



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

The Working Mind

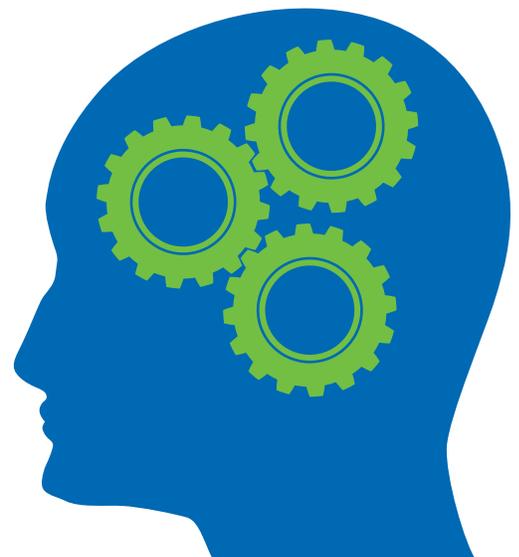


# The Working Mind™

## Workplace Mental Health & Wellness



VIRTUAL Training  
Manager Session  
Course Handout



# About MHCC

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians. The MHCC offers several mental health training programs including The Working Mind and Mental Health First Aid.

For more information about these courses, you can visit the MHCC website at <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>

## What is The Working Mind (TWM) Virtual Training?

This evidence-based training is designed to initiate a shift in the way you think, feel and act with respect to mental health by increasing your awareness, reducing stigma and other barriers to care in the workplace, encouraging mental health conversations, and strengthening your resilience. By accomplishing these goals, TWM aims to help you maintain your wellness and support others living with a mental health problem or illness in a psychologically healthy and safe work setting.

## Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be better able to:

- Define basic concepts related to mental health and mental illness;
- Recognize the impact of stigma and discuss how to reduce stigma and other barriers to care in the workplace;
- Recognize and keep track of changes in your mental health and well-being and know when to take appropriate actions;
- Have conversations about mental health and mental illness with colleagues, friends and family members;
- Identify and practice coping strategies to manage stress and remain resilient;
- Identify and use available resources to support self and others.

# Stigma

Brainstorm and write at least 3 possible impacts and/or consequences of these types of stigma for individuals, workplaces and society in general.

Self	Public	Structural
Your negative thoughts/beliefs/statements about yourself	Other people's negative thoughts/beliefs/statements about you	Discriminatory rules, laws, policies, practices at the institutional/systemic level

# Language Matters

## Question

What does “people-first” language mean and why does it matter?

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**Example:** Instead of saying “This person is mentally ill,” say, “This person lives with mental illness.”

Everyone can be a champion against stigma when advocating the use of accurate and respectful language. So, as you communicate with others, be mindful of the impact of your language.

For more information refer to the *MHCC Language Matters Reference Guide* included in this course.

# Other Barriers to Care

Brainstorm and write at least 3 possible ways to prevent/reduce these other barriers to care.

Barriers to Care	Possible ways to prevent/reduce these barriers
Limited Knowledge	
Time	
Access to Resources	
Financial Costs	

# Mental Health Continuum Self-Check

Check the signs and indicators that really speak to how you experience stress and write any additional changes you might notice in the “my personal changes” section.

	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Ill
Changes in Mood	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal mood fluctuations <input type="checkbox"/> Calm <input type="checkbox"/> Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Irritable <input type="checkbox"/> Impatient <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious <input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive sadness	<input type="checkbox"/> Easily enraged <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive anxiety/panic <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed mood, numb
Changes in Thinking and Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Good sense of humour <input type="checkbox"/> Takes things in stride <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to concentrate and focus on tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Displaced sarcasm <input type="checkbox"/> Intrusive thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes distracted or loss of focus on tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative attitude <input type="checkbox"/> Recurrent intrusive thoughts/images <input type="checkbox"/> Constantly distracted or cannot focus on tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Noncompliant <input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal thoughts/intent <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to concentrate, loss of memory or cognitive abilities
Changes in Behaviour and Performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Physically and socially active <input type="checkbox"/> Performing well	<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased activity/socializing <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased performance <input type="checkbox"/> Tardiness <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to pull away from family	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal <input type="checkbox"/> Can't perform duties/tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Absenteeism <input type="checkbox"/> Is not mentally present at home
Physical Changes	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal sleep patterns <input type="checkbox"/> Good appetite <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling energetic <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining a stable weight	<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble sleeping <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in eating patterns <input type="checkbox"/> Some lack of energy <input type="checkbox"/> Some weight gain	<input type="checkbox"/> Restless sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of appetite <input type="checkbox"/> Some tiredness or fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> Fluctuations or changes in weight	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot fall/stay asleep <input type="checkbox"/> No appetite <input type="checkbox"/> Constant lasting fatigue/exhaustion <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme weight gain or loss
Changes in Substance Use and Addictive Behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited alcohol consumption, no binge drinking <input type="checkbox"/> Limited/no addictive behaviours <input type="checkbox"/> No trouble/impact (social, economic, legal, financial) due to substance use	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular to frequent alcohol consumption, limited binge drinking <input type="checkbox"/> Some regular to addictive behaviours <input type="checkbox"/> Limited to some trouble/impact due to substance use	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent alcohol consumption, binge drinking <input type="checkbox"/> Struggles to control addictive behaviours <input type="checkbox"/> Struggle to control addictive behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular to frequent binge drinking <input type="checkbox"/> Addiction <input type="checkbox"/> Significant trouble/impact due to substance use
My Personal Changes	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# Mental Health Continuum Scenario

