness		
Changes in Thinking and Attitude	Good sense of humor	Displaced sarcasm	Negative attitude	Noncompliant
	Takes things in stride	Intrusive thoughts	Recurrent intrusive thoughts	Suicidal thoughts/intent
	Ability to concentrate and focus on tasks	Sometimes distracted or loss of focus on tasks	Constantly distracted or cannot focus on tasks	Inability to concentrate, loss of memory or cognitive abilities
Changes in Behaviour and Performance	Physically and socially active	Decreased activity/socializing	Avoidance	Withdrawal
	Present	Present but distracted	Tardiness	Absenteeism
	Performing well	Procrastination	Decreased performance	Can't perform duties/tasks
Physical Changes	Normal sleep patterns	Trouble sleeping	Restless sleep	Cannot fall/stay asleep
	Good appetite	Changes in eating patterns	Loss of appetite	No appetite
	Feeling energetic	Some lack of energy	Some tiredness or fatigue	Constant and prolonged fatigue or exhaustion
	Maintaining a stable weight	Some weight gain or loss	Fluctuations or changes in weight	Extreme weight gain or loss

<https://theworkingmind.ca/continuum-self-check>

## The Working Mind

The Working Mind (TWM) is an education-based program designed to address and promote mental health and reduce the stigma of mental illness in a workplace setting.



This training is aimed to:

- Improve short-term performance and long-term mental health outcomes
- Reduce barriers to care and encourage early access to care
- Provide the tools and resources required to manage and support employees who may be experiencing a mental illness
- Assist supervisors in maintaining their own mental health as well as promoting positive mental health in their employees

## Mental Health First Aid

MHFA is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing a mental health crisis, or a worsening of their mental health.

**More than 400,000 Canadians have been trained since 2007.**

# Psychological and Social Support

## Employee Assistance Plans



- Coping skills
- Substance use and abuse
- Dealing with anger
- Going back into the workplace
- Managing concerns and anxieties
- Managing family dynamics
- Managing teams

# Psychological and Social Support

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

Search: Canada.ca

Franglais

MENU

Canada.ca > Health > Healthy living > Mental health and wellness > Mental health services

## Mental health support: Get help

**If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital. If you need emotional support, help is available.**

It's important to get help if you or someone you know is going through a crisis or thinking about suicide. You're not alone. Learn about the resources available to you.

### On this page

- Crisis help links
- [Crisis Services Canada](#)
- [Kids Help Phone](#)
- Hope for Wellness Help Line

### Crisis help links

Help is available if you need to talk and you:

- are not feeling yourself
- are experiencing a crisis
- have emotional pain
- have thoughts of suicide

Home > Health and wellness > Addiction and mental health

## Find mental health support

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Learn about supports available to you, and how to get help when you need it.

If this is an emergency, or you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911 or go to your nearest hospital or emergency department.

### Get help. Talk to someone.

General	Young people	Indigenous peoples
<b>ConnexOntario Helpline</b> Toll free: 1-866-531-2600 Live web chat Email	<b>GoodzTalk</b> For people ages 17 to 25. Toll-free: 1-866-431-5554 Email	<b>Hope for Wellness Helpline</b> Immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention for all Indigenous peoples across Canada (available in some Indigenous languages). Toll-free: 1-855-242-3310 Live web chat
<b>211 Ontario</b> Information and referral for community, government, social and health services, including mental health resources across Ontario. Call 2-1-1 Toll-free: 1-877-330-3213 Live web chat	<b>Kids Help Phone</b> For children and youth ages 5 to 20. Toll-free: 1-800-668-6868 Live web chat Text	<b>Talk 4 Healing</b> Indigenous women can get help, support and resources seven days a week, 24 hours a day, with services in 14 languages.

# Psychological and Social Support

Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support

**Introduction**

We recognize the significant strain that COVID-19 has placed on individuals and families across the country. Many people are concerned about their physical and mental well-being. Canadians are being challenged in a number of ways because of isolation, financial and employment uncertainty and disruptions to daily life. Wellness Together Canada provides tools and resources to help Canadians get back on track. These include modules for addressing low mood, worry, substance use, social isolation and relationship issues.

