

Mental Health & Work

Drew Sousa, RN, COHN(C)

Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association (OOHNA)

October 15, 2021

Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- **Faculty:** Drew Sousa, RN, COHN(C)
- **Relationships with financial sponsors:**
 - **Grants/Research Support:** None
 - **Speakers Bureau/Honoraria:** Lancaster House, Osgoode Mental Health Diploma, various industry conferences
 - **Consulting:** Executive Director for Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association (OOHNA)
 - **Patents:** None
 - **Other:** Currently Supporting Large Public Sector Organization- COVID

Disclosure of Financial Support

- This program has received financial support from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario in the form of an educational grant.
- This program has received in-kind support from – N/A
- Potential for conflict(s) of interest:
 - No conflict of interest to declare

Mitigating Potential Bias

- The information presented in this program is based on recent information that is explicitly “evidence-based”.
- This Program and its material is peer reviewed and all the recommendations involving clinical medicine are based on evidence that is accepted within the profession; and all scientific research referred to, reported, or used in this CME/CPD activity in support or justification of patient care recommendations conforms to the generally accepted standards

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- 1.Explain how employers and healthcare practitioners can work collaboratively to support an individual, with a mental health condition, to facilitate an effective return to work.
- 2.List the organizational factors required to provide a healthy work environment which supports an individual to obtain appropriate health care, facilitate a return to work and fully integrate into the workplace.
- 3.Describe how stigma impacts an individual's ability to obtain appropriate health care.

Why be concerned about mental health?

- One in 5 Canadians will experience a mental problem or illness in any given year.
- On any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental illness.
- Every year mental illnesses costs the Canadian economy an estimated \$51 billion (at least) annually in absenteeism, disability claims, and medical services used.

Why do we care?

Employer
vs
Health Care Practitioner
vs
Employee/Client



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

Mental Health Workplace Costs



Source: Wordpress.com

Employer's Legal Obligations

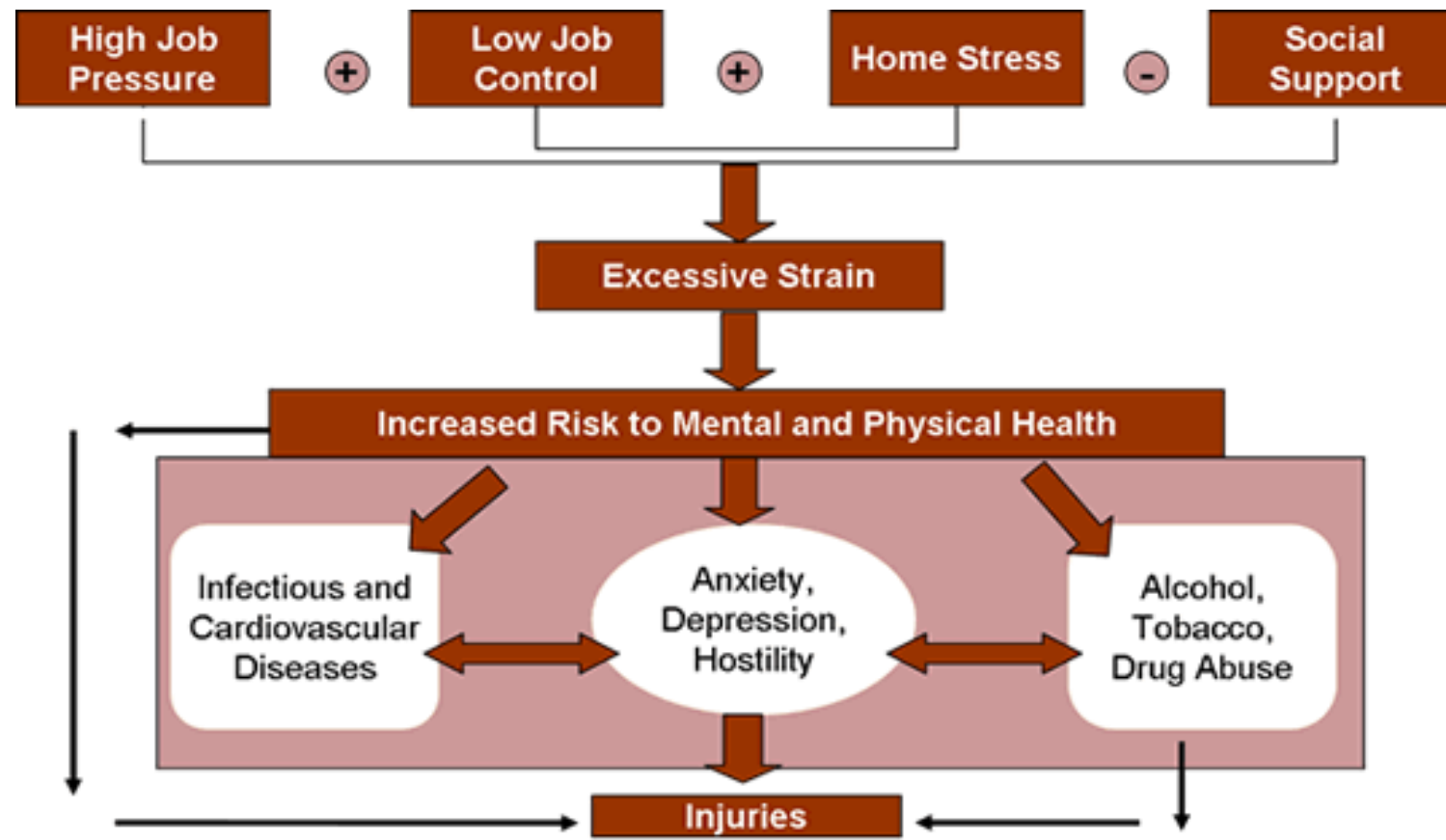
- Human Rights Legislation
- Workers Compensation Legislation
- Labour Laws
- Occupational Health and Safety Legislation
- **More.....**

