



Building Mental Health into Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs: Pandemic Response

Liz Horvath, B.A.Sc., CRSP
Manager, Workplace Mental Health
Opening Minds
Mental Health Commission of Canada

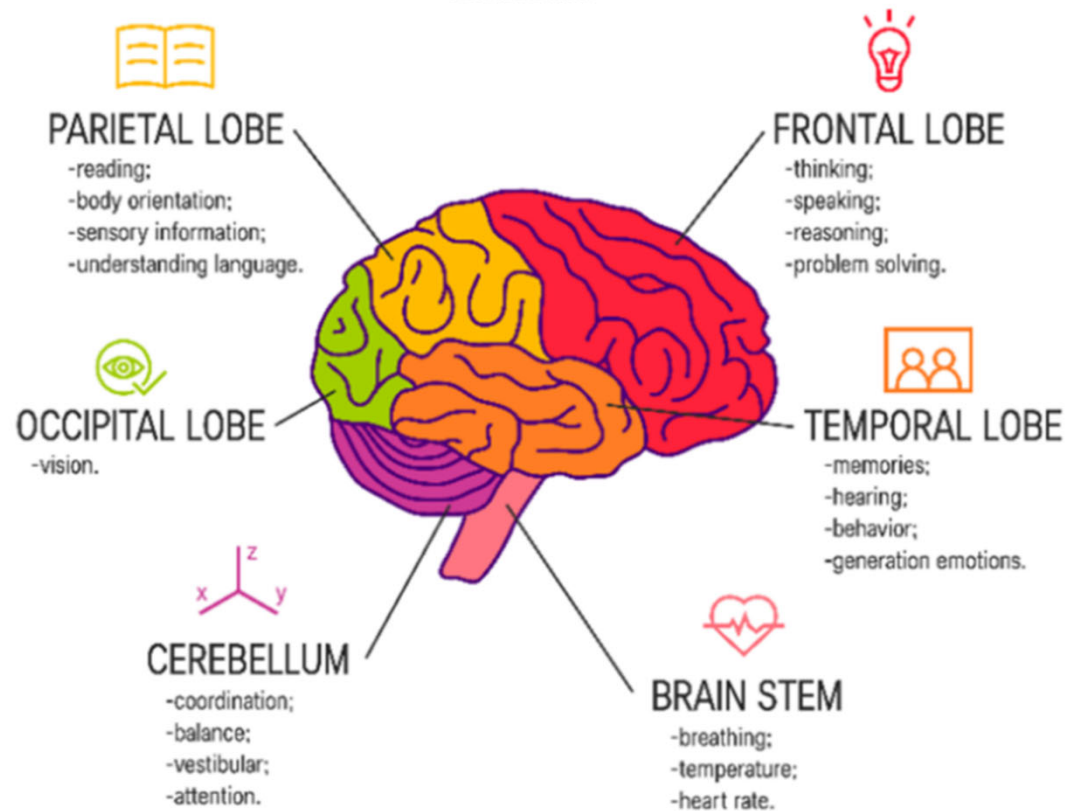
What We Will Cover



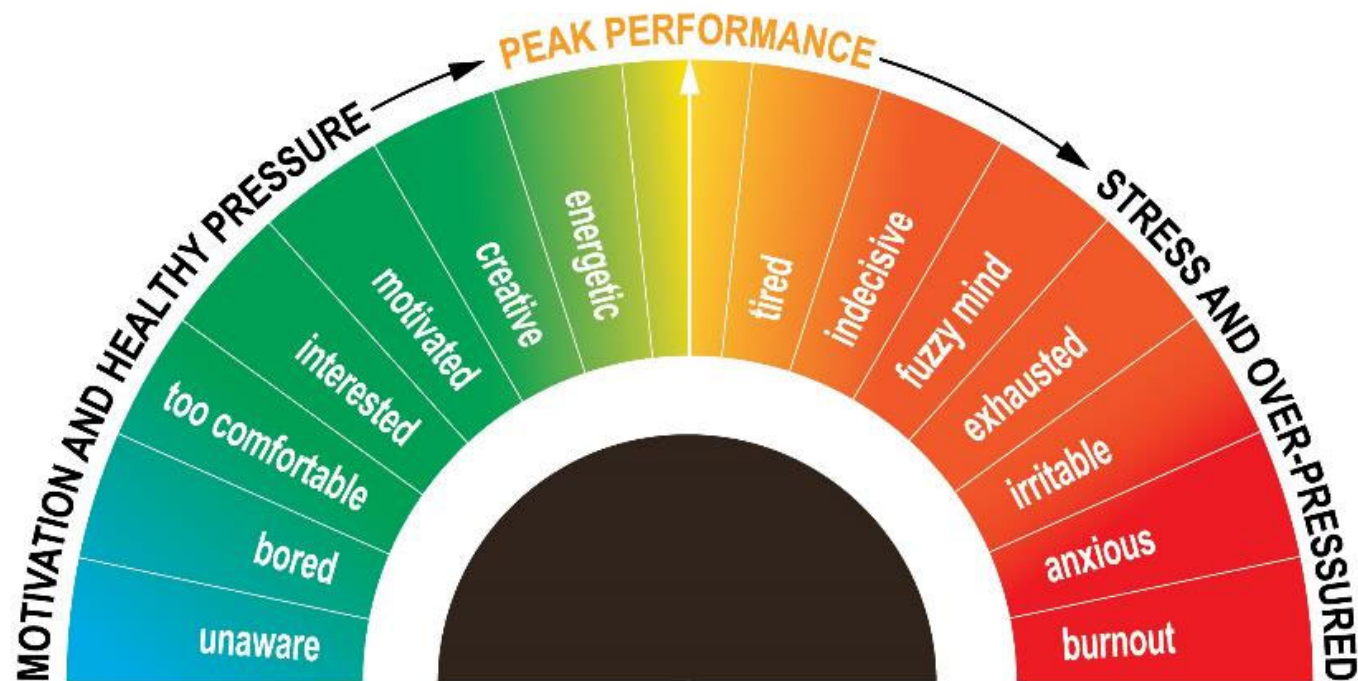
- Potential impact of emergencies and disasters, (COVID-19 in particular) on the mental health of workers
- Worker mental health needs when dealing with emergencies and disasters, including infectious disease pandemics
- How to use the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace to build mental health into your organization's emergency management and business continuity programs

FUNCTIONAL AREAS OF THE BRAIN

LATERAL VIEW



The Stress Arc



Based on the Yerkes-Dodson Law Stress Performance Curve

Food for Thought



What are the benefits of building mental health into your emergency management and business continuity programs?



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

- Shock, helplessness, worry, fear, guilt, fatigue, exhaustion
- Distress in caretakers
- PTSD, depression, and anxiety
- Vicarious and secondary trauma



Pandemic Response Plan



Goals:

- Protect the health and safety of workers and others
- Ensure business continuity

Objectives:

- Minimize the risk and potential impact of infection on workers and the business
- Support workers to perform essential work to meet stakeholder needs in a healthy and safe manner
- Minimize the risk and potential impact of physical and psychological harm arising from the emergency measures to workers and the business
- Ensure a safe and healthy return to normal working conditions following the pandemic
- Plan for post-pandemic psychological support for workers and their dependents



