



MENTAL HEALTH

IN THE WORKPLACE

Mental Health in the Workplace

May 16, 2023

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Outline

- Impact of mental illness in the workplace
- Difference between mental health & mental illness
- Common risk factors for mental illness
- Signs & symptoms of mental illness
- Ways to promote mental well-being in the workplace



Mental Health in the Workplace

- What is the impact of mental health in the workplace?

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/careers/workplace-award/video-what-is-the-impact-of-mental-health-in-the-workplace/>

Impact of Mental Illness in the Workplace

- 1 in 5 Canadians will be diagnosed with a mental illness
 - In Manitoba, that number is 1 in 4 (Manitoba Centre for Health Policy Mental Illness Report)
 - By age 40, it is estimated that 1 in 2 Canadians will have, or have had, a mental illness (CAMH)
 - 20% of Canadian workers experience a stress-related illness every year
- If you are diagnosed, chances are you will still be working
- Most people who work spend most of their waking hours at work

Impact of Mental Illness in the Workplace

- Mental illness costs the Canadian economy \$51 billion per year (Mental Health Commission of Canada)
 - Healthcare service use
 - Lost workdays & work disruptions, 'presenteeism'
- A healthy Canadian economy relies on healthy minds
- It is the responsibility of both employers & employees to protect & promote mental health in the workplace
- Best practices support early intervention

More Statistics About Mental Health in Canada

- Mental health problems & illnesses affect more people in Canada than some of the major physical disorders
 - Single largest category of disease affecting Canadians
- 60% of people with a mental health problem or illness will not seek help for fear of stigma
- In a given week, half a million Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems or illnesses
- 1 in 3 workplace disability claims are related to mental health problems or illnesses
 - The cost of a disability leave for a mental illness is 2X the cost of a leave due to a physical illness
 - Employees who consider most of their workdays to be quite or extremely stressful are over 3X more likely to suffer a major depressive episode (Statistics Canada)

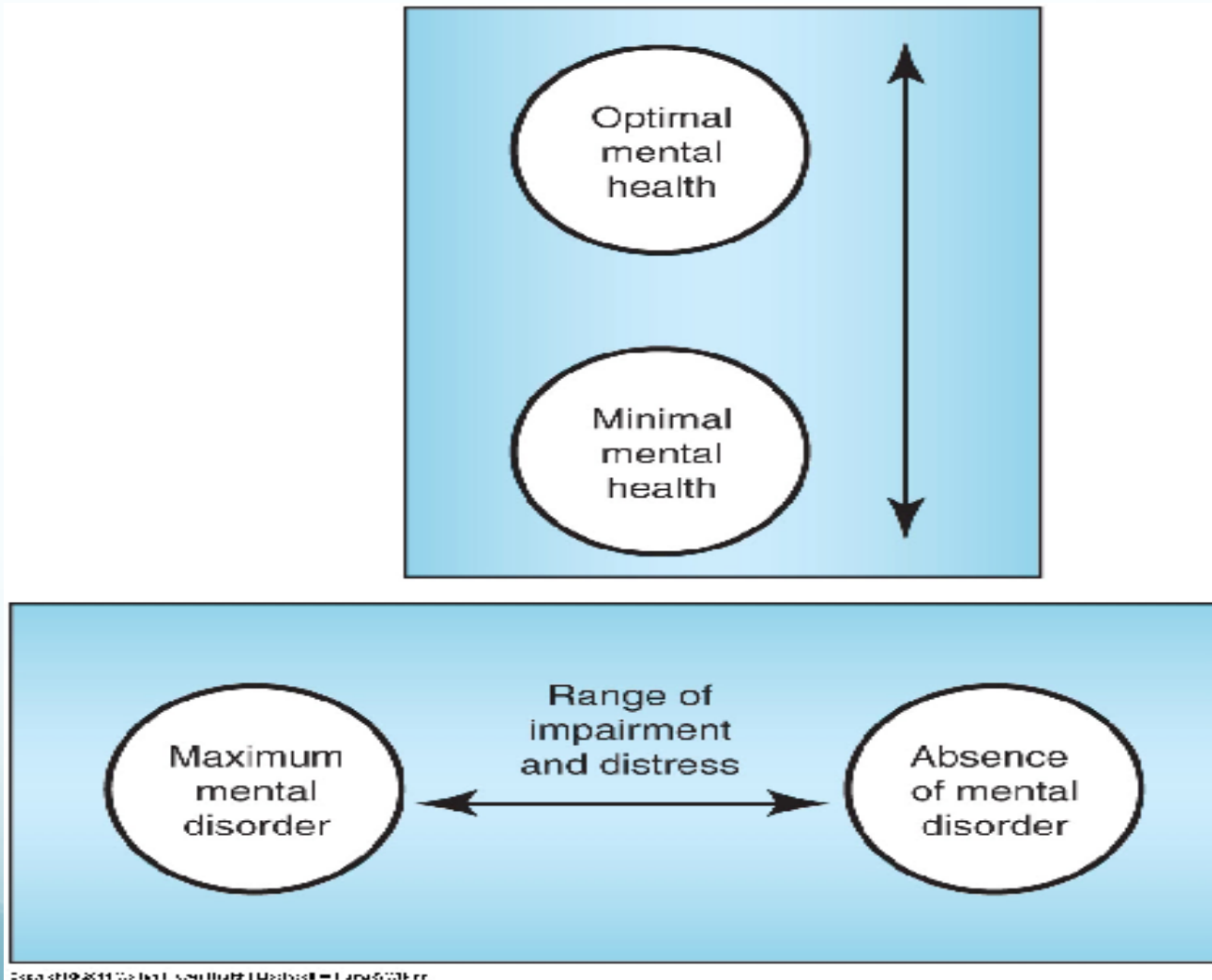
How Does Mental Illness Impact Workers?