Refer to the *Mental Health Continuum Poster* to help guide your discussion



## Scenario

Recently, your workplace has made a lot of changes to its business operations including modified work duties and shifts. Many part-time employees have been laid off and many others like yourself have been working extended hours and taking on extra responsibilities. In the last week or so, you have been feeling exhausted, frustrated and overwhelmed, and one day, you break down crying in front of your co-workers. You are worried about losing your family income if you can't keep up with the new expectations.

## Questions

1. What signs and indicators are you noticing?

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2. Where might you be on the Mental Health Continuum (green - healthy; yellow - reacting; orange - injured; red - ill)?

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3. Where can you go, what can you do and who can you talk to at this time?

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# Sources of Stress

Take a moment to think about and list some personal/work-related/other stressors. Be ready to share some of your answers with the group.

Work-Related	Personal	Other

## Big 4 Scenario

You are usually a very patient and easygoing person who likes to make jokes. Lately, you've lost your sense of humour and you're feeling more frustrated about having to manage additional work while trying to take care of your family and worrying about your elderly parents. You would like to ask your boss for help, but with the recent layoffs the last thing you want is for your boss to feel like you're not able to do your job. You often catch yourself thinking negative thoughts such as "I'm such a failure," "I'm going to lose my job" and "I should be able to do more." The constant worry is keeping you up at night.

## The Big 4 Strategies



### Questions

1. What signs and indicators are you noticing?

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2. Where might you be on the Mental Health Continuum (green - healthy; yellow - reacting; orange - injured; red - ill)?

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3. Which of the Big 4 strategies would you use and in what order?

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# Self-Care Assessment

1. One thing I do on a regular basis to take care of myself is...

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2. One thing I would like to do more often for myself is...

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3. I know I need to pause and take care of myself when...

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For more information refer to the *MHCC Self-Care & Resilience Guide* included in this course.

# Workplace Scenarios

## Scenario - Talking to an employee

You've noticed that an employee has been struggling with their workload and deadlines for a few weeks and has been showing signs of distress lately. You have no idea if it's work-related or not. They are generally a good worker, but their performance seems to be declining.

Refer to the *Healthy Conversations Guide* on the next page to help in your discussion.

### Questions

1. What signs and indicators are you noticing?

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2. Where might they be on the Mental Health Continuum (green - healthy; yellow - reacting; orange - injured; red - ill)?

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3. How would you approach them? What can you say and do?

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# Healthy Conversations Guide

