



**Opening
Minds**

MENTAL HEALTH
COMMISSION
OF CANADA

The Working Mind™

First Responders™

Primary Course Handout



About the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)

The **Mental Health Commission of Canada** (MHCC) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians. The MHCC offers several mental health training programs including **The Working Mind**, **The Working Mind First Responders** and **Mental Health First Aid**. For more information about these courses, you can visit the MHCC website at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

What is The Working Mind First Responders (TWMFR)?

This evidence-based training is designed to initiate a shift in the way you think, feel, and act with respect to mental health by increasing your awareness, reducing stigma and other barriers to care in the workplace, encouraging mental health conversations, and strengthening your resilience. By accomplishing these goals, TWMFR aims to help first responders maintain their wellness and support others in a psychologically healthy and safe work setting.

The Working Mind First Responders has been adapted by Opening Minds, the anti-stigma initiative of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, from the Canadian Department of National Defense's Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) program, as well as the Calgary Police Service's version of that program. While many individuals have helped with the development of TWMFR, special acknowledgment should go to the staff at the Department of National Defense and Calgary Police Service, to Dr. Andrew Szeto and Dr. Keith Dobson from the University of Calgary, as well as the staff and researchers at Opening Minds.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be better able to:

Module 1

- ✓ Define basic concepts related to mental health
- ✓ Recognize the impact of stigma for people with mental health problems and discuss how to reduce stigma in the workplace

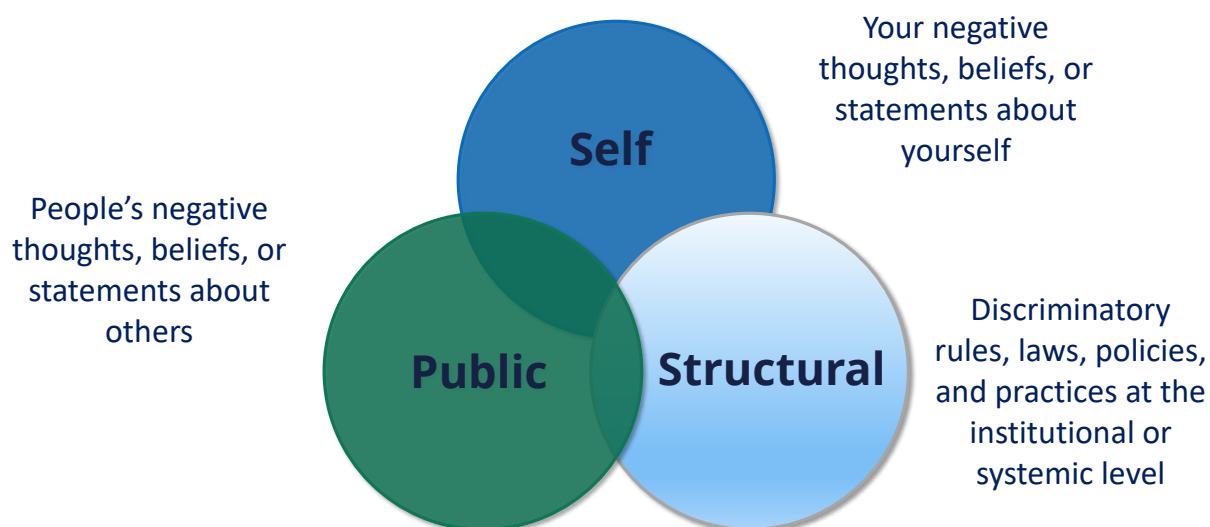
Module 2

- ✓ Recognize and keep track of changes in your mental health and know when to take appropriate actions or seek help
- ✓ Have conversations about mental health with colleagues, friends, and family members

Module 3

- ✓ Recognize the role of stress and your response to stressors
- ✓ Practice The Big 4 coping strategies to manage stress and remain resilient
- ✓ Identify and use available mental health resources to support yourself and others

Module 1: Mental Health and Stigma



Impact of Stigma

Brainstorm and write down at least 3 possible impacts of stigma on individuals, at work and society in general.