- People who experience mental illness may doubt their abilities, appear less confident, and/or have difficulty concentrating, learning, & making decisions
- Symptoms may feed bigger thoughts, i.e., someone who can't concentrate may then also think they can't do their job or worry about losing their job, which will then affect work performance (vicious cycle)
- Mental illness can also have a big effect on work relationships: withdrawal from others, acting in unexpected ways, or appearing less productive, which can strain relationships with supervisors & coworkers

What is Health?

- Mental Health is an essential component of health
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO):
 - “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, & social well-being, & not merely the absence of disease or infirmity
 - In the workplace, there can be no health without mental health”

What is Mental Health?



Mental Health on a Continuum

- Most people consider having a mental health disorder (mental illness) to be associated with minimal mental health (which it can be)
- Conversely, most people consider the absence of a mental health disorder to be associated with optimal mental health (which it also can be)

However:

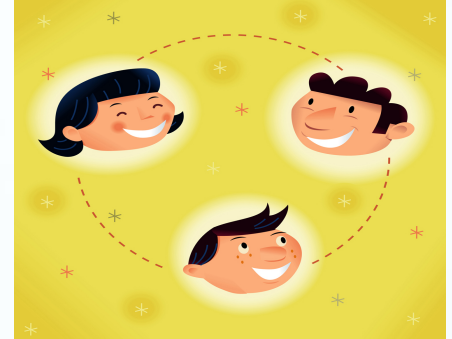
- It is possible to have a mental health disorder & have optimal mental health
- It is also possible to have no mental health disorder, but have minimal mental health

What is Mental Health?

- Achieving quality & fulfillment, & striking a balance, in all areas of life
 - Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social
- Ability to enjoy life
- Ability to deal with challenges
 - Making choices
 - Managing difficult relationships
 - Adapting to stressful situations

Mental Health is the Ability to:

- Think ‘rationally’
- Communicate ‘appropriately’
- Learn
- Grow emotionally
- Have a healthy self-esteem
 - Recognize own potential
- Be resilient
 - Cope with ‘normal’ stress
- Work productively & contribute to community



Resilience

- Ability & capacity to secure resources needed to support well-being
- Characterized by
 - Optimism
 - Sense of mastery
 - Competence
- Essential to recovery

What Does Mental Well-Being Look Like?

