



# Psychological Safety at Work

Sharing the Journey

# Objectives

- \* Identify legislated requirements for psychological safety & psychological hazards in the workplace
- \* Identify who is responsible for safe workplaces
- \* Share views and perspectives from the Union
- \* Discuss how we may work together to achieve better outcomes

# Did You Know

60 per cent of Canadian employees polled claim they would leave their current employer if they were offered less money but better support for personal well-being.

Survey by Morneau Shepell, Financial Post Article January 27, 2020

# What is Psychological Safety- WCB

## WCB – Alberta

- \* **Psychological injuries.** Traumatic onset **psychological injury** or stress can be personally devastating and is compensable when it is an **emotional** reaction to a single traumatic work-related incident or a cumulative series of traumatic incidents experienced by a worker.

Aug 21, 2018

# What is Psychological Safety - OH&S

## Alberta OH&S Bulletin

- \* A **psychological** hazard is a situation, condition or thing that may affect the **mental** health of the worker and may result in physical effects by overwhelming individual coping mechanisms and impacting the worker's ability.

# Psychology Safety - Bill 30

Bill 30 states in part:

- \* “Purposes of this Act 2 The purposes of this Act are
- \* (a) the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, **psychological** and **social well-being of workers**,
- \* (b) to prevent work site incidents, injuries, illnesses and diseases,
- \* (c) the protection of workers from factors and conditions adverse to their health and safety, ..... “

# Legislative Changes



# Increased Risk & Responsibility to Employers

Higher onus to:

- \* Develop policies that support legislative requirements and protect employees
- \* Educate and train employees
- \* Ensure processes are working
- \* Ensure competency & compliancy of supervisors



# Increased Risk & Responsibility to Employers

- \* Create and maintain fair, equitable and safe culture at work
- \* What is tolerated is repeated
- \* Need \* Intention \* Planning \*Action \* Commitment \*

# Psychological Safety Then and Now

- \* PAST – check your baggage at the door



- \* PRESENT – your baggage is our baggage



# Impacts of Psychological Safety

## **When Issues Are Not Adequately Managed**

- \* Impacts work performance
- \* Impacts home life
- \* Costs associated with lost time from work or lower productivity
- \* Presenteeism
- \* Benefit costs
- \* Morale
- \* Employee Turnover
- \* Stilted Communication

# Who is impacted

- \* Employees
- \* Family members
- \* Employers
- \* Unions

# #1 Issue Across North America

- \* We have known for a decade that mental health would be the #1 issue facing workplaces in North America!



- \* Did we prepare for what we are dealing with today?
- \* What has been the impact to your workplace?

# Rising Costs of Mental Health

- \* **Depression and anxiety cost the Canadian economy** at least \$32.3 billion a year and \$17.3 billion a year, respectively. ... Almost a quarter of **Canadians** living with a mental illness are unable to work because of their symptoms, Sept 1, 2016

- \* [www.conferenceboard.ca > press > newsrelease > Unmet\\_Mental\\_Health...](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/newsrelease/Unmet_Mental_Health...)

# Rising Costs of Mental Health

- \* “There are studies that say 50 percent of depression and anxiety patients don’t even seek help”