Actions	Looks/sounds like...
<p><b>Approach the person</b></p> <p>Set a time when you are both available and able to listen to each other face-to-face, by phone or online.</p> <p>Ensure confidentiality.</p>	<p>"I would like to put aside some time for us to have an informal chat. When would be a good time for you?"</p>
<p><b>Share your observations</b></p> <p>Stick to the facts and remain objective. Use "I" statements to talk about the specific behaviour(s) you are worried about and show that you are concerned. This is a good way to say what you think/sense without blaming or criticizing.</p>	<p>"I've noticed that..."            "I feel..."            "I'm worried about..."            "You seem distracted/frustrated/exhausted lately."            "I sense something is bothering you."</p>
<p><b>Use open-ended questions/statements to encourage more conversation.</b></p> <p>These can help the person open up and help you understand the situation better. Ask them with a genuine interest in what's going on.</p>	<p>"What changes have you noticed in yourself lately?"            "What do you feel comfortable sharing?"            "What's going on?"            "How can I help you?"</p>
<p><b>Listen without judgement</b></p> <p>Stop what you are doing and listen to what they are saying. Don't interrupt and let them say everything they need to.</p>	<p>Relaxed posture, eye contact, nodding            "I see...yes...hmm"            "Okay. I see."</p>
<p><b>Keep calm and objective</b></p> <p>Be open to what the person has to say. If you feel yourself getting impatient or upset, take some deep breaths or take a break.</p>	<p>Calm, even tone of voice            "I need some time to think about this. Can we continue this conversation later?"</p>
<p><b>Acknowledge the person and try to understand it from their point of view (empathy)</b></p> <p>Recap what you've heard and acknowledge that you hear what they're saying/feeling.</p>	<p>"I'm hearing that..." Is that correct?            "It's normal to feel..."            "I understand that you are feeling..."            "It sounds like you feel..."</p>
<p><b>Encourage them to find their own solutions if it's appropriate.</b></p> <p>Help them figure out what options they have and what will make them feel better.</p>	<p>"What do you need right now?"            "Is there anyone else you trust that you can talk to about this?"            "What resources would help?"</p>
<p><b>Check in often:</b> Continue to check in with them to see how they are doing and let them know you are there to support them.</p> <p>Set a date to check back (within a week) to see how they are progressing and to work out a plan. Connect with the employee as planned to see how they are doing.</p>	<p>"I'm here for you if you need to talk."            "Let's check back in with each other next week."</p>
<p><b>Take appropriate action(s):</b> If the person is in distress and refuses help, offer to help them contact EAP or someone else they trust.</p> <p>If you think they might harm themselves or they express suicidal thoughts, get immediate help or call emergency services.</p>	<p>"I'm going to call for help."            "Let's contact EAP/other service/person together."</p>

Source: Adapted from <http://www.commonground.org.nz/common-support/healthy-conversations/>

# Scenario – Helping an employee

You’ve noticed that an employee you get along with quite well has not been their usual self these last few weeks. They seem to be struggling and you are worried. Lately, you noticed they have been withdrawing from colleagues and missing more workdays. When you approached them about it, they blurted out: “I don’t know why I bother to show up. Everyone would be better off without me”.

Refer to these steps to help guide your discussion

### ASK

*“Are you thinking of killing yourself?” or  
“Are you having thoughts of suicide?”*

**LISTEN** without judgement

### BELIEVE

*“I believe you.”  
“I don’t want that to happen to you.”*

### REASSURE

*“Thank you for trusting me.”  
“I’m here with you right now.”*

### ACT

*“Is there someone I can call?”  
“I’m going to stay with you until emergency  
services arrive.”*



## Questions

1. What signs and indicators are you noticing?

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2. Where might they be on the Mental Health Continuum (green - healthy; yellow - reacting; orange - injured; red - ill)?

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3. Where can you go, what can you do and say at this time?

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# Return to Work and Accommodation Scenarios

## Scenario A - Employee returning to work

An employee is returning from short-term disability leave for a mental health-related problem. You don't know how they are doing now and what their needs are at this time.

Refer to the *Healthy Conversations Guide* and the *Return to Work and Accommodation Checklist* to help guide your discussion.

### Questions

1. When and how would you approach them? What can you say?

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2. What steps would you take to accommodate and support the employee?

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3. What would you say to the rest of your team?

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## Scenario B – Request for accommodation (work schedule)

An employee asks you for accommodation because they have been recently diagnosed with depression. They want a more flexible work schedule. You grant them permission for a more flexible work schedule, but once their depression lifts, they continue to expect flexibility in their schedule.

Refer to the *Healthy Conversations Guide* and the *Return to Work and Accommodation Checklist* to help guide your discussion.

### Questions

1. Is the accommodation reasonable? Why or why not?

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2. How would you support their request for accommodation?

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3. What other option(s) for accommodation would be available in this situation?

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### Scenario C – Request for accommodation (workspace)

A staff member who works at a reception desk comes to you with a request for accommodation because they have recently developed agoraphobia. Their doctor has recommended their workspace to be moved to a more private area where they don't have to interact with people as often.

Refer to the *Healthy Conversations Guide* and the *Return to Work and Accommodation Checklist* on the next page to help guide your discussion.

#### Questions

1. Is this a reasonable accommodation request? Why or why not?

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2. How would you support their request for accommodation?

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3. What other option(s) for accommodation would be available in this situation?