- Having a positive outlook
- Being regularly happy
- Ability to tolerate & cope with difficult emotions
- Being interested in life & other people
- Being able to acknowledge both the positive & negative parts of the self

What Does Mental Well-Being Look Like?

- Feeling that life has direction
- Ability to recognize own potential & belief that they are growing as a person
- Having warm & trusting personal relationships
- Being positive towards others & accepting differences
- Ability to trust others

What Does Mental Well-Being Look Like?

- Being interested in others
- Feeling of belonging to a community that supports & comforts them
- Feeling valued by others
- Living according to own values & standards
- Ability to communicate & address needs in a positive & constructive way

What is Mental Illness?

- Wide range of disorders with definable diagnoses
- Affect mood, thinking, & behaviour
- Associated with distress &/or impairment in functioning
- Some mental illnesses can be acute (one time occurrence), while others can be chronic & episodic, i.e., people have periods of functioning well, as well as unwell (like physical illnesses)
- With appropriate treatment & support, most people will recover
- Early recognition & intervention promote better outcomes

Different Types of Mental Illness (as per DSM5)

- Depressive Disorders (Major Depression)
- Bipolar Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders (GAD, phobias)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders
- Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders
- Personality Disorders (Borderline PD, Antisocial PD)
- Eating Disorders (Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa)
- Substance-Use & Addictive Disorders (including gambling)
- Sleep-Wake Disorders
- Trauma & Stressor-Related Disorders (PTSD)
- Sexual Disorders/Dysfunctions

What is NOT Mental Illness?

- It is normal to feel 'off' sometimes, & to feel sad, uncertain, scared, or suspicious
- Having feelings of stress &/or anxiety does not mean that you have a mental illness
- These emotions only become problematic if they get in the way of your daily life over a longer period of time
- 2 key distinguishing features of a mental illness versus 'normal' human emotion:
 1. If they cause intense distress for you or others
 2. If they prevent you from being able to function in your daily life

Who is Affected by Mental Illness?

- Mental illness, just like physical illness, is part of the human condition
- Affects people of all ages, genders, cultures, occupations, educational levels, & income levels
- All Canadians are likely to be affected by a mental illness, whether it be a family member, friend, colleague, or through personal experience

Stigma & Mental Illness

- Fear & misunderstanding have led to strong stigma about mental illness
- Stigma can lead to people being shamed, shunned, blamed, & even physically harmed, just because they have a mental illness
- Not only does stigma add to the suffering caused by mental illness, it also prevents many people from seeking help
- People often conceal their illness & worry that others may 'discover' it

Question

- What do you think are the common stigmas surrounding mental illness?