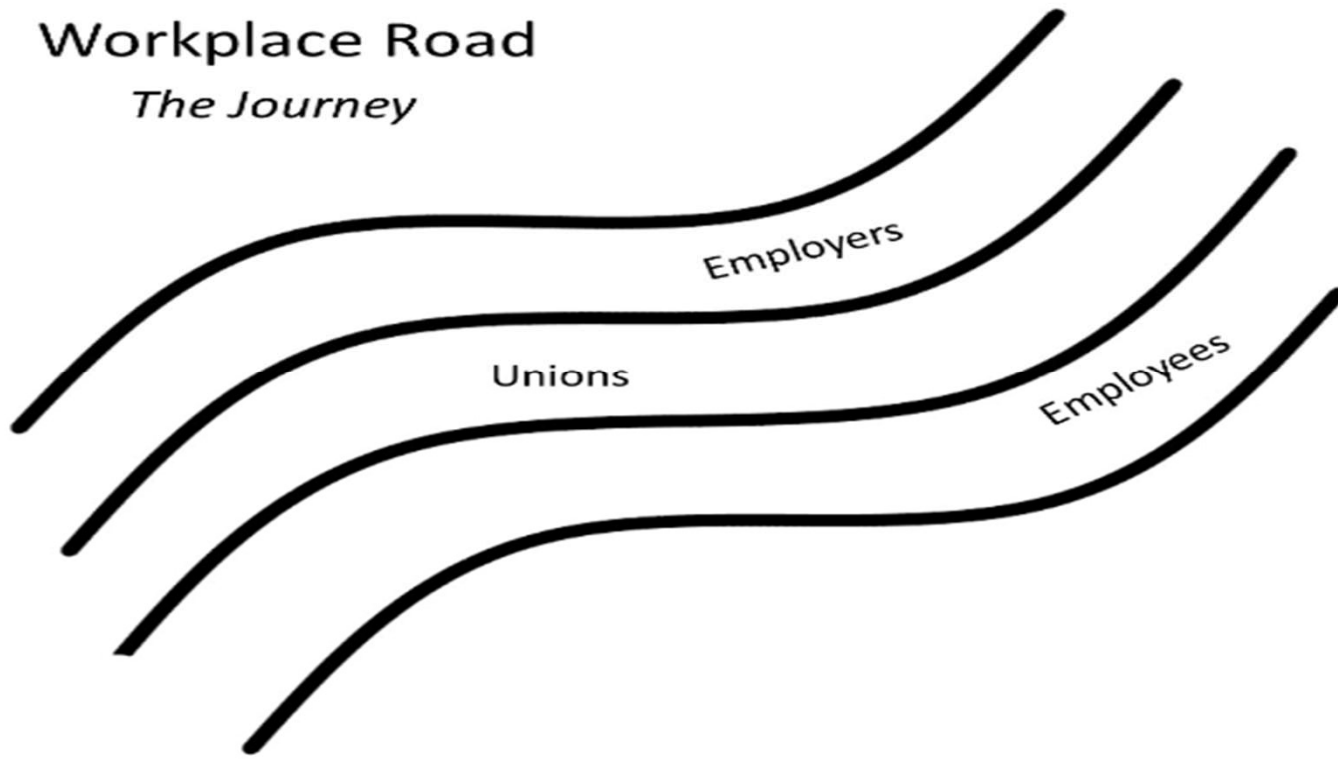
Greg Sutherland, principle economist, Conference Board of Canada

- \* 1 in 5 employees is experiencing a mental health issue – *and not all are comfortable disclosing it*
- \* Only 23 percent of Canadians would feel comfortable talking to their Employer about mental health

# The Journey

Workplace Road

*The Journey*





# The Journey

- \* Removing Stigma. Has this changed?
- \* How has it changed?
- \* Me too movement – has contributed
- \* Harassment – taken seriously now?
- \* Workplace culture – isn't ok anymore to say – 'that's how we do things around here'
- \* Unions are at the tip of the spear of the change whether we like it or not! Our members are in an evolution and culture shift as society evolves - we must keep pace.

# The Gaps

- \* Union role is often reactive
- \* We are there to mitigate impacts (discipline) to our members when possible
- \* We are there to represent our members – and – work with Management. There are challenges.....

# The Gaps

- \* Employees may not wish or may not be aware to ask for Union support until matters become disciplinary
- \* Employees may have unrealistic expectations of all parties involved in their issue including the Union
- \* Employers bear the most responsibility for mental health issues in the workplace.
- \* We are not there on a day to day basis

# What Does Psychological Safety Mean To You?

- \* Management has my back
- \* Knowing what to expect – good or bad
- \* Feeling supported and respected
- \* Good information flow – both ways
- \* TRUST

# What Does Psychological Safety Mean to You?

- \* Allowed to make mistakes & feel safe
- \* Allowed to voice opinions
- \* Feeling safe to disclose personal information
- \* Knowing issues will be addressed
- \* Ability to go home and not obsess about work