Duty to Inquire

- “Where an organization is aware, or reasonably ought to be aware, that there may be a relationship between a disability and someone’s job performance... the organization has a ‘duty to inquire’ into that possible relationship before making a decision that would affect the person adversely. This includes providing a meaningful opportunity to the employee... to identify a disability and request accommodation.” –

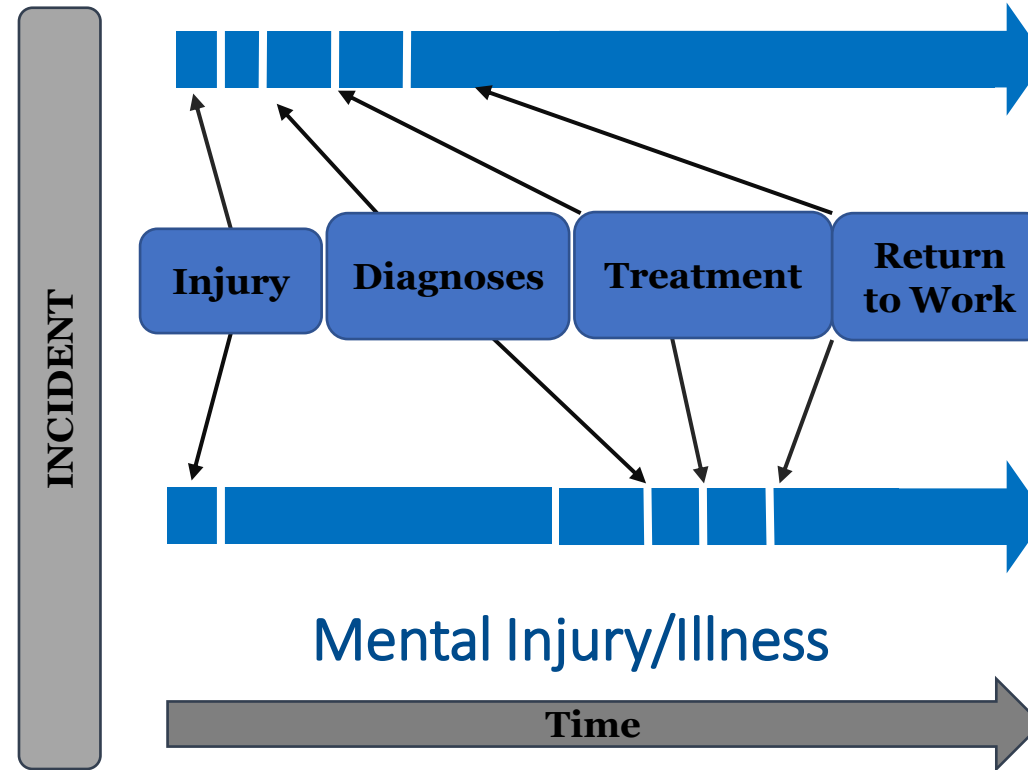
[*Ontario Human Rights Commission’s Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability, 2016](#)