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# Return to Work and Accommodation Checklist

Action items	
1. Connect with the employee during their leave to let them know everyone is thinking about them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Discuss how the employee would like information about themselves to be shared with co-workers, especially with regard to the changes in work that will affect co-workers as the person returns to work. When co-workers have adequate information, they can then be supportive during the individual's return to work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Respect the employee's wishes about what information is kept private and what is shared with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Meet with the employee after they return to work to discuss their needs and understand how to support them. Ask if there are any functional limitations that could affect the person's ability to carry out the essential duties of their job and what accommodations would enable them to continue to do their job effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Discuss and provide any training, information or resources that the employee may need to get back up to speed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Provide information about extended health benefits, Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) services, disability benefits, sick days and other information about benefits as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Provide information about workplace policies or procedures including policies for return to work and accommodation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Participate in the development of the return to work plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Help to address issues of workplace conflict or performance concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Initiate training and education programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Follow up with the employee or designate someone who can follow up on your behalf.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Keep your notes on the meeting in a secure location. A locked filing cabinet and password-protected computers are key to maintaining an employee's confidentiality.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Source:** Adapted from Working Through it: Leader's Guide, Great West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace

# Ad Hoc Incident Review (AIR) Scenario

Due to unforeseen circumstances, your organization is going through major changes which have resulted in several layoffs in your department. Many employees are extremely stressed and frustrated with the situation, which seems to be getting worse every day. Several team members have been calling in sick and showing signs of burnout. One morning, you learn that a team member has had a severe anxiety attack during a video conference call, collapsed while working from home and was immediately taken to the hospital. Everyone on the team is worried about their co-worker. They're now also stressed about the uncertainties of their own jobs.

Refer to the *AIR poster* to help guide your discussion.

## 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.

*“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.

## Questions

1. When/how would you use AIR to manage this incident and support the mental health and well-being of the employee as well as the other team members?

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2. What questions would you ask? How would you start the conversation with your team?

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3. What other tools and/or resources could you use?

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## Suggested Reading

Leadership Behaviours to Support Mental Health – by Bill Howatt and Louise Bradley  
<http://www.ceohsnetwork.ca/blog/psychological-safety/leadership-behaviours-to-support-mental-health/>

Empathy is both a trait and a skill. Here's how to strengthen it

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/empathy-is-both-a-trait-and-a-skill-here-s-how-to-strengthen-it-1.4997546>

## Online Resources

MHCC Resource Hub: Mental health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic  
<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19>

Mental Health Continuum Tool Self-Check:  
<https://theworkingmind.ca/continuum-self-check>

The Working Mind Self-Care & Resilience Guide  
<https://theworkingmind.ca/blog/working-mind-covid-19-self-care-resilience-guide>

### Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Resources

Free online training: Being a Mindful Employee: An Orientation to Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace  
<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/online-training-psychological-health-and-safety>

National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace  
<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace/national-standard>

13 Psychosocial Workplace Factors (Posters)  
[https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2019-02/13\\_factors\\_posters\\_eng.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2019-02/13_factors_posters_eng.pdf)

MindsMatter Online Assessment

This free tool is designed to help you assess where your workplace stands on mental health. It's confidential, easy to use and takes under three minutes to complete.

To get started, go to  
<http://mindsmatter.openingminds.ca/>

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Assembling the Pieces Toolkit  
[https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/assembling\\_pieces/](https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/assembling_pieces/)

### Recovery Resources

Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice  
[https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-07/MHCC\\_Recovery\\_Guidelines\\_2016\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-07/MHCC_Recovery_Guidelines_2016_ENG.PDF)

Recovery Declaration  
<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/declaration>

Recovery Inventory  
<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/inventory>

Video “Hope Changes Everything” (16:11 minutes)  
<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/media/3675>

## Suicide Prevention Resources

Living Works course on suicide intervention:

<https://www.livingworks.net/asist/>

Mental Health First Aid Training

<https://www.mhfa.ca/>

Canadian Crisis Centres

<https://thelifelinecanada.ca/help/crisis-centres/canadian-crisis-centres/>

Canada Suicide Prevention Service

Call Toll free number:

1-833-456-4566 Available 24/7

## Return to Work and Accommodation Resources

Supporting Employee Success

[https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Supporting\\_Employee\\_Success\\_EN.pdf](https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Supporting_Employee_Success_EN.pdf)

Canadian Human Rights Commission Policy and Procedures on the Accommodation of Mental Illness

<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/policy-and-procedures-accommodation-mental-illness>