**What is included**


Wellness Together Canada offers the following at **no cost** to Canadians:

1. Wellness self-assessment and tracking.
2. Self-guided courses, apps, and other resources.
3. Group coaching and community of support.
4. Counselling by text or phone.

**Where to Start**

Click the 'Get Started' button below to create an account. You have the option of completing a wellness self-assessment, and then choosing from the full range of no cost options for support. Without an account you can access immediate support by text and other helpful resources below.

For COVID information and a physical self-assessment of COVID symptoms [click here](#).



## Crisis Text Line:

Adults Text WELLNESS to 741741

Youth Text WELLNESS to 686868

## Emergency:

Call 911



# Psychological Protection

## 3 Stage Response

1. Acknowledge concerns
2. Provide accurate information and set boundaries
3. Take action to respond effectively to rectify the situation

# Integrated Disability Management Program

- Policies and procedures
- Benefits and resources
- Education for all staff
- Training for key staff
- Communication and connection
- Psychological support and protection
- Accommodation strategies, plans and documentation
- Risk assessment and control
- Workplace inspections
- Incident investigations
- Reporting and evaluation

# Health, Safety & Disability Management Program Framework



Source: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC): Health, Safety & DM Framework

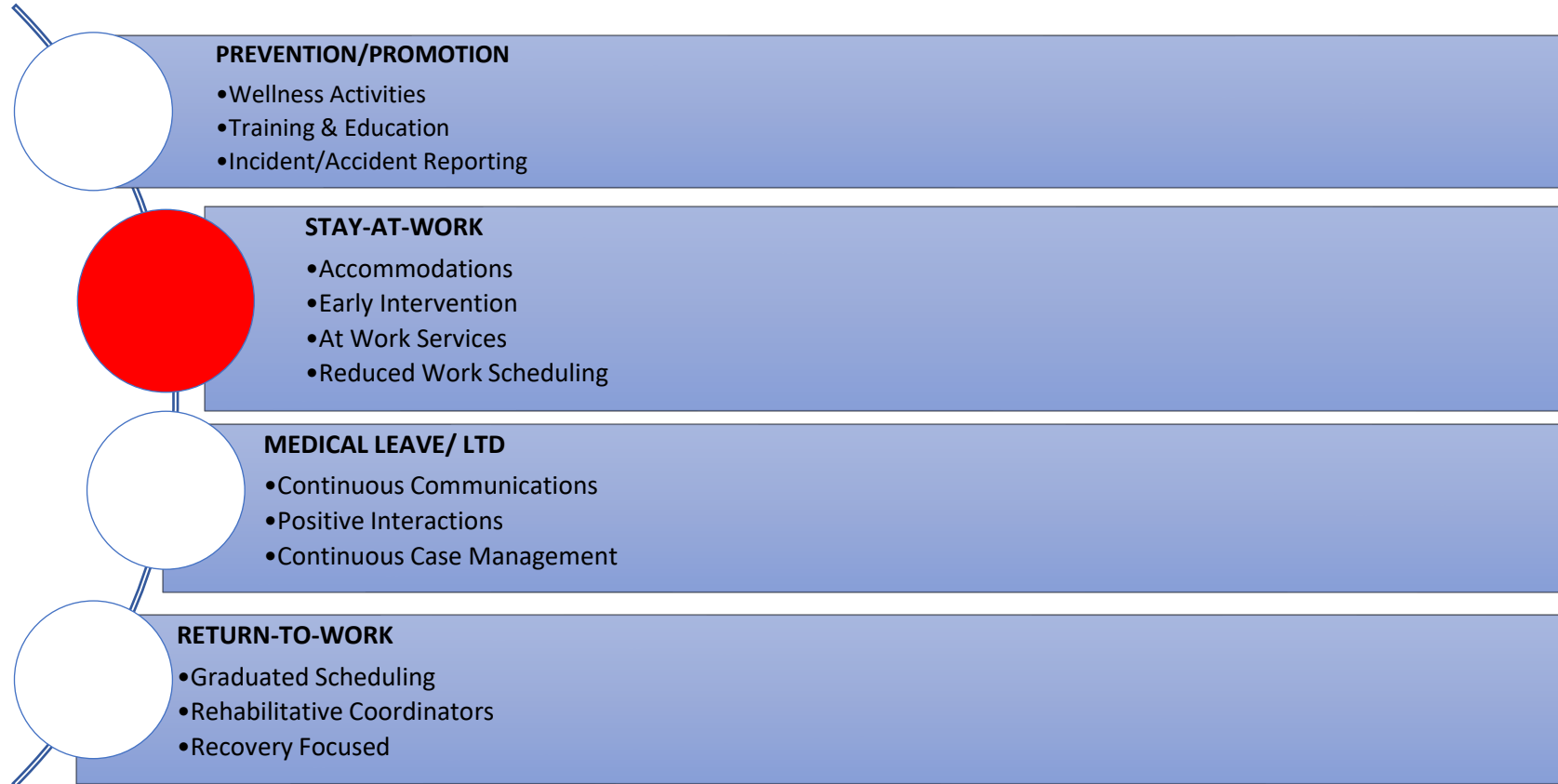
# EARLY INTERVENTION IS KEY

- Time away from work is harmful and has a negative impact on well-being
- Return to work in some capacity may have a positive impact on recovery and prognosis
- Early intervention is essential; the longer the absence from work, the lesser the chance of return

**“Early intervention is important because after 12 weeks of absence from work, the chance of the employee returning to work is reduced by 50% and this reduces significantly as weeks go by”**

~Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, Assessing and Treating Psychiatric Occupational Disability, Report released by the American Psychiatric Foundation (2005)