Stages of Emergencies

Stages of Emergency



- Prevention / mitigation
- Preparedness
- Response and continuity
- Recovery

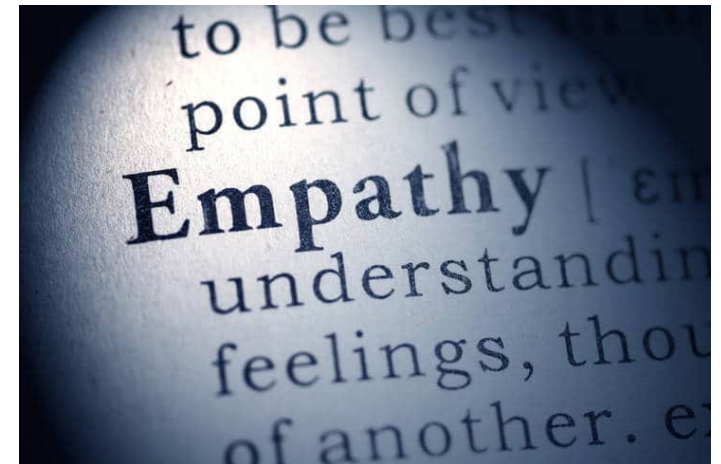
RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX				
SEVERITY PROBABILITY	Catastrophic (1)	Critical (2)	Marginal (3)	Negligible (4)
Frequent (A)	High	High	Serious	Medium
Probable (B)	High	High	Serious	Medium
Occasional (C)	High	Serious	Medium	Low
Remote (D)	Serious	Medium	Medium	Low
Improbable (E)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Eliminated (F)	Eliminated			

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Preventive Actions



- Reduce stigma
- Recognition of signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Guidance on where to go for support
- Education about trauma and its effects
- Education about the effects of cumulative stress
- Training for managers and supervisors on interpersonal skills and empathy



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Resource Hub: Mental health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic



Tips on talking to someone in crisis during COVID-19

The current COVID-19 pandemic is a source of anxiety for people across the country and your colleagues, friends or family may reach out to you for support. **How should you respond?** Use our active listening tips to navigate these sensitive conversations with more confidence.

DO

1. Tell them you're there to listen and help them find the next step.

EXAMPLE

"I'm here to listen and I really want to help you. I'm not a trained counselor or doctor, but I'll do my best to put you on the right path."

2. Practice empathy by considering the needs of people different than yourself, especially those in vulnerable populations.
3. Pause to reflect on what the caller has told you and share back your understanding, showing the caller they've been heard.
4. Mirror back what you're hearing **in your own words** rather than parroting what they've told you.

EXAMPLE

"I just lost my job and I don't know what to do. I have small kids and I don't know if I'll be able to get food on the table. I have no idea if I even qualify for EI."

Helpful answer (mirroring): "I'm hearing you say that you're feeling very overwhelmed with all the uncertainty, and not knowing how to apply for EI is even more frustrating."

Unhelpful answer (parroting): "I'm hearing you say that you're worried about going hungry."

5. Validate the caller's feelings and concerns.

EXAMPLE

"I'm worried about my son, who lives with a mental illness and doesn't have secure housing. What if he catches this virus?"

Helpful answer: "I can tell that you care about your son very much. It can be hard not to run through the worst-case scenarios."

Unhelpful answer: "Everyone feels stressed right now. I have two elderly parents, and they have trouble even using a cellphone."

• Ask the Experts

The Working Mind COVID-19 Self-care & Resilience Guide

Home / Courses

Crisis Response Virtual Training

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has developed a crisis response training course for **essential workers**. We know that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, essential workers are facing a number of new challenges while at work, which may be affecting their mental health. This course is specifically designed to help provide individuals with the tools

Mental Health First Aid

MHFA is the help provided to a person developing a mental health

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



The Working Mind – Mental Health Continuum Model

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
Normal fluctuations in mood	Nervousness, irritability, sadness	Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness	Excessive anxiety, easily enraged, depressed
Normal sleep patterns	Trouble sleeping	Restless or disturbed sleep	Unable to fall or stay asleep or sleeping too much
Physically well, full of energy	Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches	Fatigue, aches and pains	Exhaustion, physical illness
Consistent performance	Procrastination	Decreased performance	Unable to perform duties
Socially active	Decreased social activity	Social avoidance or withdrawal	Isolation, avoiding social events
No trouble/impact due to substance use	Limited to some trouble/impact due to substance use	Increased trouble/impact due to substance use	Dependence
			Suicidal thoughts and/or intentions

Food for Thought



What other resources are you aware of that you find helpful?



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Recovery Stage



Strategies to restore business to an acceptable level.

