

Psychological Safety in the Workplace

Psychological Demands

Psychological Demands are one of the 13 psychosocial factors and relate to the emotional, mental, and interpersonal requirements of work. They include factors such as workload, time pressure, concentration, emotional effort, and interactions with others. When these demands are not well balanced with a worker's skills and abilities, they can negatively impact mental health, safety, and overall well-being.

Recognizing Psychological Demands

Psychological demands can change over time, and it's important to recognize early signs when work demands are becoming harder to manage. These signs may show up in how people feel, think, or interact at work, and noticing them early helps prevent impacts on health, well-being, and safety.

- Feeling constantly rushed, mentally drained, or emotionally exhausted
- Difficulty concentrating, increased mistakes, or irritability
- Feeling overwhelmed by workload or expectations
- Increased conflict, unclear priorities, or frequent overtime at the workplace

Managing Psychological Demands at Work

Psychological demands are best managed when work supports mental well-being, safe performance, and a healthy work-life balance. This includes reasonable workloads, clear expectations, appropriate support, and job demands that match a worker's skills and abilities. When psychological demands are addressed, workers are better able to manage stress, stay focused, and work safely. In a workplace where psychological demands are managed effectively:

- Workloads and time pressures are reasonable, with realistic deadlines and time for breaks and recovery.
- Conflict and difficult conversations that occur can be resolved in a civil and respectful manner. Workers have clear expectations, appropriate training, and feel able to ask questions or raise concerns.
- Work-life balance is supported through reasonable hours and manageable schedules.

Key Takeaways

Psychological Demands are an important part of workplace psychological safety and affect how people experience their workday. Being aware of this factor and talking about concerns early helps prevent issues from escalating and supports a safer, healthier workplace for everyone.

Watch this video for more information on Psychological Demands.

[13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace - YouTube](#)

Supporting Employees to Disconnect from Work

With the rise of mobile technology, alternative work arrangements, and the 24/7 economy, the boundary between "work time" and "personal time" has been blurred.

Every day outside of normal working hours in Canada¹:



43%

of workers check their work email



1 in 3

respond to work emails or answer work calls or texts



28%

perform work related to their job (aside from answering work emails, calls or texts)

¹Privacy Council Office Survey on Current Issues, August 17-30, 2020

Disconnecting

is the ability for an employee to disengage from work by not having to attend to work-related electronic communications, including emails, texts and calls, outside their normal working hours.



Why don't workers disconnect?

- expected/nature of the job
- irregular working hours
- workload

Develop a policy on disconnecting

- Clearly define the boundaries between work time and non-work time.
- Address how labour or employment standards protections are being respected.
- Address the issue of working across different time zones.
- Consider how disconnecting impacts emergencies and other safety-related issues.
- Set expectations for response times to non-essential emails sent after working hours.



Effects



Work-life interference



Stress



Health issues



Burnout

What can we all do?

- ✓ Respect another person's efforts to disconnect by not routinely emailing or calling outside their normal working hours.
- ✓ Model behaviour by not checking and responding to emails during time off work.
- ✓ Be clear that any communications sent outside working hours do not require an immediate response, unless it's an emergency.

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