GuardingMinds @ WORK

Suggested Actions and Resources

BALANCE

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where there is recognition of the need for employees to be able to manage the demands of work, family, and personal life.

Engage your employees to improve balance

Putting balance On the Agenda is easy with these resources. A workshop slide presentation and facilitator guide help you have a productive conversation with your team about this psychosocial factor and each of the relevant statements from the Guarding Minds at Work survey.

If this factor shows up as a relative strength in your workplace, have a team discussion to find out why they scored this factor higher than the national average. This can lead to appreciation and understanding of what is already good. Policies and processes can also be developed or refined to continue to support positive balance.

If this factor has been flagged as an area of concern in your workplace, engage all stakeholders in discussion about which actions might provide the best solutions. You can use ideas from the list below to begin the conversation. When everyone contributes to improving psychological health and safety, the responsibility is shared, the outcomes are more effective, and the effort is sustainable.

Below are actions and resources related to improving balance. This list does not contain every solution. There may be other ideas that you find or think of and want to try. However, these suggestions can help provide a strong and cost-effective foundation for addressing balance.

The practical strategies come from research studies, have been recommended as best practices, or have been applied effectively in workplaces. The resources included here are free. You can also find excellent services available at a cost from a variety of reputable providers.

Once you have reviewed the actions and resources below, we encourage you to use the Action Planning process to help you think critically about which combination of free, paid, or internal resources will best meet the needs in your workplace.

Actions by statements

If there are specific balance statements from your Guarding Minds at Work survey that you want to address you may want to consider one of the actions or resources provided directly under the statement below. More general actions and resources, relevant to balance, are also included at the end.

1. **My employer encourages me to take my entitled breaks (e.g., lunchtime, sick time, vacation time, earned days off, parental leave).**
    - Leaders not only can model good self-care in terms of working reasonable hours and taking vacation. They can specifically encourage breaks by sharing Healthy Break Activities.

2. **I am able to reasonably balance the demands of work and personal life.**
   - Plan for Resilience is a resource that can help improve employees' abilities to bounce back after a potential health, personal, or work crisis. It will help them identify effective strategies and resources to draw on when needed.
3. **My employer promotes work-life balance.**
   - Work/Life Balance is a tool from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety which offers ideas for initiatives to boost work-life balance as well as guides on how to implement these changes.
4. **I can talk to my supervisor when I am having trouble maintaining work-life balance.**
   - Referring Employees to Resources is a helpful tool when employees are struggling with mental health issues and you may be concerned about invading privacy or being seen as harassing. Providing employees with information about resources or coping strategies can be helpful. Included are tactful suggestions for referring your employees to resources such as Working Through It. You can adapt any of the suggestions for an employee and family assistance program, support group, counselor, or other resources.
   - One place to look for employee resources is the employee resources section at Workplace Strategies for Mental Health.
   - Supporting Employee Success is a tool that can help create a workplace plan for the employee to be most productive at work. It can be used on its own or as part of an existing approach to support an employee's accommodation need. It includes ideas intended to be no cost or low-cost to implement. Most require a small investment of time and/or a change in communication approach.
5. **I feel supported in my workplace when I am dealing with personal or family issues.**
   - Employees Who Are Caregivers offers strategies for employers to support their employees who are caregivers for family members or loved ones with mental health or other health issues.
6. **My employer has programs or policies to prevent worker burnout.**
   - Burnout in the Workplace: A Focus on Prevention is a free webinar that explores the workplace factors that could cause the mental harm leading to burnout. It also discusses what can be done to eliminate or control the hazards that have the potential to result in burnout.
   - When burnout does occur, Burnout Response helps to understand the issue, recognize workplace factors, be aware of signs and symptoms, and take pro-active steps for prevention which can help reduce the impact of burnout on employees and workplaces.

Additional actions and resources

- Have management support and model positive work and life balance behaviour. For example, ensure that messaging is consistent with demonstrated behaviour or expectations.

- Create workplace balance by providing healthy opportunities in the workplace. For example, on-site gym or fitness facilities, provision of "personal time" off, options for unpaid leaves, etc.
- Offer supports for employees who work from home or off-site. For example, appropriate technology and resources.
- Provide information on creating and sustaining a balanced approach to the demands of work and personal life. For example, enhanced resiliency, coping, and problem-solving skills.
- Provide training opportunities for managers or supervisors to support both themselves and their employees in the management of work and life demands.
- Provide a range of educational internal and external opportunities on non-job-related topics. For example, attending "lunch-and-learn" sessions on childcare or eldercare issues.
- Regularly remind and demonstrate to your team that your organization is committed to balance as an important part of being healthy and productive.
- Ensure that your team is aware of existing company and community resources or programs that support work and life balance.
- Support employees who wish to share non-work-related accomplishments. For example, birth of children, major anniversaries, accomplishment of lifelong goals, etc.
- Provide flexible work arrangements, when possible. For example, compressed work schedules, work from home, virtual conferencing, part-time work, contract opportunities, or job sharing. For example, some people may find working longer days with more days off works best for them, but other people may find they keep their balance best with a regular five-day work week.
- Accommodation Strategies offers strategies to help employees who have a disability to remain productive. Developing sustainable solutions is more likely to happen by engaging employees to help determine what will work for them. The strategies shared here can help support the discussion with an employee with a mental health related disability.
- Provide appropriate support for shift-based employees. For example, limit split shifts, provide advance notice of shift changes, or permit trading of shifts.
- Offer personal and family supports for both child and elder care. For example, comprehensive benefits, daycare, fitness facility access, health education, or family responsibility leaves.

  Employees Who Are Caregivers offers strategies for employers to support their employees who are caregivers for family members or loved ones with mental health or other health issues.

  Caring for a family member, partner, or friend can be distressing when you are not able to personally provide all they need to be comfortable and are not sure where to turn to for help. Being a Health Advocate can be offered to employees who are struggling with balancing being a caregiver with work.
- Assess employees' perceptions of the value of benefits when making decisions concerning these programs. For example, provide flexible or "opt-out" options.
- Offer opportunities to earn time off during peak work periods to use during lower workload demand periods.

- Encourage use of allocated time off.
- Develop parameters around communication, availability, and technology use during off-work periods and have leaders model this approach.
- Systematically review Policy Recommendations to see where opportunities exist to improve how they impact psychological health and safety.

Use this space to jot down additional ideas and suggested actions:

To consider which actions are most likely to result in the outcomes you desire, use the Action Planning process to guide your decision making and help you identify timelines, milestones, budgets, responsibilities, and measures of success.

Thank you to Workplace Safety and Prevention Services for their generous contribution to the development of these action items. For more tools and resources, please visit Think Mental Health.ca

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