# Health Management & Recovery Program





# Roles and Responsibilities

## Manager

- 1) Promote safe and healthy workplace
- 2) Ensure workers aware of EAP
- 3) Be aware of DM process and related policies and guidelines
- 4) Ensure all workers are aware of their right to accommodation, up to undue hardship
- 5) Adhere to the guiding principles of disability
- 6) Proactively address the needs of workers and facilitate meaningful participation in the workplace.

## Worker

- 1) Advise their manager about functional/emotional/cognitive restrictions and limitations
- 2) Provide documentation from a HC professional
- 3) Participate in discussions regarding accommodation solutions
- 4) Advise manager of changes that may affect need for accommodation
- 5) Actively work to safeguard and maintain health and wellness

## Union

- 1) Engage with worker to facilitate reasonable accommodation measures
- 2) Support the worker throughout the process

## Workplace H&S Committee

- 1) Comply with Canada Labour Code, under "Occupational Health and Safety"
- 2) Participate in inquiries, investigations & inspections pertaining to H&S of workers
- 3) Make recommendations pertaining to adjustments to existing work procedures and processes and to use of PPE's
- 4) Maintain adequate records on workplace accident or illness and monitor that corrective actions have been completed

# *Is Accommodation Needed?*

- ✓ Consult
- ✓ Communicate
- ✓ Map
- ✓ Track



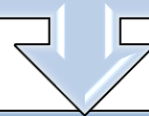
When you understand the potential challenges, you can offer a suitable accommodation plan.

# Assessment Process

Compare the worker's psychological abilities and limitations with the psychological *and* physical demands of the job.



Determine if the job resources are adequate or need to be augmented.



Determine if job or workplace modifications are needed.



Determine if personal resources need to be augmented.