Individuals	At work	Society

Language Matters



Reference Guide - Safer Language

Combating stigma related to mental illness, suicide, and substance use starts with how we use language – something that continuously evolves. That's why we must all be aware of any outdated language being used in the media and around us every day. Everyone can be a champion against stigma when advocating the use of accurate and respectful language. So, as you communicate with others, be mindful of the impact of your language:

Language Matters

Stigmatizing	Respectful
It drives me <i>crazy</i> .	It <i>bothers/annoys/frustrates</i> me.
This is <i>nuts</i> .	This is <i>interesting/strange/peculiar funny</i> .
This individual <i>suffers</i> from depression.	They <i>live with/are experiencing</i> depression.
<i>Mentally ill</i> or <i>insane</i> person	Person <i>living with a mental health problem or illness</i>
<i>Committed</i> suicide, <i>successful</i> suicide	<i>Died</i> by suicide
<i>Failed</i> or <i>unsuccessful</i> suicide attempt	<i>Attempted</i> suicide
Substance <i>abuse</i>	Substance <i>use</i> or <i>substance use disorder</i>
Everyone who is a <i>junkie</i> ...	Everyone who <i>uses substances</i> ...
They used to be an <i>addict</i> .	They are <i>in recovery</i> .

The Working Mind
First Responders



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* This brochure is a living document and is subject to regular updates.

What does “people-first” language mean and why does it matter?

Everyone can be a champion against stigma when advocating the use of accurate and respectful language. So, as you communicate with others, be mindful of the impact of your language.

For more information refer to the **MHCC Language Matters Reference Guide**.

Module 2: The Mental Health Continuum

As you move from the left (green) toward the right (red) of the Continuum, you may notice changes in each of these areas. The dotted lines across the four colour zones indicate that some people may experience a linear progression (i.e., from regular-occasional-frequent to excessive) from healthy to ill but not everyone will experience it this way.

This is not a one-size-fits-all tool so everyone will experience these changes differently.

Your task: Take a moment to check the signs and indicators that reflect your changes in these five areas and write any additional changes you might notice in the “my personal changes” section.

	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Ill
Changes in Mood	Healthy mood fluctuations	Irritability/impatience	Anger	Excessive anger or rage
	Calmness	Nervousness	Feelings of anxiety	Feelings of excessive anxiety
	Confidence/optimism	Occasional self-doubt/pessimism	Loss of confidence/frequent pessimism	Feelings of depression, numbness, hopelessness
	Good sense of humour	Displaced sarcasm	Cynicism	Humourless
Changes in Thinking and Attitude	Healthy attitude and thinking patterns	Occasional negative intrusive thoughts	Frequent negative intrusive thoughts/suicidal ideation	Obsessive negative intrusive thoughts/suicidal intent
	Ability to concentrate and/or focus on tasks	Occasional distraction and/or loss of focus on tasks	Frequent distraction and/or loss of focus on tasks	Inability to concentrate and/or complete loss of memory or cognitive abilities
	Ability to cope and/or handle competing demands	Occasional inability to cope and/or handle competing demands	Frequent inability to cope and/or handle competing demands	Pervasive sense of incompetence and/or feeling completely overwhelmed
	Healthy physical/social activity	Occasional avoidance of physical/social activity	Frequent avoidance of physical/social activity	Isolation and/or complete withdrawal from physical/social activity
Changes in Behaviour and Performance	Good performance	Occasional performance issues and/or procrastination	Frequent performance issues and/or procrastination	Inability to perform duties and/or complete tasks
	Physically present and engaged	Occasional presenteeism	Frequent presenteeism/absenteeism	Constant and prolonged absenteeism
	Mentally present and alert	Occasionally distant/distracted	Frequently distant/distracted and/or pulling away from others	Not mentally present
	Healthy sleep patterns	Occasional trouble sleeping	Frequent trouble sleeping/restlessness	Inability to fall/stay asleep and/or insomnia
Physical Changes	Healthy appetite	Occasional gain/loss of appetite	Frequent gain/loss of appetite	Excessive food intake or complete loss of appetite
	Feeling energetic	Occasional lack of energy	Frequent tiredness	Constant and prolonged physical exhaustion
	Healthy and stable weight	Occasional weight fluctuations	Frequent weight fluctuations	Extreme weight fluctuations
	Limited/no alcohol consumption and/or binge drinking	Occasional alcohol consumption and/or binge drinking	Frequent alcohol consumption and/or binge drinking	Excessive alcohol consumption and/or binge drinking
Changes in Substance Use and Addictive Behaviours	Limited/no addictive behaviours (i.e., gaming, social media use, etc.)	Occasional addictive behaviours (i.e., gaming, social media use, etc.)	Struggle to control addictive behaviours (i.e., gaming, social media use, etc.)	Inability to control addictive behaviours (i.e., gaming, social media use, etc.)
	No trouble/impact due to substance use (i.e., smoking, vaping, etc.)	Limited trouble/impact due to substance use (i.e., smoking, vaping, etc.)	Frequent trouble/impact due to substance use (i.e., smoking, vaping, etc.)	Severe trouble/impact due to substance use (i.e., smoking, vaping, etc.)
My Personal Changes				



Wellness Plan

Things I can do on my own that support my wellness and help me cope:

People and places that support my wellness and help me cope:

Name: Phone #:

Name: Phone #:

Place:

Place:

Signs that my mental health may be starting to decline:

Changes in mood, thinking and attitude, behaviour & performance, physical changes, substance use and addictive behaviours?



