
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY RESOURCES FOR LEADERS DURING COVID-19

Overview

COVID-19 has changed our workplaces, possibly forever. In addition to the many physical safety considerations and risks it presents, it has also magnified the importance of mental health.

Employers should identify and address any new psychosocial risks that have emerged as a result of COVID-19. Employers should consider their specific obligations under disability accommodation, workplace safety insurance and occupational health and safety laws as psychological stress and mental disabilities may be work-related.

Best Practices

The information and recommendations contained in this publication are believed to be reliable and In addition to assessing and addressing psychosocial hazards, employers should follow these best practices to promote a psychologically safe and healthy workplace:

- **Communicate** – Talk openly and regularly about mental health. It can help break down barriers and can make workers feel safe coming forward with concerns.
- **Check in regularly** – Don't wait for workers to come to you. Ask how they are doing and if you observe concerning changes, check in to make sure everything is okay.
- **Recognize everyone's experience is different** – Leaders should expect that each worker's experience with the crisis will be different and support should be provided based on individual needs.
- **Lead by example** – By sharing your own feelings and being transparent, your workers may see you as authentic and may be more inclined to trust when you're lending support.
- **Leave nothing "off the table"** – Even the most difficult topics should be part of your planning and conversations.

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- **Take stock of the supports in place** – Make sure you have the necessary supports in place to assist workers and leaders. And remind them frequently of the tools that are available.
- **Provide new or refresher training if required** – All leaders and managers in your organization should feel confident and competent to support their teams. If needed, source appropriate training solutions or provide refresher training.

Summary of Resources

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) and HowattHR launched the Psychological Safety Blog to empower leaders with information, tools, and resources to help you protect and promote the psychological health, safety, and wellness of workers. Below is a summary of resources that have been shared on the blog, categorized by format.

Written

The following posts are co-written by Dr. Bill Howatt of HowattHR and Conference Board of Canada and Louise Bradley of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Each weekly post covers a specific theme and includes tips and strategies, along with additional reading and support tools in a variety of formats. Some examples include:

- [Mental Fatigue](#) – Prolonged cognitive load can result in an employee feeling overwhelmed. This post provides tips for monitoring and preventing mental fatigue.
- [Work 2.0 Reboot](#) – Employees will likely arrive back in the workplace changed by what has happened. Each will have a different mindset based on their experience. Leaders must be ready to provide support based on individual needs.
- [Mental Health Risk](#) – It is important that leaders watch for risk among employees and themselves. This post provides tips for doing so and includes a poster, as well as tip sheets.
- [Irritability](#) – When left unchecked, irritability can lead to anger and unstable behaviour. This post provides leaders with insights and advice to nip irritability in the bud before it escalates.
- [How leaders can support employees through grief, loss, regret experiences](#) – Business leaders can expect that employees are or will face a grief-loss-regret experience. This post provides tips for supporting them.

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- **[Managers Have a Role to Play in Preventing Suicide](#)** Growing fear and social disconnect are expected to increase the risk of suicide. This post offers guidance to leaders who are supporting employees contemplating life-ending decisions.

To see all posts, visit <http://www.ceohsnetwork.ca/psychological-safety-blog/>

Videos, Webinars and Podcasts

[The Boiling Point](#) – Dr. Bill Howatt and David Veale share stories and research and talk with leading experts to help listeners understand and act toward protecting mental health and preventing mental harms at work.

[Tactics for Maintaining Mental Fitness during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – (Offered by CSSE) is a weekly webinar series examining behaviours for maintaining mental fitness.

[Mental Health and COVID-19](#) – (Offered by CBoC) Each of these 5-7 minute-videos, offered by the Conference Board of Canada, covers a specific theme and provides tips and ideas for managing mental health in this time of isolation.

Support Tools, Programs and Services

[BEACON](#) – (Offered by Green Shield Canada and Manulife) A digital therapy program provided with guidance from a team of clinical psychologists, available free to all Canadians.

[Starling Minds COVID-19 Program](#) – (Offered by Starling Minds) A confidential online therapy program to help people combat stress, worry and anxiety related to the pandemic.

[Mental Fitness Practice](#) – (offered by UNB) An online course designed to help individuals develop a personal mental fitness plan

[Pathways to Coping](#) – (offered by UNB) This course is a structured developmental program designed to improve personal coping, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

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[Psychologically Safe Leaders](#) – (offered by UNB) A five-module course providing participants with greater awareness, understanding of risks, and the skills needed to be a psychologically safe leader.