# *Healthcare Practitioner: Collaborative, Integrated Approach*

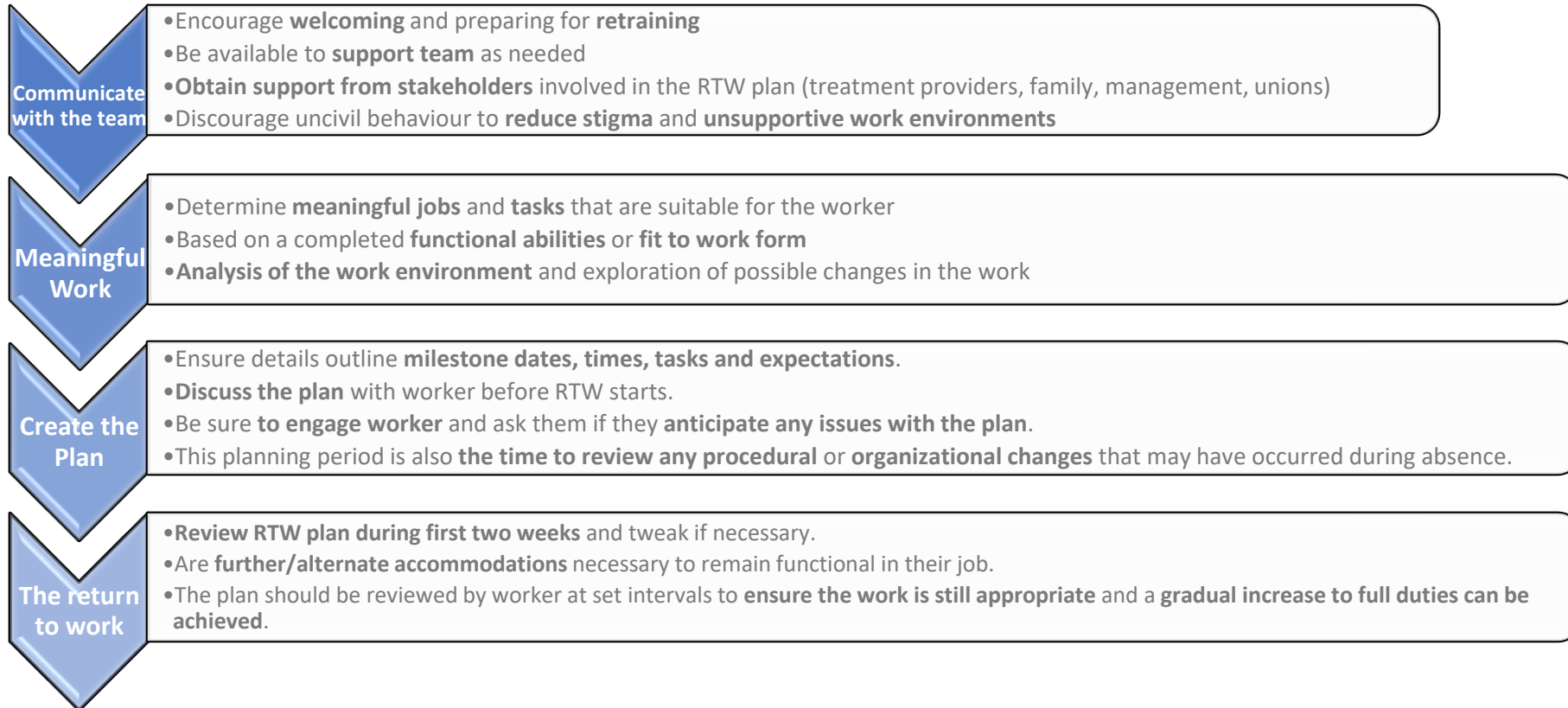
- Focus on **workplace function**, issues, workplace triggers not medicalized process
- Explain intent and willingness to accommodate RTW
- Create good understanding of psychological, emotional and cognitive job expectations and physical work environment and conditions.
- Job demands analysis required to identify risk factors
- Offer payment for filling out the form
- Ask for specific information based on abilities, limitations, triggers and support needs AND expected duration
- Ask for reassessment and update in a reasonable time period



# Key Questions For Healthcare Practitioners

- What is the **prognosis** for full recovery related to current restrictions?
- How were the **restrictions noted assessed** and when will they be reassessed?
- Are there **expected recovery milestones** that would indicate a full return to work is possible? If so, can these be shared along with the anticipated timeline?
- Have all **treatment options** available to promote recovery been explored and are there treatment options not yet started **that can promote recovery**?
- Are the **current barriers for full return to work expected** to be address through the current treatment in place therefore leading to eventual full return?
- Are there any **non-medical barriers impacting recovery** and return to work?
- Has the employee **experienced similar restrictions in past related to medical condition** and if so, how long was it before the condition was managed well enough that employee was able to resume full activities including work?
- Are the workplace changes expected before you support a return to work and if so please explain so these can be reviewed and considered?