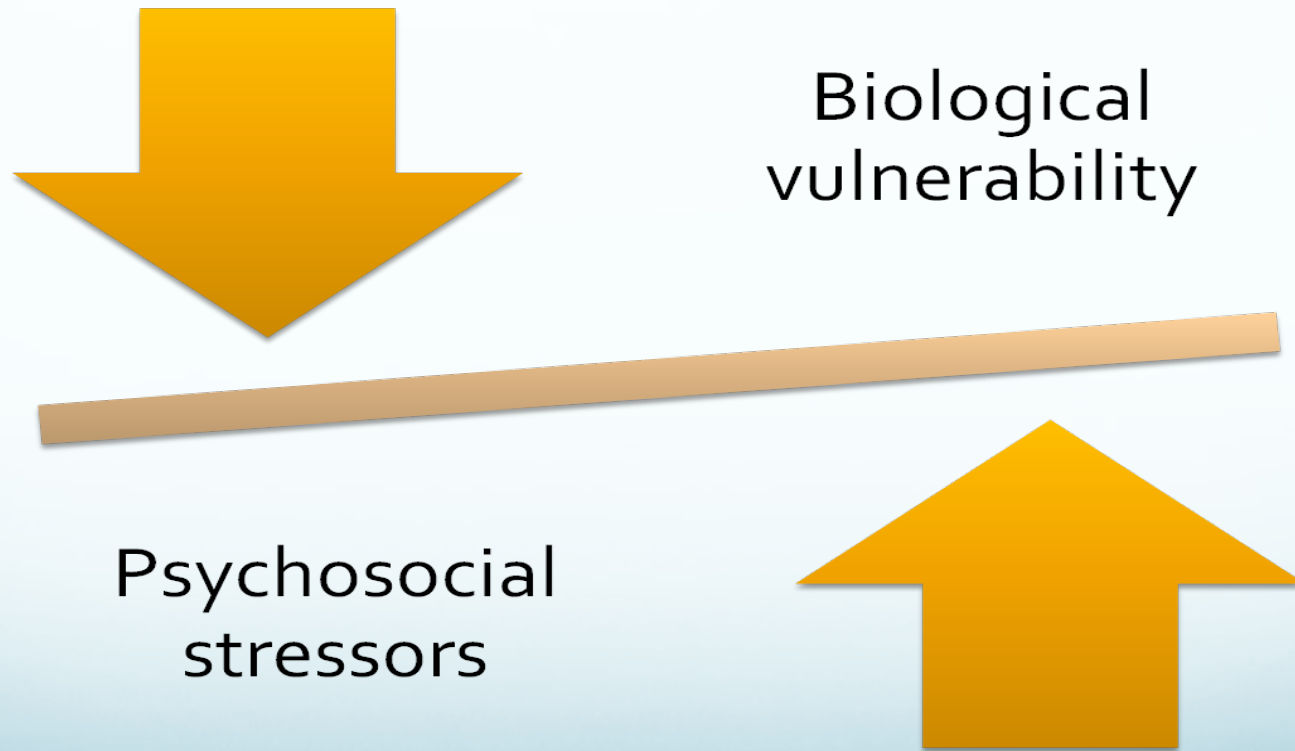
3 Common Myths about Mental Illness

1. People with mental illness are violent & dangerous
 - People with mental illness are no more violent than any other group
 - They are far more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators
2. People with mental illness are poor &/or less intelligent
 - Most people with mental illness have average or above-average intelligence
3. Mental illness is caused by personal weakness
 - It is an illness, not a character flaw
 - They do not choose to become ill, & are not 'lazy' because they don't 'snap out of it'

What Causes Mental Illness?

- A combination of genetic/biological predisposition & environmental stressors
- Someone may have a strong genetic predisposition for mental illness, but they experience very few stressors in their life, & may never develop the illness
- Conversely, someone's genetic predisposition may be very weak, but they experience many stressors, & may become ill

Diathesis-Stress Model



Mental Illness Risk Factors

- Having a first degree relative with a mental illness
- Mother's exposure to viruses while pregnant, or poor prenatal nutrition (both linked to schizophrenia)
- Extremely stressful life situations (death, trauma, assault), or additive stressful events
- Having a chronic medical condition, i.e., cancer
- Problematic substance use
- Abuse or neglect in childhood
- Having few friends or few healthy relationships

Signs & Symptoms of Mental Illness

- Note: S & S vary depending on the types of mental illness, but any of the following may be cause for concern
- Major changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Having strange beliefs not based in reality (delusions)
- Hearing or seeing things that aren't there (hallucinations)
- A growing inability to cope with daily problems & activities
- Confused thinking
- Thoughts of harming or killing oneself

Signs & Symptoms of Mental Illness

- Not realizing obvious problems
- Problematic substance use
- Feeling sad or irritable for more than 2 weeks
- Feeling extreme highs &/or lows
- Excessive fears, worries, & anxiety
- Spending more time alone or avoiding others

How can Mental Illness be Accommodated at Work?

- If you have a mental illness, you have the right to ask for certain accommodations that will allow you to continue to work
- You are under no obligation to disclose your mental illness to your employer, but you may need to provide documentation from your physician that outlines your required accommodations

How Can I Improve my Work Situation if I Have a Mental Illness?

