

Psychological Health and Safety: Mental health at work

Did you know?

- According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, in a typical week, 500,000 Canadians are unable to work due to psychological health issues.
- The economic cost of mental health issues for Canadian workplaces is estimated at \$20 billion annually¹.
- 70% of Canadian employees report being concerned about the Psychological health & safety of their workplaces

As we begin 2019, many of us have set personal goals for our physical health. Workplaces often begin the year by encouraging employees to participate in quit smoking programs, or to meet 'steps' goals – but most organizations don't set similar goals to encourage our employees to take care of their mental health and be 'psychologically fit'.

One of the most important things that workplaces can do to promote mental health is to raise awareness of workplace psychological health and safety. Whether it's an inclusion in the health and safety programming for the month, a staff meeting centering on the topic, or simply sharing this newsletter (or some of the great resources available through Work Safe Manitoba), it all counts to get people thinking and talking about mental health.

Ensuring that employees are aware of the services that are available to them in their benefits or Employee Assistance Programs is important, particularly for those in crisis, however there are other actions that can easily be taken to adopt a preventative approach:

- Ensure employees are aware of your workplace harassment and violence prevention policy. All Manitoba employers are legally required to have one, and employees must be trained and aware of how to make a complaint if they're being bullied or harassed.
- Have a team member trained on mental health first aid as part of your workplace health and safety strategy through **CMHA Manitoba**
- Encourage your employees to practice 'mental fitness'

Anyone can benefit from practicing mental fitness, not just those going through a rough time. Practicing mental fitness not only prepares us to **cope with difficult times in our personal or professional lives, but also helps us enjoy life.** Simple ways to practice mental fitness include:

¹ SafeWork Manitoba. Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace strategy. Accessed at <https://www.safemanitoba.com/Topics/Pages/Psychological-Health-and-Safety-in-the-Workplace.aspx>

- **Learn ways to cope with negative thoughts:** Instead of trying to stop negative thought entirely, learn to interrupt negative self-talk. Try not to let these thoughts take over and focus on comforting yourself or distracting yourself with another task if you are unable to overcome the problem that is causing these thoughts right away.
- **Exercise:** Exercise has just as many mental benefits as it does physical benefits. Regular exercise can reduce depression and anxiety, reduce tension and help clear your mind.
- **Keep a journal:** Expressing yourself after a tough day can help you release tension, gain perspective and even help your body boost its resiliency to illness. It also can provide a way to 'vent' without having another person involved.
- **Volunteer:** Being able to help others helps you feel good about yourself. Volunteering also widens our professional and social networks and provides new learning opportunities.
- **Seek out and share humour:** When you see or hear something that makes you laugh, share it with somebody else and spread the fun. Funny animal videos or some of the standup comedy specials on Netflix are an easy way to brighten your mood.
- **Set goals:** Setting goals, even as small as vowing to finish a book you started years ago helps you build confidence and gives you a sense of satisfaction.
- **Enjoy hobbies:** Taking up a hobby helps keep your brain active. It also helps you unwind and achieve balance in life by allowing you to do something just because you find it enjoyable.
- **Treat yourself well:** Do the things that you enjoy, just for you. Take a 'Sunday drive', go see a movie, join a pick-up hockey game, or connect with a friend you haven't seen in a while. Enjoy these experiences and make time for them.

At People First HR Services, our vision is to provide trusted people solutions to Canadian businesses. Our experts partner with organizations and apply years of diverse experience to customize, facilitate and implement industry-specific solutions to modern business challenges.

We specialize in Strategic HR Consulting, Career Management, Senior Management & Executive Search, and Professional & Management Recruitment services. Founded in 2000, we are one of the largest human resource consulting firms in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

We can be reached at info@peoplefirsthr.com or 204-940-3900.