# What Does Psychological Safety Mean To You?

- \* An environment free of prejudices
- \* The ability to do your job without the distractions of the negative stuff, that includes emotions, feelings, thoughts, people and politics in the workplace
- \* Be able to do my work and also function at home
- \* Having Leaders who have heart & empathy

# Who Is Responsible For Psychological Safety?

- \* All respondents stated psychological safety is a shared responsibility
- \* Employer is responsible for having systems in place to identify hazards and provide a safe environment to support employee mental health
- \* Employee is responsible to look after themselves and speak up when they need assistance

# How Is Psychological Safety Addressed

- \* Policies & Procedures
- \* Values of Organization
- \* Human Resources
- \* Managers / Leaders
- \* Co-workers
- \* Encouragement to use resources (EFAP – S&A – LTD – WCB)
- \* Safety Committees
- \* Unions



# Contributing Causes That Impact Psychological Safety

- \* Lack of recognition or motivation when to intervene
- \* Training – not everyone knows what to do!
- \* Processes that don't work
  - \* Benefits process
  - \* Investigative process!

# Contributing Causes That Impact Psychological Safety

- \* Workplace culture – when not aligned with values or policies
- \* Failing to provide a safe environment
- \* Do more with less... again and again
- \* Ignoring Duty to Inquire

# Duty to Inquire

- \* If you see something, say something
  - \* Be mindful – be prepared
  - \* Keep it simple
- 
- \* ***I'VE NOTICED.....***
  - \* ***I'M WONDERING.....***
  - \* ***HOW CAN I HELP.....***

# Contributing Causes That Impact Psychological Safety

- \* Real or perceived workplace fairness – processes – outcomes – impact to employees
- \* Employees have long memories!



# Contributing Causes

## The BIG PICTURE

### The **Big Picture** Meaning

- \* **Definition:** The **complete**, overarching story or idea. This phrase usually implies that one should think of the future, or think of other parallel factors, and not focus on the small details.

\* [writingexplained.org › idiom-dictionary › the-big-picture](https://writingexplained.org/idiom-dictionary/the-big-picture)

# Contributing Causes That Impact Psychological Safety

A Big Picture View May Not Always Align

- \* People want to know:
  - \* What does my day look like
  - \* Will that chair be fixed?
  - \* Will my paycheque be accurate?
  - \* Will we have a full team of people today?
  - \* Who is going to make me uncomfortable today

# The Right Tools

“We have all the right tools in place so why are we all so unhealthy?”

The right tools will be the best tools when the small picture items are managed.

# Common Ground

- \* Psychological safety is important
- \* Everyone is entitled to a safe & supportive work environment
- \* Important to support employees who have been affected and get them back to work
- \* Mental health stigma's need to be eliminated
- \* **If you have a problem – We have a problem – We all have a problem**



# Common Ground

- \* We all want workplaces that are free from bullying / harassment/ or other behaviours that contribute to the loss of wellbeing of employees
- \* We want and need Managers / Supervisors to be successful in managing their workplaces.
- \* We all have a part to play
- \* We are in this together!

# Opportunities to Collaborate

Joint Workplace Health & Safety committees

Communicate often & share information\*

Look for issues that may be percolating

Support Employer policies & initiatives\*

Supportive Accommodation Processes

Establish a peer support network

# Opportunities to Collaborate

- \* Share resources
- \* Collaborative back to work processes
  - \* Actively support employees in the process
  - \* Allow employees some influence in this process
- \* Identify gaps and needs within the workplace
  - \* Training opportunities
  - \* Education of employees about available resources
  - \* Actively support employees

# Opportunities to Collaborate

- \* Mindful updates to collective agreements
- \* Ask good questions
- \* Be honest – Be courageous – Be inclusive
- \* Build Trust – in all directions
- \* Build Hope

# Benefits of Psychological Safety

## **When Issues Are Adequately Managed**

- \* Improved work performance
- \* Less lost time from work
- \* Engaged employees
- \* Benefit costs remain the same or less
- \* Improved morale
- \* Less Employee Turnover
- \* Improved communication

# A New Reality



**Complexity of work**

**Complexity of families**

**Emerging culture of workplace fairness**

**This is not the end... this is the beginning**