Health Care Practitioner



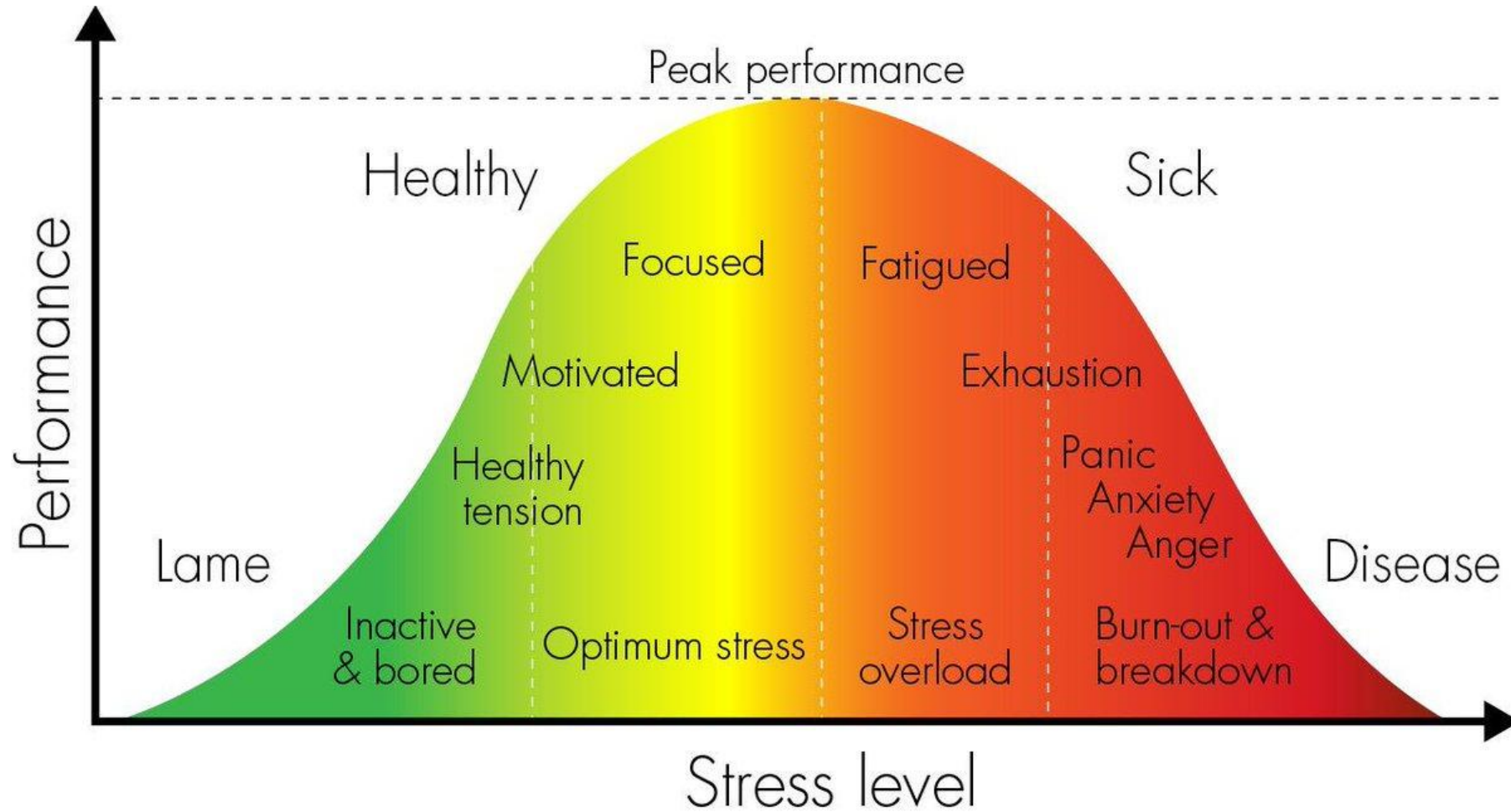
Source: Best advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace, Health Canada, 2000