[Perceived Isolation Survey](#) – (HowattHR, the Globe and Mail, and WSPS) This survey is designed to increase your awareness of the relationship between isolation (i.e., things that may be negatively impacting your ability to make social connections) and loneliness (i.e., the emotions associated with feeling isolated)

Additional COVID-19 Mental Health Resources

[WSPS COVID-19 Mental Health Resources Information Sheet](#) – This summary of resources provides links to over 35 sources providing assistance on a myriad of mental health related topics, including:

- helping employees decrease mental distress and seek care
- supporting employees working from home
- helping employees manage mental health
- supporting employees who have been laid off
- supporting employees who have lost family members friends and colleagues
- preparing employees for a psychologically safe return to the workplace

[Mental Health Commission of Canada COVID-19 Resource Hub](#) – Content is available in both French and English with links to expertise and resources to assist individuals and leaders in maintaining mental health during the COVID-19 crisis.

[ThinkMentalHealth.ca](#) – Developed by Ontario Health and Safety System Partners to provide workplaces with resources to better understand and prevent mental health problems.

The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

- [Mental Injury Toolkit](#) – Provides workers with a basic understanding of workplace stress, their rights and Ontario's legal framework.
- [StressAssess](#) – A web tool and mobile application designed to help individuals monitor their work-related stress. Developed from evidence-based studies, these resources help leaders analyze and address stress in the workplace.

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Public Services Health & Safety Association

- [Firstrespondersfirst.ca](https://www.firstrespondersfirst.ca) – A free online toolkit for developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Prevention Plans.
- [Resources](#) and prevention strategies to manage psychological health & safety in the workplace, including:
 - TruReach Mental Wellness, a self-help Mental Wellness App to address depression and anxiety.
 - Information about voluntary Psychological Health & Safety Standards.
 - Specific resources and training for the health and community services sector and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) awareness resources for police officers, firefighters, nurses, children’s aid workers, teachers, principals, education assistants and paramedics.

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

- [Mental Health First Aid Training](#) – Helps workers to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and provide appropriate assistance.
- [National standard consulting services](#) – Helps leaders improve work environments and implement solutions that encourage a positive workplace mental health framework.

Infrastructure Health & Safety Association

- [Mental Health First Aid Training](#) – Helps workers to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and provide appropriate assistance.
- [Mental health in the workplace poster](#) – Promotes awareness of mental health in the workplace.

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Workplace Safety North

- [Mental Health Awareness Training](#) – Introduces the complex topic of mental health and its impact and importance in the workplace.
- [Feed Your Brain Lunch and Learn Series](#) – One-hour sessions that explore why mental health matters in the workplace.

Workers Health and Safety Centre

- [Mental Health At Work Training](#) – Includes courses on stress in the workplace, workplace violence and harassment, and critical incident and post-traumatic stress.

Additional Resources

- [ConnexOntario](#) – Provides free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness and/or gambling.
- [HealthyMinds@Work](#) – Builds greater understanding of mental health, and provides support to help employers and workers address mental health problems in the workplace.
- [Not Myself Today](#) – A toolkit to help employers improve mental health at work.

[Mental Health Works](#) – An initiative of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario which provides workshops, presentations, and webinars to workplaces to build awareness and encourage healthy and safe workplaces, including [Mental Health in the Workplace: An Accommodation Guide for Managers and Staff](#)

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Further COVID-19 Resources

[Keeping Safe During the Pandemic](#) – This rich resource hub, offered by Workplace Safety & Prevention Services for businesses operating or re-opening during the pandemic, includes tip sheets, checklists, guideline documents and videos for keeping employees safe.

Stay updated with daily government updates

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [The Ontario Ministry of Health](#)

For more information visit www.wsps.ca/COVID19

NOTE: This document is intended for informational purposes only to provide an overview of the potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19. It is not intended as medical advice, to provide a comprehensive risk assessment for all workplaces, or to replace any legislated workplace safety obligations. WSPS has not endorsed and does not endorse any particular product or company as a solution to the risk presented by COVID-19. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation in Ontario and around the world, this document may be used as a guide for Employers in addition to guidance delivered by public health authorities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any use which is made of this document by any Employer or individual, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of the Employer or individual. WSPS and its partners, officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, suppliers and service providers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in content or for damages of any kind or nature suffered by any Employer or any third party as a result of use of or reliance on this communication