- If you are returning to work after a mental health leave, consider negotiating a graduated return-to-work, i.e., less days per week, or shorter workdays
- Be clear with your employer about what workplace situations cause the most stress, & how they can be mitigated, i.e., you may have to leave meeting rooms periodically, & sit close to the door so as not to disturb others
- Certain medications may make it difficult to be at work first thing in the morning, so ask about flexible work times that would allow you to be the most productive
- If you find it difficult to retain spoken information, ask for written instructions or directions from your supervisor

To Disclose or Not To Disclose

- Benefits of disclosure (i.e., telling employer about mental illness):
 - Can work with employer to figure out strategies that will help you stay at work (also called accommodations)
 - By law, workplaces have to look for reasonable accommodations for anyone with a disability, including a mental illness
 - Can help others understand any challenges or difficulties you may have
- Risks of disclosure:
 - Stigma & discrimination
 - Although there are laws against this, it still could happen

To Stay at Work or Take Time Off

- Advantages of staying at work:
 - Staying connected to work can be helpful during recovery
 - Work can help you contribute your skills (increasing self-esteem), build social connections, develop a self-identity & sense of purpose, & earn money
- Advantages of taking time off:
 - It's okay to take time for yourself, especially if work is a source of added stress or anxiety
 - Consider reduced hours or a graduated return-to-work plan

How Can Employers Promote Mental Health in the Workplace?

- Create an organizational culture that values worker input in all aspects
 - Planning, policy making, & goal setting
- Ensure that managers & supervisors act to support the organization's values
- Balance job demands with workers' capabilities & resources
- Provide leadership training for managers & supervisors to learn their roles in reducing workplace stress
- Foster opportunities for learning, skill development, personal growth, & social interaction with other workers
- Address psychosocial hazards as they do physical hazards

How Can I Help a Coworker with a Mental Illness?

- Express your concerns without making assumptions
- Let them decide what & how much to disclose
- Be supportive: Let them know you are there to listen without judgment, & help them feel like they are still part of the team
- Ask how you can help, & respect their wishes
- Include them in the workplace's usual activities
- If they take time off, still keep in touch
- When they return to work, make them feel welcome & appreciated
 - Saying nothing for fear of saying the wrong thing can make them feel worse
- Advocate for a healthy workplace
- *Break*

Breakout Rooms: Brainstorm Session

- Take a few minutes to brainstorm specific strategies for promoting your own mental health in the workplace, as well as outside the workplace
- We will reconvene to share strategies with the large group

How Can Employees Promote Their Own Mental Health in the Workplace?

- Seek help when needed
 - Talk to your supervisor, human resources, or health & safety rep
 - Use EAP!
- Participate in planning with your manager to balance work demands & work load
- Find a hobby or activity that helps you relax & brings happiness, then do it regularly

How Can Employees Promote Their Own Mental Health in the Workplace?

- Share your feelings with someone you trust, or write them down in a journal
- Acknowledge when things are going well, & celebrate your successes
- Get to know what makes you happy, & your stress triggers
- Learn to acknowledge what you can & cannot change about yourself
- Develop healthy habits such as regular exercise & sleep, & a balanced diet

More 'Mental Fitness' Tips

- Assess your emotional health regularly
- Give yourself permission to take a break from your worries & concerns
- Daydream
 - Close your eyes & imagine yourself in a dream location
- 'Collect' positive emotional memories
 - Recall times when you have experienced pleasure, comfort, confidence

More 'Mental Fitness' Tips

- Learn ways to cope with negative thoughts
 - Interrupt those thoughts
- Do one thing at a time
 - Turn off your phone, be mindful of each thing your doing
- Set personal goals
- Share humour
- Volunteer
- Treat yourself well
 - Cook yourself a good meal, have a bubble bath, see a movie, call a friend

Importance of Exercise, Nutrition, & Sleep

- When you're focused on work, it's easy to neglect your physical health
- When you're supporting your health with good exercise, nutrition, and sleep, you're more resilient to stress
- Taking care of yourself doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul: even small things can lift your mood & increase your energy