Physical Injury/Illness

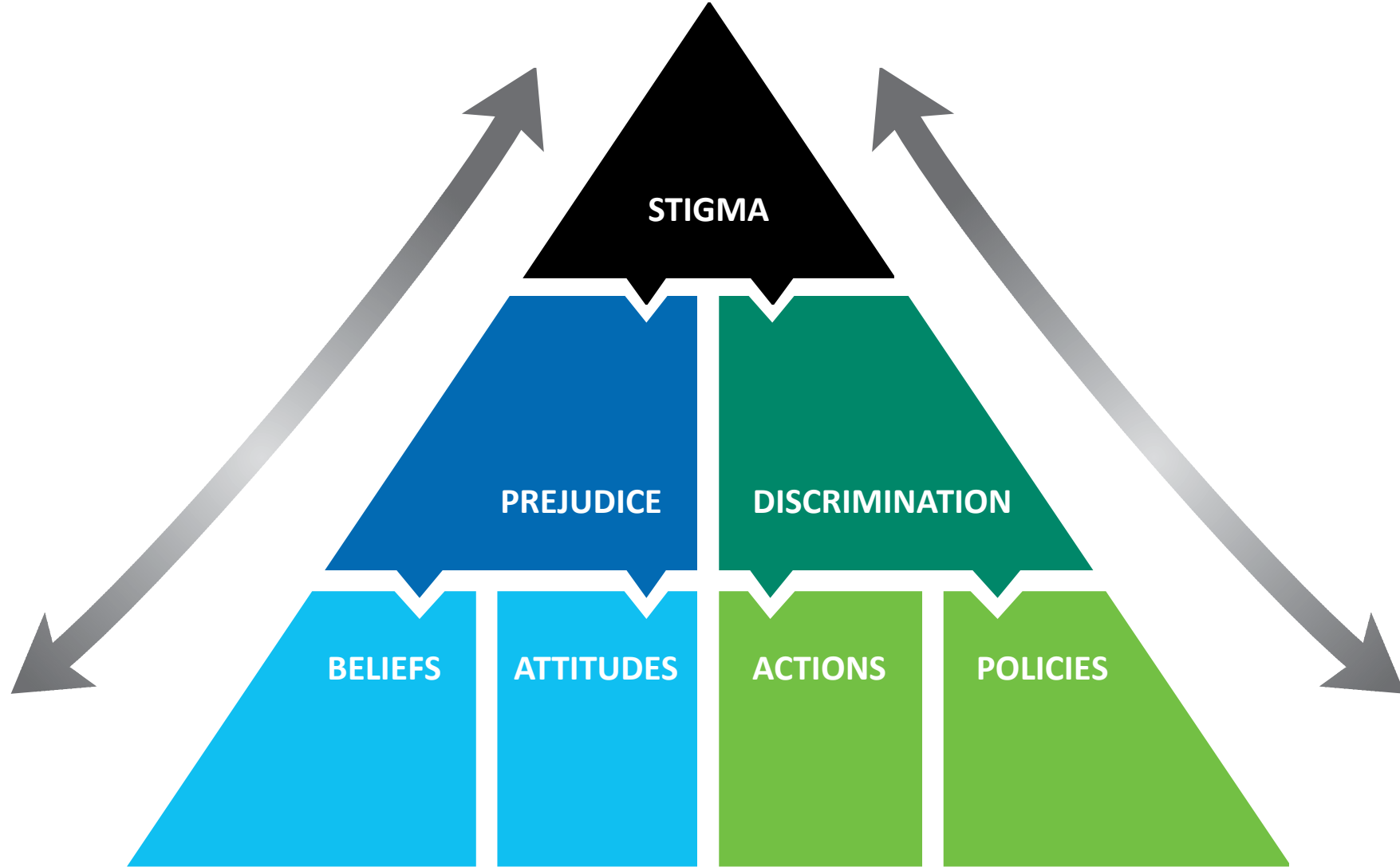


Wang PS, Berglund P, Olsson M, Pincus HA, Wells KB, Kessler RC. Failure and delay in initial treatment contact after first onset of mental disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Arch Gen Psychiatry, June 2005;62(2):603-1