- Set specific recovery targets and procedures for implementing relevant activities
- Consider the needs of employees in their personal life
- Staggered return to work
- Ensure protective equipment available for everyone
- Disinfection and transport of equipment being returned to the workplace
- Proactive follow up and healthy debriefing methods
- Lessons learned and revision of policies and procedures



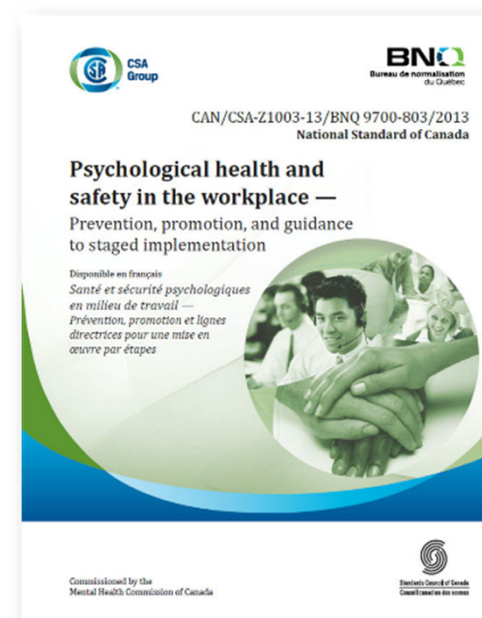
Psychological Health and Safety

Workplace Factors



Download free:

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace/national-standard>



Clear Leadership & Expectations



- Communication plan
- Acknowledge feelings, fears and concerns
- Celebrate successes, reward and recognize
- Communicate about:
  - Signs and symptoms of Covid-19 infection
  - Health and safety measures
  - Chain of command
  - Accommodation of high risk workers
  - Expectations to comply with law and guidelines
  - Available resources
  - Sources of information

Protection of Physical Safety



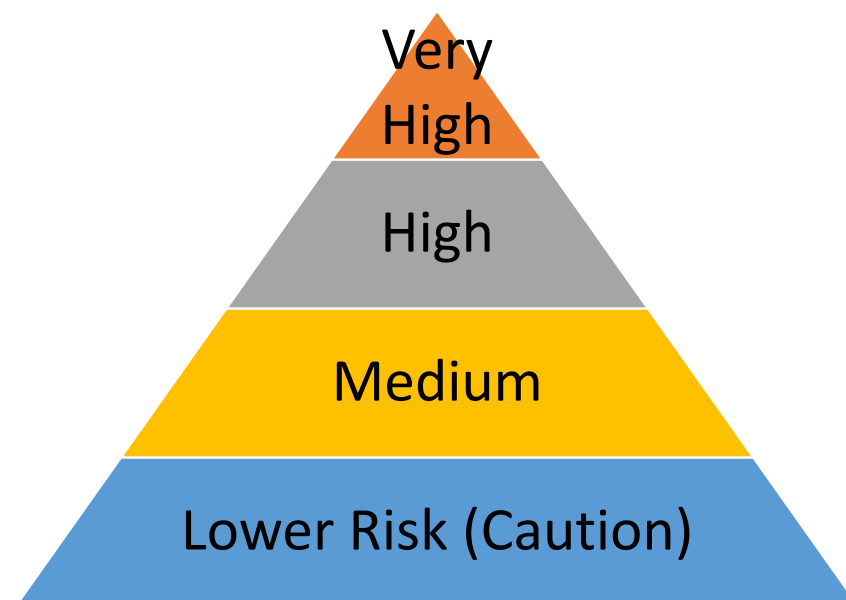
Present when a worker's **psychological, as well as physical safety**, is protected from hazards and risks related to the worker's physical environment