Importance of Exercise

- Regular exercise is not only good for the body, but it is also one of the most effective ways to improve mental health
 - Has a profoundly positive impact on depression, anxiety, ADHD, etc.
 - Relieves stress, improves memory, improves sleep, boosts mood
- Even moderate amounts of exercise can make a big difference

Exercise & Depression

- Exercise can treat mild to moderate depression as effectively as antidepressant medication, without side-effects
- Maintaining an exercise schedule can prevent relapse of depression
- Exercise promotes changes in the brain:
 - Promotes growth of neurons
 - Reduces inflammation
 - Promote feelings of calm & well-being
 - Releases endorphins, which are powerful chemicals that energize mood
- Exercise can also serve as a distraction, allowing yourself some quiet time to break out of the cycle of negative thoughts that feed depression

Exercise & Anxiety

- Relieves muscle tension & stress
- Boosts physical & mental energy
- Enhances well-being through the release of endorphins
- Interrupts the flow of constant worries running through your mind

Exercise & ADHD

- Improves concentration, motivation, memory, & mood
- Immediately boosts the brain's dopamine, norepinephrine, & serotonin levels – the brain's 'feel-good' neurotransmitters
- Works on the brain in much the same way as Ritalin & Adderall

Exercise & PTSD

- Helps the nervous system move out of the immobilization (“freeze”) stress response
- Exercises that involve rhythmic movement & that engage both arms & legs are particularly helpful in soothing the nervous system
 - Walking, running, swimming, weight training, dancing
- Outdoor activities have also been shown to be particularly helpful with PTSD
 - Hiking, sailing, mountain biking, rock climbing, skiing

Other Mental & Emotional Benefits of Exercise

- Sharper memory & thinking
 - Endorphins help the mind concentrate & focus
 - Exercise stimulates the growth of new brain cells
 - Helps prevent age-related decline
- Higher self-esteem
 - Can foster self-worth
 - Feel better about appearance
 - Fosters a sense of achievement by meeting small goals

Other Mental & Emotional Benefits of Exercise

- Better sleep
- Increased energy
- Stronger resilience
 - Can help increase coping mechanisms
 - Replaces need for drugs, alcohol, or other negative behaviors
 - Boosts immune system to reduce the impact of stress

Overcoming Obstacles to Exercising

- Feeling exhausted
 - When you're tired, it feels like working out will just make it worse, but physical activity is actually a powerful energizer
 - Regular exercise can dramatically reduce fatigue & increase energy levels
 - Promise yourself only a 5 minute walk – chances are, you will be able to go 5 more minutes
- Feeling overwhelmed
 - The thought of another obligation can seem overwhelming
 - If you begin thinking about physical activity as a priority, you will find ways to fit small amounts into a busy schedule

Overcoming Obstacles to Exercising

- Feeling hopeless
 - If you have no experience exercising, start slow with low-impact movement a few minutes each day
 - Ditch the all-or-nothing attitude
- Feeling bad about yourself
 - No matter your weight, age, or fitness level, there are others like you with the same goal of getting fit
 - Take a class with people at a variety of fitness levels
 - Accomplishing even the smallest fitness goals will help you gain body confidence
 - Be kind to yourself

Overcoming Obstacles to Exercising

- Feeling physical pain
 - Talk to your health care provider about ways to safely exercise
 - Don't ignore pain, but do what you can, when you can
 - Divide your exercise into shorter, more frequent chunks of time if that helps
 - Try exercising in water to reduce joint or muscle discomfort

Importance of Nutrition

- Our food choices can have a huge impact on how we feel during the work day
- Eating small, frequent, & healthy meals can help our bodies maintain an even level of blood sugar, which maintains energy & focus, & prevents mood swings
- Low blood sugar can make us feel anxious & irritable, while high blood sugar can make us feel lethargic

Making Stress-Busting Food Choices

- Minimize sugar & refined carbs
 - ‘Feel-good’ foods quickly lead to a crash in mood & energy, making the symptoms of stress worse
 - Try & avoid: sugary snacks, baked goods, pasta, French fries
- Reduce intake of foods that can adversely affect your mood
 - Caffeine, trans fats, saturated fats, foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones

Making Stress-Busting Food Choices

- Eat more Omega-3 fatty acids to give your mood a boost
 - Fish, eggs, flaxseed, walnuts, beans, Brussels sprouts, kale, spinach
- Avoid nicotine
 - Smoking may seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant, leading to higher levels of anxiety
- Drink alcohol in moderation
 - Too much can cause anxiety as it wears off & adversely affect mood

Making Stress-Busting Food Choices

- Cook with olive oil, bake with canola oil
- Eat more avocados
 - Add them to sandwiches & salads
 - Make guacamole
 - Loaded with heart & brain healthy fats
- Reach for nuts
 - Add nuts to vegetable dishes
 - Use them instead of breadcrumbs
 - Make your own trail mix

Making Stress-Busting Food Choices

- Eat 'good' carbs:
 - Unrefined whole grains: whole or multigrain bread, brown rice, quinoa, bran cereal, oatmeal
 - Non-starchy vegetables: spinach, green beans, Brussels sprouts, celery, tomatoes
 - Legumes: kidney beans, baked beans, peas, lentils
 - Nuts: peanuts, cashews, walnuts
 - Fruit: apples, berries, citrus fruit, bananas, pears

Making Stress-Busting Food Choices

- Snack on olives
 - High in healthy monounsaturated fats
 - Low in calories
- Dress your own salad
 - Commercial salad dressings are often high in unhealthy fat or added sugars

Importance of Sleep

- Sleeping well directly affects your mental & physical health & the quality of your waking life
- Try & aim for 8 hours of sleep a night
- Skimping on sleep interferes with daytime energy, productivity, creativity, problem-solving ability, & ability to focus
- The better rested you are, the better equipped you will be to tackle your job responsibilities & cope with workplace stress
- Improve the quality of your sleep by making healthy changes to your daytime & nightly routines
 - Go to bed at the same time every night (even on days off)
 - Turn off screens 1 hour before bedtime
 - Avoid stimulating activity before bed
 - Focus on quiet, soothing activities
 - Keep lights low

Wind Down & Clear Your Head

- If anxiety or chronic worrying dominates your thoughts at night, take steps to reduce this
- If the stress of work, family, or school is keeping you awake, practice stress management techniques
- The more over-stimulated your brain becomes during the day, the harder it can be to slow down & unwind at night
 - Set aside specific times to check your phone

Case Study: Mandi

- What are some of the stressors that Mandi experienced that contributed to her anxiety?
- What are some of the signs & symptoms of mental illness that Mandi demonstrated?
- What can Mandi's supervisor/manager do to help her?
- What can co-workers do to show Mandi support?
- What can Mandi do to promote her own mental health?

Mental Health for Life

- Build a healthy self-esteem
 - Being able to see all your abilities & weaknesses together, accepting them, & doing your best with what you have, without comparing yourself to others
- Activity: Build confidence
 - Take a good look at your good points: What do you do best? Where are your skills & interest areas? How would a friend describe you?
 - Now look at your weak points: What do you have difficulty doing? What things make you feel frustrated?
 - Which list was easier to write?

Mental Health for Life

- Build positive support networks
 - Social support is very important to mental health!
 - Good relationships take effort, whether it's with family members, friends, neighbours, clubs, coworkers, or specific support groups
- Activity: Make time
 - Be with the important people in your life, either simply having fun & enjoying each other's company, or having more serious conversations

Mental Health for Life

- Get involved
 - Provides a sense of purpose & satisfaction
 - Connects you with others in your community who share similar interests or values, & connects you to groups of people you might not normally meet
 - Can help you learn new skills, build confidence, & gain different perspectives
- Activity: Volunteer
 - Read to children at your local library, visit people in a hospital or care facility, serve on a committee or board of your favourite charity, or simply help a neighbour

Mental Health for Life

- Build resiliency
 - Coping with problems & stresses of life
- Activity: Build your own toolkit
 - What resiliency tools do you already have? How have you coped with problems & stresses in the past?