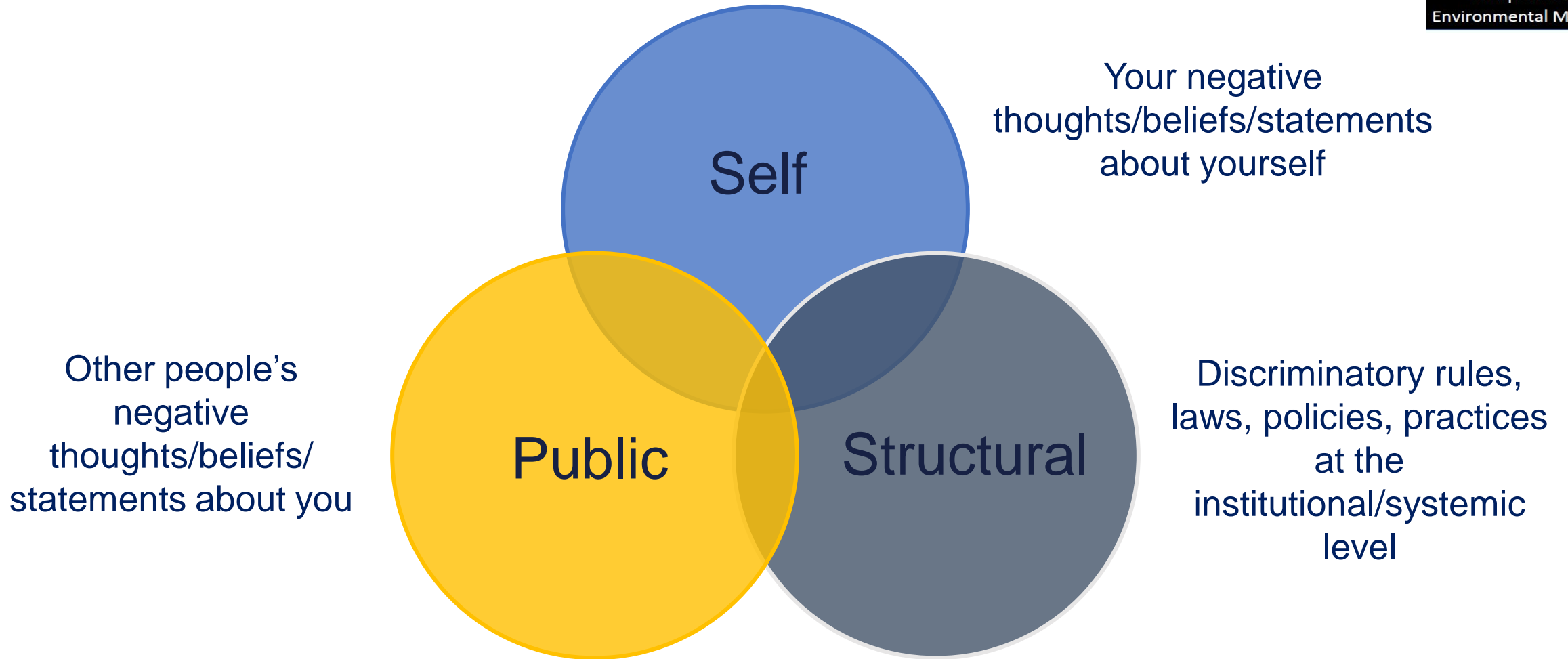
Impact of Stress



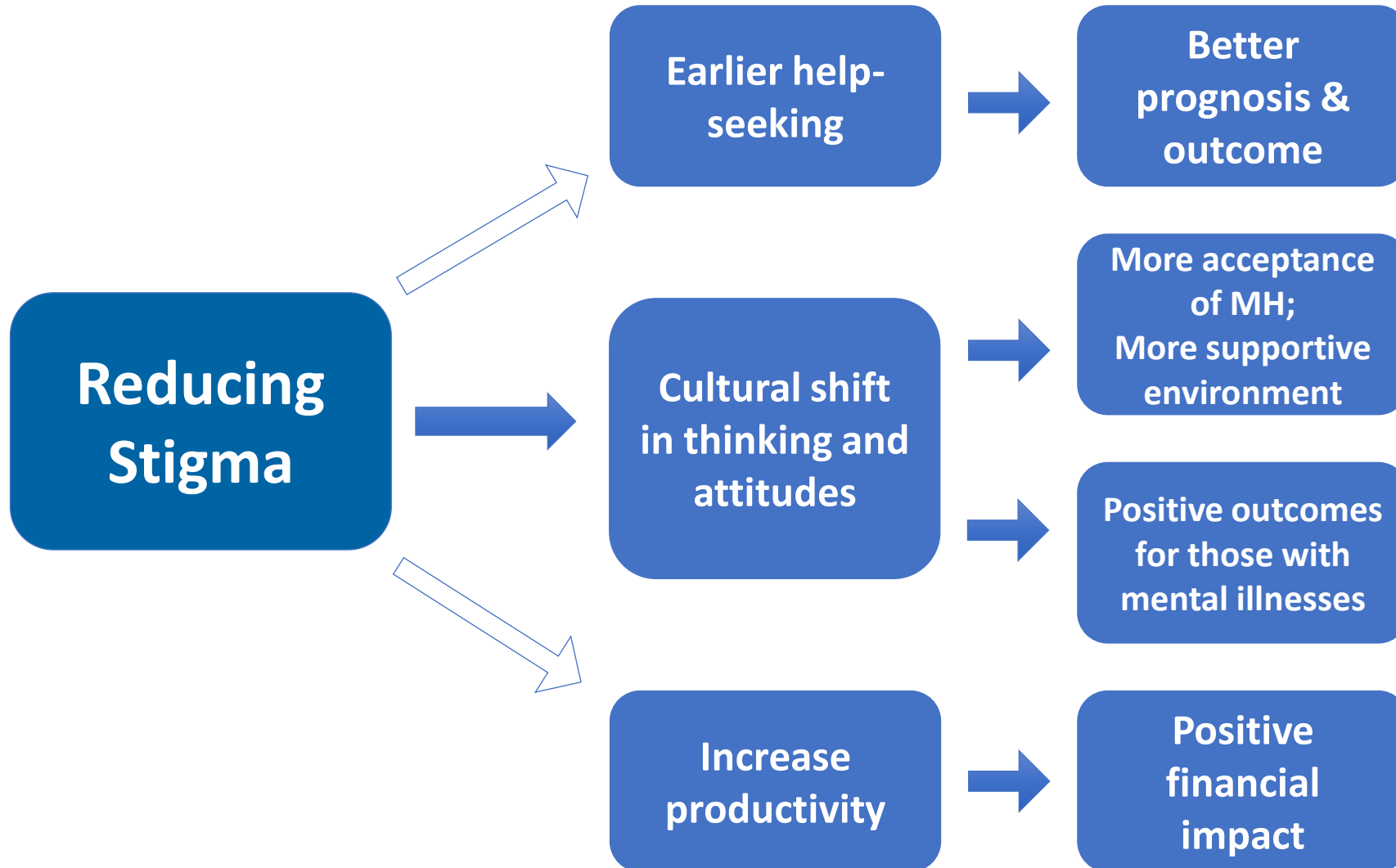
**Employee is
impacted by
stigma of
mental illness**



Types of Stigma



The Importance of Stigma Reduction



**Employee is
impacted by
psychological
health and safety
factors within
organization**



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

What is a psychologically healthy and safe workplace?

- A **psychologically healthy and safe workplace** is one that promotes employees' well-being and actively works to prevent harm to employee mental health. Building a supportive work environment that promotes mental well-being is a shared responsibility.*
- Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.**

*Guarding Minds at Work

** World Health Organization

13 Psychological Workplace Factors

Psychological Health & Safety Standards



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

Psychological and Social Support	Organizational Culture
Clear Leadership and Expectations	Civility and Respect
Psychological Competencies and Requirements	Growth and Development
Recognition and Reward	Involvement and Influence
Workload Management	Engagement
Balance	Psychological Protection
Protection of Physical Safety	

Source: Guarding Minds at Work

How do psychosocial risk factors affect employee health?



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

- Move beyond traditional occupational health & safety perspective and include measures that may impact the mental health of worker.
- Evidence suggests that certain features of the workplace can affect employees' mental and physical health.
- It is possible that workplace factors may increase the likelihood of the occurrence of a mental disorder or make an existing disorder worse. They can also impact access to treatment and effective care.
- A supportive work environment can reduce the onset, severity, impact and duration of a mental health disorder.