# Reintegration Process





# Supporting the Worker

Source	Primary Responsibility	Resources to Support
<b>Health</b> (Change in health status of worker or family member; side effects of meds; chronic conditions; new conditions)	Worker	<b>Referral to professional health services and/or EFAP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with family doctor</li> <li>• EFAP</li> <li>• Site Occ. Health Nurse</li> </ul>
<b>Life</b> (Marital issues, family, change in family make-up, childcare, legal, financial concerns)	Worker	<b>Referral to EFAP and/or community resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EFAP</li> <li>• Community resources</li> <li>• Personal resources</li> </ul>
<b>Work</b> (i.e. interpersonal conflicts; ergonomic issues; workload; organizational change; attendance concerns; harassment; violence, etc.)	Manager / Supervisor With the worker	<b>Primarily resolved in the workplace</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy and procedures</li> <li>• Consultation with HR/OHS</li> <li>• EFAP support</li> <li>• <b>Education and Training</b></li> <li>• <b>Monitoring</b></li> <li>• <b>Peer and leadership support</b></li> </ul>

Adapted from Morneau Shepell

# *The 3 Key Questions*

What are you doing to care for yourself?

What can we do to help you succeed?

How should we handle future situations?



Source: <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/managing-workplace-issues/accommodation-strategies>

# Communicate

Express concern and invite conversation *without blaming, shaming or judging*

Active listening *plus*:

- Allowing pauses
- Managing eye expressions
- Postponing evaluation or advice
- Seeking clarification
- Document

Source: <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/managing-workplace-issues/accommodation-strategies>

# Communicate



Follow up  
Review productivity  
Reassess and modify plan if needed  
Ensure key stakeholders are updated



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# *What's the best approach for you?*

## **Poll Question:**

- 1) Frequent communication and dialogue with the employee
- 2) Mental health literacy and anti-stigma training of managers and HR
- 3) Having an integrated process with forms and written policies and procedures
- 4) Working with a reputable disability management company that understands your culture and challenges

# Call to Action

- ✓ Don't wait for a claim to be filed before taking action
- ✓ Assess your organization's readiness
- ✓ Get help where needed:
  - Reach out for assistance with policy and program development
  - Get assistance with employee rehabilitation and RTW
  - Equip your managers with training, tools and coaching
  - Get legal advice if needed







## *What Else Is In Your RTW Tool Box?*

- EAP/EFAP Programs and Extended Benefits
- Gradual Return to Work Plans (GRTW) and early offer of Modified Return to Work
- Assessment Services to provide clarity of extent of impairment and related restrictions and to validate medical basis for restrictions requested
- Training and coaching for managers (i.e. Mental Health First Aid, Accommodation, Claims Management, etc.)
- Reactivation programs (Customized/Progressive Goal Attainment Program) including a transition to a RTW plan
- Mental Health Risks and Available Supports: Added to Job Descriptions
- Cognitive Assessments
- Job Coaching for employees
- Resiliency and Coping Strategies Training
- Inventory for mental health related accommodations by job
- Assistive Technology

# *Management Training Suggestions*

- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health – GWL Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace
- Mindful Manager – take an workplace pledge to safeguard and support employees with mental health challenges.
- Take Psychologically Safe Leader Assessment (PSLA) – it's free
- Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT)
- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) through MHCC
- Workplace Mental Health Leadership Certificate Program, Queen's University
- The Working Mind through MHCC

# Accommodation Tools



Supporting Employee Success

A tool to help employees be successful at work



Mental Health in the Workplace

An Accommodation Guide for Managers and Staff

Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario

mental health WORKS

# How Can I Help...

## How Can I Help my Team?



*"These are challenging times. Whatever you're feeling is OK."*

**Acknowledge and Listen**

- ✓ Acknowledge that something happened.
- ✓ Review the facts without going into details.
- ✓ Listen and provide an opportunity for discussion.

**When to use it?**

- ✓ Following exposure to any potential stressor or workplace incident.