People I can ask for help:

Name: Phone #:

Name: Phone #:

Name: Phone #:

Wellness Plan

Resources for when I need professional help or during a crisis:

Name: Phone #:

Emergency #:

Name: Phone #:

Emergency #:

Local Urgent Care #:

Phone #:

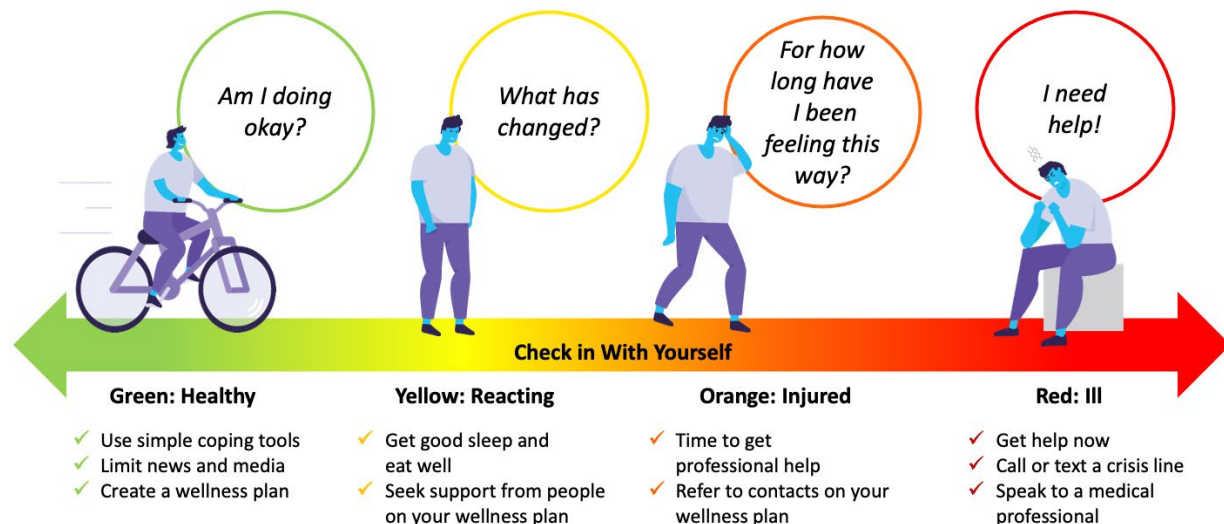
Address:

Ways I can make my environment safe:



The one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is:

How am I doing?



Scenario: Mental Health Continuum

Scenario 2A

You have been coming to work feeling tired and are having a hard time concentrating. You notice you keep making mistakes and end up blaming them on someone else. Even small things are making you angry and you blow up at your co-workers at least once every shift. You are avoiding your supervisor whenever possible, and don't take part in the conversation at break time.

Scenario 2B

Your co-worker approaches you after your shift and asks if they can talk to you. They explain that when they got home last night their spouse and kids were gone and the house was empty, except for a note saying that their spouse wants a divorce. Your co-worker is distraught: they say that without their family nothing matters anymore. They admit to drinking heavily for some time and having had an affair. They cannot stop crying and tell you that they don't know what they are going to do.

Scenario 2C

Your co-worker has always been really popular with everybody on the team. Although they can sometimes be loud and boisterous, they are usually able to stay in control even when they drink excessively. Lately, the first day of the rotation has seemed rough for them, especially when call volumes or workloads spike. No one seems to want to work with them anymore, and your co-worker often keeps to themselves. You heard they might be having personal issues, but they have not said anything specific to you about it.

Discussion Questions: Mental Health Continuum

1. What signs and indicators are you noticing? Where might you (they) be on the Mental Health Continuum?
2. Where can you (they) go, what can you (they) do and who can you (they) talk to?

Module 3: Stress, Resilience, and Mental Toughness

Stress in your Life

Take a moment to reflect and make your own list of some organizational, operational, and personal stressors. This list is for you, and you will not be asked to share your list.