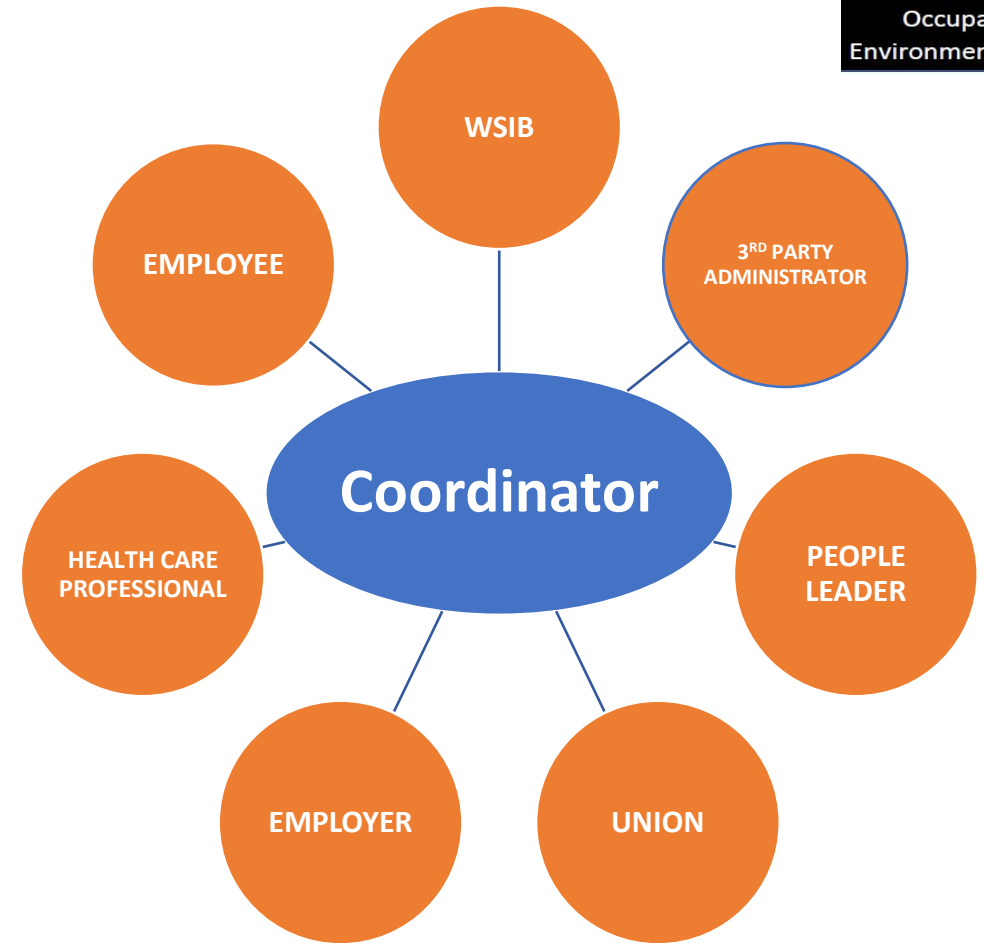
Disability Management

The process of minimizing the impact of an impairment (resulting from injury, illness or disease) on the individual's capacity to participate competitively in the work environment.

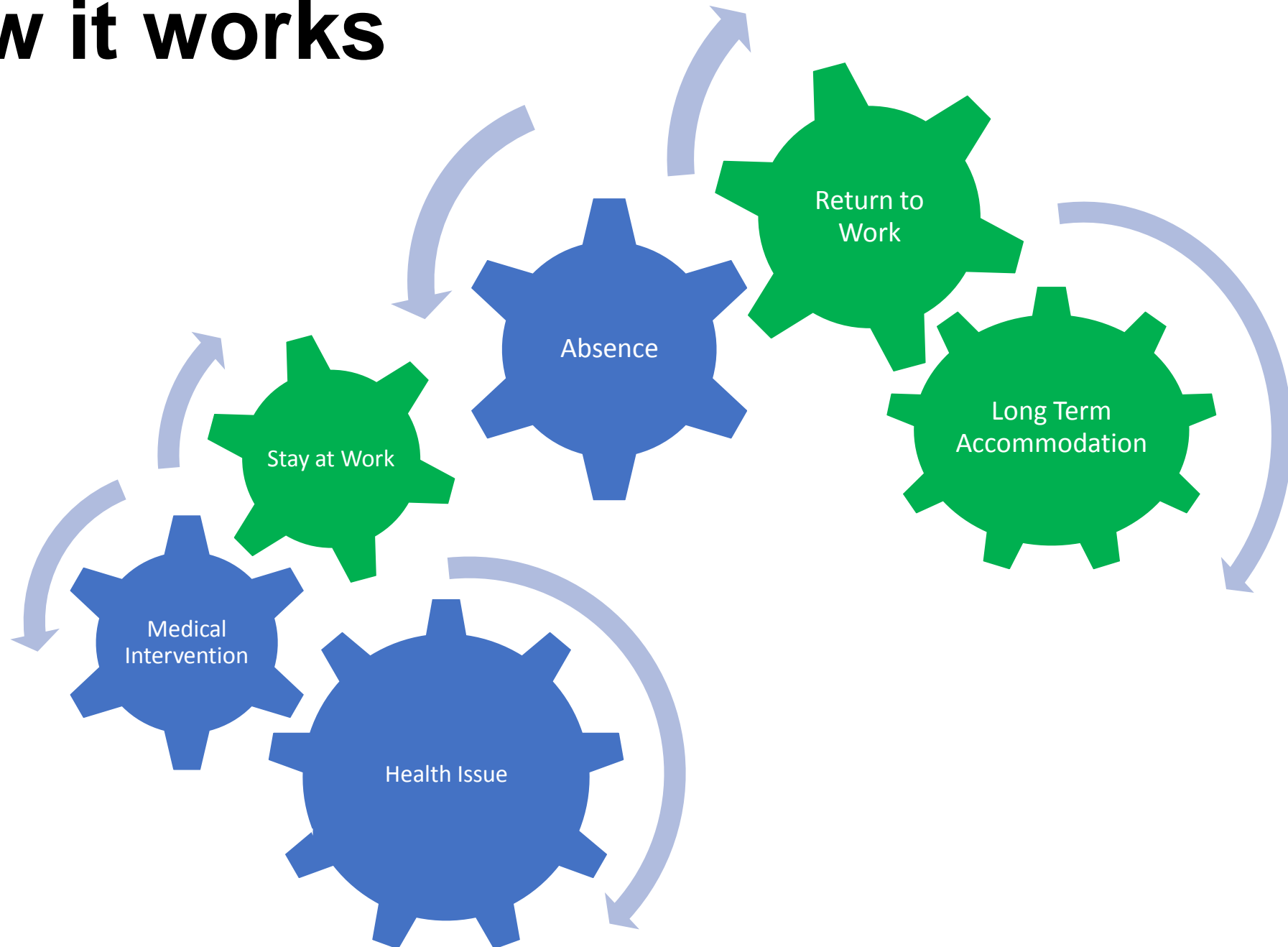
Source: Dr. Don Shrey, *director of disability management*