*"Here are some ways that can help keep us safe right now..."*

**Inform and Remind**

- ✓ Help your team check-in with themselves about their mental health.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of taking care of themselves.
- ✓ Remind them about using healthy coping strategies.
- ✓ Share available resources.

*"How else can I support you?"*

**Respond and Follow-up**

- ✓ Observe your team and follow-up with members in the upcoming hours, days, and weeks.
- ✓ Walk the talk by modeling healthy coping strategies and seeking help if needed.

**To find out more**



[theworkingmind.ca/covid19-tw](http://theworkingmind.ca/covid19-tw)


 Mental Health Commission of Canada | Commission de la santé mentale du Canada |  The Working Mind

## How Can I Help Someone in Mental Distress?



*"I've noticed that..."*  
*"How are you doing? How long have you been feeling this way?"*

**Approach & Assess**

Invite the person to talk.

If there is a risk of suicide or harm, reach out to First Responders.

*"It sounds like... Is that right?"*

**Listen Without Judging**

Help the person speak freely by listening and asking questions without judging or telling the person what to do.

*"What has helped in the past?"*  
*"Would it help to call...?"*

**Encourage Professional Help**

Help them to identify appropriate professional supports.

*"How might a family member, friend, or community member help?"*

**Encourage Other Supports**

Help the person to find ways that others can support them during this time.

*"Given the situation, it is understandable that you are experiencing this. There are supports available that have helped others."*

**Give Reassurance**

This hopeful message helps to counter any shame associated with mental distress, reluctance to talk about, or reluctance to reach out for help.

**To find out more**

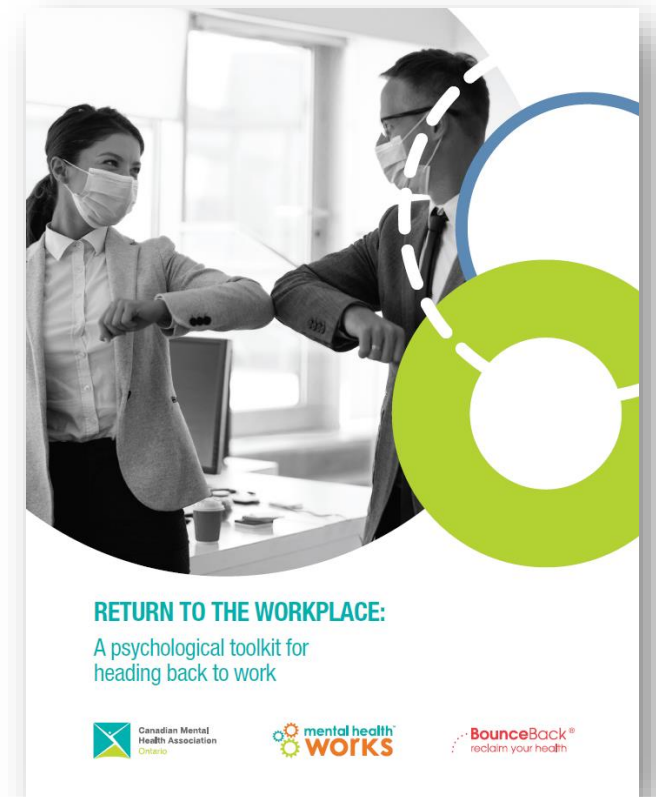


[www.mhfa.ca/covid19-mhfa](http://www.mhfa.ca/covid19-mhfa)


 Mental Health Commission of Canada | Commission de la santé mentale du Canada | 
 Mental Health First Aid Canada

# Tip Sheets and Guides for Employers

- [Return to the Workplace: A psychological toolkit for heading back to work](#)
- [Conversation guide – clear leadership during a pandemic](#)
- [Suicide Prevention in the Workplace](#)
- [Helping Women Who Are Returning to Work](#)
- [What Does Flexible Work Life Look Like?](#)
- [Preventing Retraumatization](#)
- [Supporting Employee Success: A tool to help employees be successful at work](#)
- [A Practical Toolkit to Help Employers Build an Inclusive Workforce](#)
- [Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support](#)



# Thank you / Merci



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