Mental Health for Life

- Recognize your emotions
 - All emotions are part of being human: happiness, sadness, anger
 - How can we accept & express our emotions in a respectful way?
 - Recognize what influences our emotions, & how they affect the way we think & act
- Activity: Identify & deal with your moods
 - Find out what makes you happy, sad, joyful, angry
 - What helps you feel better, i.e., exercise, movies, music

Mental Health for Life

- Take care of your spiritual well-being
 - Knowing ourselves, discovering our values, being at peace with ourselves, living with purpose
 - May, or may not, include religious beliefs
- Activity: Connect with yourself
 - Set aside quiet time to be totally alone
 - Breathing exercises
 - Spend time in nature

Work-Life: Are You in Balance?

- 58% of Canadians report ‘overload’ associated with their many roles: work, home & family, friends, physical health, volunteer & community service
- A moderate amount of stress improves our efficiency & mental sharpness
- How do you know when your everyday ‘juggling act’ has stop being a motivating challenge & started being harmful?
 - You feel like you’ve lost control of your life
 - You often feel guilty about neglecting your different roles
 - You frequently find it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand
 - You’re always tired

Work-Life Balance Quiz

- On a piece of paper, write numbers 1-15 in a column
- Indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement by marking A (Agree) or D (Disagree)
- When finished, I will put up the 'key'
- Give either 0 or 1, depending on your answer
- Add up the scores

Tips for Staying in Balance: At Work

- Schedule brief breaks for yourself throughout the day
 - Your productivity & effectiveness will increase if you take even a 10 minute break every 2 hours
- At the end of the day, set your priorities for the following day
 - Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time you have available
- Only respond to email once or twice a day
 - Then, shut off your email to avoid being distracted as messages come in
- Make a distinction between work & the rest of your life
 - Protect your private time by turning off electronic communications
 - Don't be available 24/7!

Tips for Staying in Balance: At Home

- Create a buffer between work & home
 - After work, take a brief walk, do a crossword, or listen to some music before beginning the evening's routine
- Decide what chores can be shared or let go
 - Determine which household chores are critical & which can be done by someone else by someone else
 - Let the rest go!
- Exercise
 - Even if it's only for 15 minutes at a time, you'll feel more energized & refreshed
- Create & implement a household budget
 - \$ is the main cause of stress outside of work; 50% cite \$ issues as their top stressor (Desjardins Financial Security survey)
 - Start by setting aside some \$ from each paycheque for the future

Tips for Staying in Balance: In Your Community

- Make choices
 - Social, community, & volunteer obligations pull us in many directions
 - Choose the ones that are most fulfilling & learn to say NO to the rest

Staying Safe

- Intense & prolonged stress can result in depleting a person's sense of hope & strength, which can in some cases lead to suicidal thoughts
- Having suicidal thoughts is not unusual, & most people will have fleeting thoughts during their lifetimes, especially when experiencing a crisis or intense emotional distress

Some Thoughts About Suicide May Be:

- Believing suicide is the only way to stop your suffering
- Believing that your family & friends would be better off without you
- Thinking that you've done something so horrible that suicide is the only option
- Wanting to hurt or get revenge on others

How to Cope with Suicidal Thoughts & Stay Safe

- Connect with others
- Make your home safe
- Develop a safety plan
- If these fail, go to a hospital ER or call 911

Summary

- Mental health is an integral & essential component of health
- Many people face mental health issues during their prime working years
 - 20% of Canadian workers experience stress-related illness every year
- At some point in our lives, all Canadians are likely to be affected by a mental illness, either themselves, friends, family members, or coworkers
- A psychologically safe & healthy workplace is one that promotes mental health

Summary

- Mental Health is a state in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with everyday stresses of life, can work productively, & is able to contribute to their workplace &/ or community
- Experiencing feelings of stress/anxiety does not mean you have a mental illness; they only become problematic if they cause significant distress &/or impair your ability to function in your everyday life
- If you experience those 2 things, seek professional help
- Early identification & treatment are important

Mental Health Resource Guide

https://mbwpg.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/MHRG_ALL_2020.pdf

Thank you!