Disability Management

- A customized process
- Addresses biopsychosocial issues
- Includes both occupational and non-occupational illness and injury
- Involves many players
 - Employee, Health Care Practitioner, Employer (Union, Supervisor/Managers, Insurer, WSIB, 3rd Party providers of care)
- Needs a coordinated approach



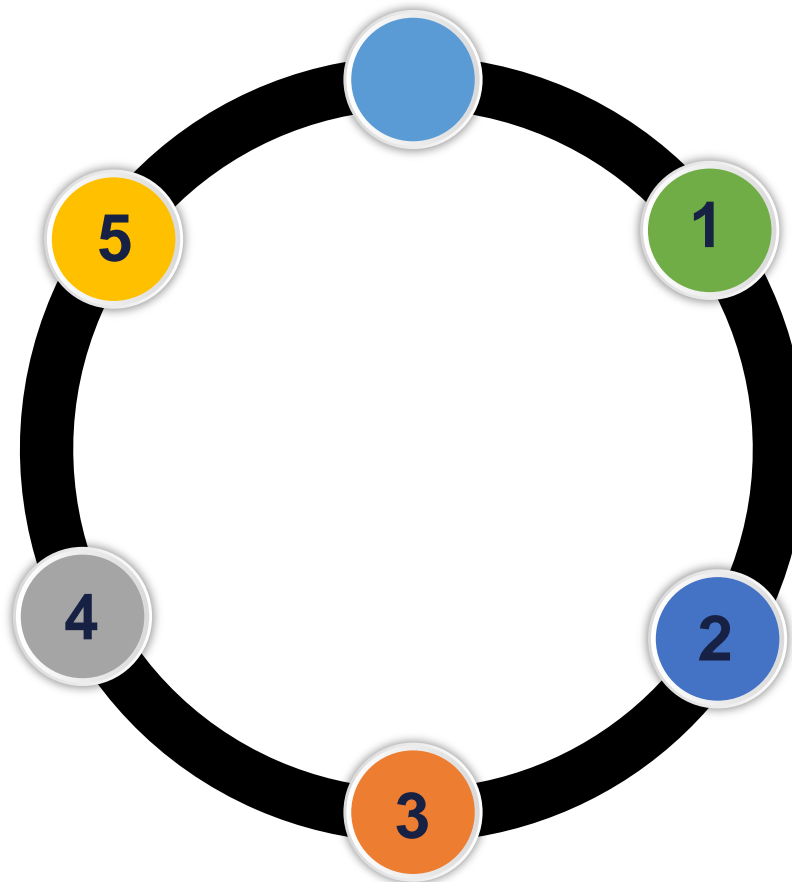
How it works



“Accommodation” Process

**Implement and
monitor the
accommodation
plan**

**Determine a
suitable
accommodation
plan**



**Understand the
abilities and limitations
of the employee**

**Recognize the
need for
accommodation or
changes to the
workplace**



**Identify the job
demands and
available
resources**

What Does Accommodation Look Like?