Protection of Physical Safety



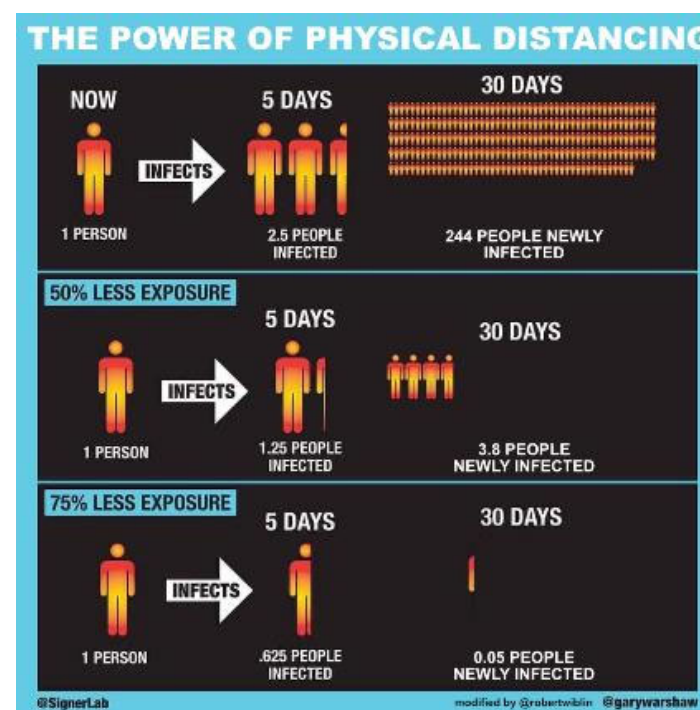
- ✓ Preventive measures
- ✓ Infection prevention and control protocol
- ✓ Classifying employee exposure to pandemic influenza at work
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Right to refuse unsafe work
- ✓ Masks and respirators



Protection of Physical Safety



- ✓ Travel restrictions
- ✓ Physical distancing guidelines
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Lock-down procedures
- ✓ Security procedures
- ✓ Work at home guidelines



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

Protection for High-Risk Workers



- Consider accommodation for workers who live with anxiety or mood disorders
  - Adjustment to workload or schedules
  - Expedited or increased benefits for mental health support and treatment
  - Systematic check-in, buddy system
  - Additional supports to help with management of symptoms

Psychological and Social Support



- Self-care coordinator
- Access to wellbeing and mental health services
- Spiritual care counsellor
- Peer support team
- Mental Health First Aider
- Managers and supervisors trained in interpersonal communication and empathetic listening

Protection for High-Risk Workers



- Contamination obsession and cleaning and washing compulsions during pandemic can result in:
  - More intense sensory experiences
  - Over-estimate threat, excessive worry
  - Dry, chapped skin, dermatitis
  - Increased risk of super-imposed skin infection and chemical exposure injuries



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

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](#).



Get Started

Sign In

Transitions Between Stressful Events



- Disassociation
- Deep breathing
- The Pause
<https://thepause.me/>
- Low impact debriefing
<https://www.tendacademy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Low-Impact-Debriefing-2019.pdf>
- Access to professional debriefing



Psychological Protection



- Social stigma and xenophobia
  - Education about discrimination and xenophobia
  - Communication of policies and procedures for preventing, reporting, and addressing acts of discrimination, harassment and violence

Supporting Your Workers



- Define essential work and what can be deferred
- Redistribute work to help balance workloads
- Focus on results not time spent
- Define flexible work, limits on connectivity and work hours
- Encourage teams to establish and respect boundaries
- Provide education, training and tools to help (e.g. refreshers on stigma reduction, indicators of mental illness, coping strategies, MHFA refresher, etc.)

Workload
management

Psychological
demands

Balance

Supporting Your Workers



- Encourage workers to take breaks and to use time off for wellbeing
- Rotate shifts and stagger time off requests and vacations
- Encourage use of available benefits to support wellbeing
- Encourage use of EAP, community and virtual resources to address health and wellbeing issues
- Establish safe space for dialogue about challenges and needs
- Connect workers with mental health support for themselves and their families

Balance

Psychological
and social
support

Psychological
protection



Conclusion and Call to Action

Food for Thought



What was the most important thing you learned from this webinar?



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Call to Action



Identify **at least one step** will you take **this week** to move forward with integrating psychological health and safety into your emergency management and business continuity plans.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

Thank you/Merci



For more information or to inquire about training or implementing a workplace mental health strategy, please contact:

Liz Horvath

613-325-3818

lhovath@mentalhealthcommission.ca

This webinar was developed in collaboration with

Francois Legault MSW RSW

Certified MHFA and TWM Instructor

613-360-9457 consultactioninc@gmail.com Website: Consult-actioninc.com