Organizational	Operational	Personal

Stress and Performance



Stress is a fact of life. But NOT all stress is negative!
Both too little and too much stress can negatively impact well-being.



Scenario: The Big 4

Scenario 3A

You have recently separated from your spouse of 10 years, have a three-year-old child, one of your parents has a terminal disease and is now in palliative care. You are having trouble sleeping, eating, and often find yourself breaking down in tears. You have been to your family doctor, who has prescribed an anti-depressant and is encouraging you to take some leave time. You are really reluctant to take time off and feel ashamed that you cannot deal with your problems on your own. You do not know how to approach your supervisor. You need your job and do not want to be seen as someone who cannot handle things.

Scenario 3B

You are usually a very patient and easygoing person who likes to make jokes. Lately, you seem to have lost your sense of humour and you're feeling more frustrated about changes to work policies. On top of having to manage additional work, you are trying to take care of your family and worrying about your elderly parents who need you for support each week. You would like to ask your supervisor for help, but with so many people on leave already, the last thing you want is for anyone to think you're not able to do your job. You often catch yourself thinking, "I'm such a failure," "Everyone thinks I'm no good at this," and "I should be able to keep up." The constant worry is keeping you up at night.

Scenario 3C

You have noticed one of your co-workers has been coming to work looking unkempt. Their uniform looks loose, and it seems like they may have lost a lot of weight in the past few weeks. You find they often seem confused during discussions at briefings and they don't seem to be able to recall recent conversations with others. Your team members have been commenting on all the extended breaks that your co-worker has been taking and how this is causing extra duties for the rest of the team. You want to approach this person and ask how they are doing, but you don't know how to get the conversation started and are really worried they'll be angry at you, so you keep putting it off.

Discussion Question: The Big 4

Take note of the signs and indicators you notice and where you (they) might be on the Continuum, and then answer the following question.

1. How can you use the Big 4 coping strategies to help with the situation?

Self-Care Questions

A One thing I do on a regular basis to take care of myself is...

B One thing I would like to do more often for myself is...

C I know I need to pause and take care of myself when...

For more information refer to the *MHCC Self-Care & Resilience Guide* included in this course.

Suggested Reading

Leadership Behaviours to Support Mental Health – by Bill Howatt and Louise Bradley

<http://www.ceohsnetwork.ca/blog/psychological-safety/leadership-behaviours-to-support-mental-health/>

Empathy is both a trait and a skill. Here's how to strengthen it

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/empathy-is-both-a-trait-and-a-skill-here-s-how-to-strengthen-it-1.4997546>

Online Resources

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

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19>

Mental Health Continuum Tool Self-Check

<https://theworkingmind.ca/continuum-self-check>

The Working Mind Self-Care & Resilience Guide

<https://theworkingmind.ca/blog/working-mind-covid-19-self-care-resilience-guide>

Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Resources

Free online training – Being a Mindful Employee: An Orientation to Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/online-training-psychological-health-and-safety>

National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

<https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/resource/national-standard-for-psychological-health-and-safety-in-the-workplace-the-standard/>

13 Psychosocial Workplace Factors (Posters)

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2019-02/13_factors_posters_eng.pdf

MindsMatter Online Assessment

This free tool is designed to help you assess where your workplace stands on mental health. It's confidential, easy to use, and takes under three minutes to complete. To get started, go to:

<http://mindsmatter.openingminds.ca/>

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Assembling the Pieces Toolkit

https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/assembling_pieces/

Recovery Resources

Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-07/MHCC_Recovery_Guidelines_2016_ENG.PDF

Recovery Declaration

<https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/declaration/>

Video “Hope Changes Everything” (16:11 minutes)

<https://adam.mb.ca/news/recovery-hope-changes-everything>

Suicide Prevention Resources

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline

<https://988.ca>

Living Works course on suicide intervention:

<https://www.livingworks.net/asist/>

Mental Health First Aid Training

<https://openingminds.org/training/mhfa/standard/>

Canadian Crisis Centres (The Lifeline Canada Foundation)

<https://thelifelinecanada.ca/canadian-crisis-centres/>

Return-to-Work and Accommodations Resources

Supporting Employee Success

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/a-tool-to-support-employee-success>

Canadian Human Rights Commission Policy and Procedures on the Accommodation of Mental Illness

https://www.chrc-ccdpc.gc.ca/sites/default/files/policy_mental_illness_en_1.pdf



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TWMFR Harmonized Handout-Primary

Version Date: February 23, 2024