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

Physical

- Lifting, twisting, bending limitations/restrictions
- Driving restrictions
- Additional tools and resources required
- Accessible washrooms
- Accessible workspace
- Specialized software or computer equipment

Psychological

- Flexible routine & schedule
- Quiet work environment
- Modified supervision
- Structured communication
- Modified job duties
- Modified workspace
- Specialized job aids and computer applications and software
- Job coaching
- Mentoring
- Service dog

Stay at Work

- Intent is to address medical issue before impacts performance significantly
- May be formal or informal
- An element of a good performance management program and attendance, support and management program
- Supervisor plays key role in process
- Long-term changes to essential elements of job should lead to accommodation process

Return to Work (RTW)



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

- RTW focus should be to full regular duties but may involve short term accommodation which may lead to long term accommodation
- RTW where possible should be to same work unit, same shift, same location
 - Hierarchy of these elements should depend on worker needs first then organization's needs.
- Hierarchy of RTW:
 - Same job
 - Same job with modifications
 - Alternate job
 - Alternate job with modifications
- Accommodations may include:
 - Changes to duties
 - Hours of work
 - Location of work
 - Supportive devices
 - Support of co-workers

Stay at Work and Return to Work (RTW)

Factors to consider include:

- What additional treatment is required to support maximum medical recovery and how does that impact the RTW plan?
- Does the worker believe there are workplace factors which contributed to the illness or injury?
 - How have they been addressed?
- Timing is everything.
 - Consideration should be given to worker's ability to perform productive work, including essential duties.
- Have there been prior unsuccessful RTW efforts?
 - If so, what has been learned from them?
- How will the workplace respond to the worker's RTW, consider both supervisors and co-workers.

Addressing Psychological Functional Abilities

- The conversation should focus on abilities and strategies that may support success on the job, rather than on diagnosis or symptoms
- Employer may have tools/resources to support health care practitioner, tool which helps to identify limitations and restrictions.

Issues which may need to be to addressed



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

1. **Adaptability and flexibility** – The ability to work effectively in the midst of changing needs, conditions and work responsibilities.
2. **Attention to detail** - The ability to perform work tasks that require significant attention or understanding.
3. **Decision making** - The ability to work effectively when analyzing problems, organizing information, resolving issues or generating solutions.
4. **Degree of self-supervision** - The ability to work effectively without supervision, including working remotely or when a supervisor is not available.
5. **Degree of supervisor responsibility** - The ability to work effectively in the role of supervisor, respecting organizational values and policies while meeting objectives.
6. **Exposure to confrontational situations** - The ability to work effectively when confronted by an individual or when encountering confrontational situations requiring the employee to take action.
7. **Exposure to distractions** - The ability to work effectively in the presence of visual, auditory or other distractions.
8. **Tolerance of stressful environments** - The ability to work effectively in a stressful environment, which may be caused by workplace processes or physical hazards such as noise, lighting, scents, chemicals and others.
9. **Exposure to distressed people** - The ability to work effectively when exposed to emotional individuals in person or over the phone, or other communication channels such as social media.

Issues which may need to be to addressed



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

- 10.Overlapping tasks** - The ability to perform and/or monitor more than one task or function at a time, and identify when tasks or functions require attention
- 11.Problem solving and analysis** - The ability to work effectively at solving problems and analyzing situations and information.
- 12.Recall** - The ability to recall and retrieve, on demand, information that has been previously learned.
- 13.Time pressures** - The ability to complete tasks within a given time period, work quickly when required, and/or manage time effectively so that all tasks are completed on time and at an acceptable level of quality.
- 14.Working relationships** - The ability to work well, collaborate, and cooperate with all stakeholders, including management, co-workers, or clients.
- 15.Physical demands** - The ability to safely and effectively meet the physical demands of the job.
- 16.Work endurance** - The ability to effectively perform work tasks for a long period of time with little opportunity for breaks due to the nature of the work being performed. This also includes the ability to work regular, rotating, overnight or on-call shifts.
- 17.Degree of isolation** - The ability to work effectively without regular contact with others. This could include interacting primarily through technology or infrequently, if ever, coming together face-to-face.

Long Term Accommodation



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

Implementation Challenges:

- Determining when long term (permanent) accommodation is triggered
- Should be last resort only once stay at work and return to work have been attempted
- Should occur once employee's medical condition has stabilized
- Health care practitioner ensures employee:
 - has participated in optimal medical care
 - supports employee to address fear of change
 - identifies limitations and restrictions
 - identifies workplace barriers for successful accommodation
- Employer Role:
 - Assessing skills and aptitudes of employee
 - Assesses job opportunities within employees own job, work unit, work location and organization
 - Assesses benefit entitlement
 - Concerns of Supervisor and other employees regarding job fit and resentment that "best" candidate has not been awarded job.

More...

Resources

What resources are available:?

- Community
- Organizational:
 - EAP/ EFAP (Employee Assistance Program/Employee and Family Assistance Program)
 - confidential workplace service that employers pay for and is free to employees.
 - short-term, goal oriented
 - Generally available to employees and their family members
 - Employee/Occupational Health Resources
 - Role they play
 - Privacy Issues
 - Peer Program
 - Employee Benefits



Accommodation vs Absence vs New Employer

Remember:

- Success can be defined many different ways
- Timing is everything, sometimes you have to take a step back to be ensure success in the future.

When it may be best for a worker to remain off work rather than consider accommodations:

- The employee's behaviour constitutes an unacceptable health and safety risk in the workplace
- Despite the best attempts the employee is unable to manage the disability and is therefore unfit for work

On the rare occasion it may be in everyone's interest to look for a new employer. When to consider new employer:

- Unsupportive work environment
- Worker deeply focused on past negative work experience
- Worker considering new career goals

Supportive Employer Culture



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine



Sound disability and accommodation principles



Comprehensive benefits



Effective education and training



Strategic & integrated policies and programs