



Occupational &
Environmental Medicine

Mental Health & Work 1

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- **Faculty:** Drew Sousa RN COHN(C)
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 - No conflict of interest to declare

Mitigating Potential Bias



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- 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 do we care?

Employer

vs

Health Care Practitioner

vs

Employee/Client



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Employer's Legal Obligations

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

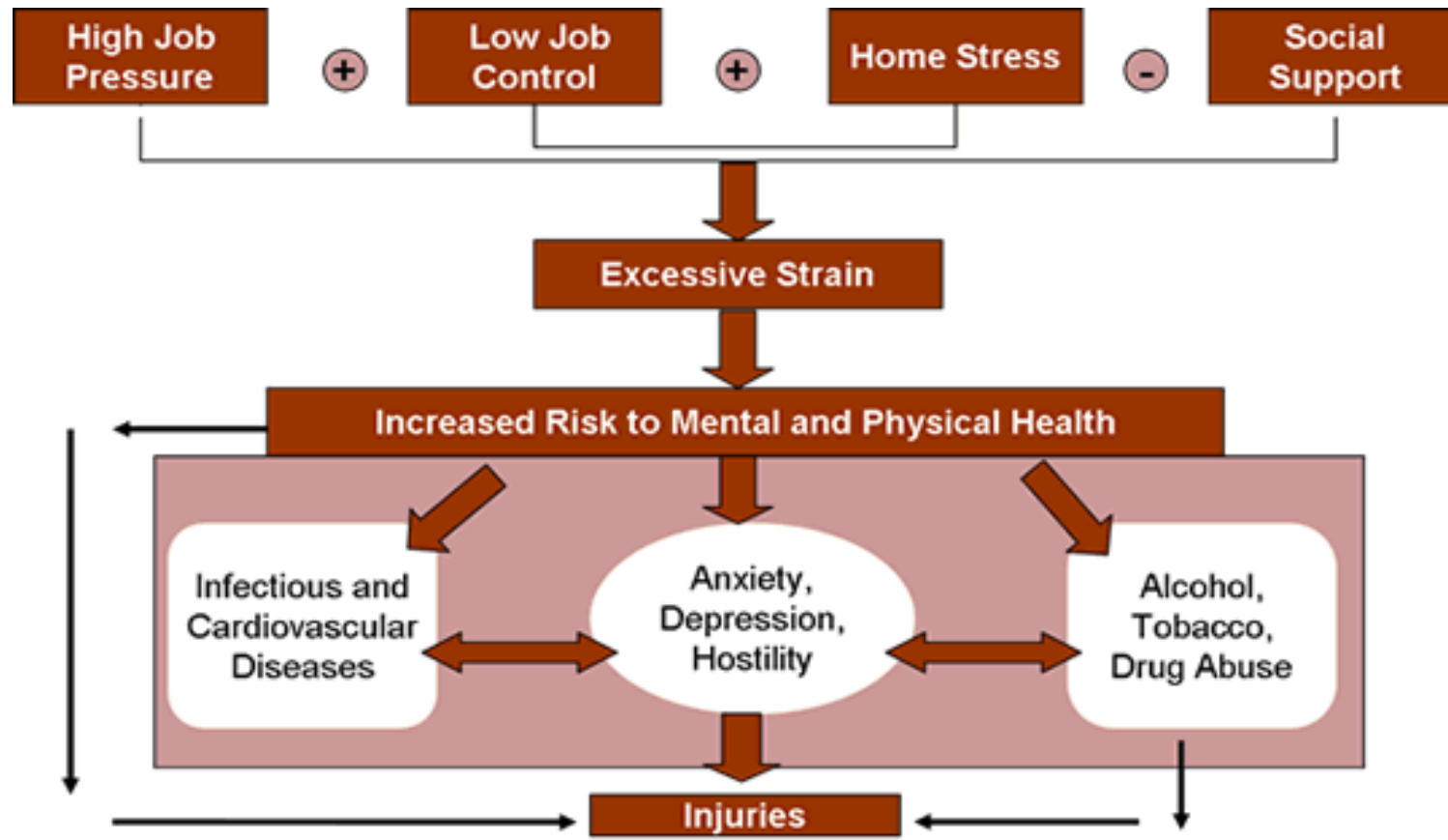


Duty to Inquire

- “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.” –

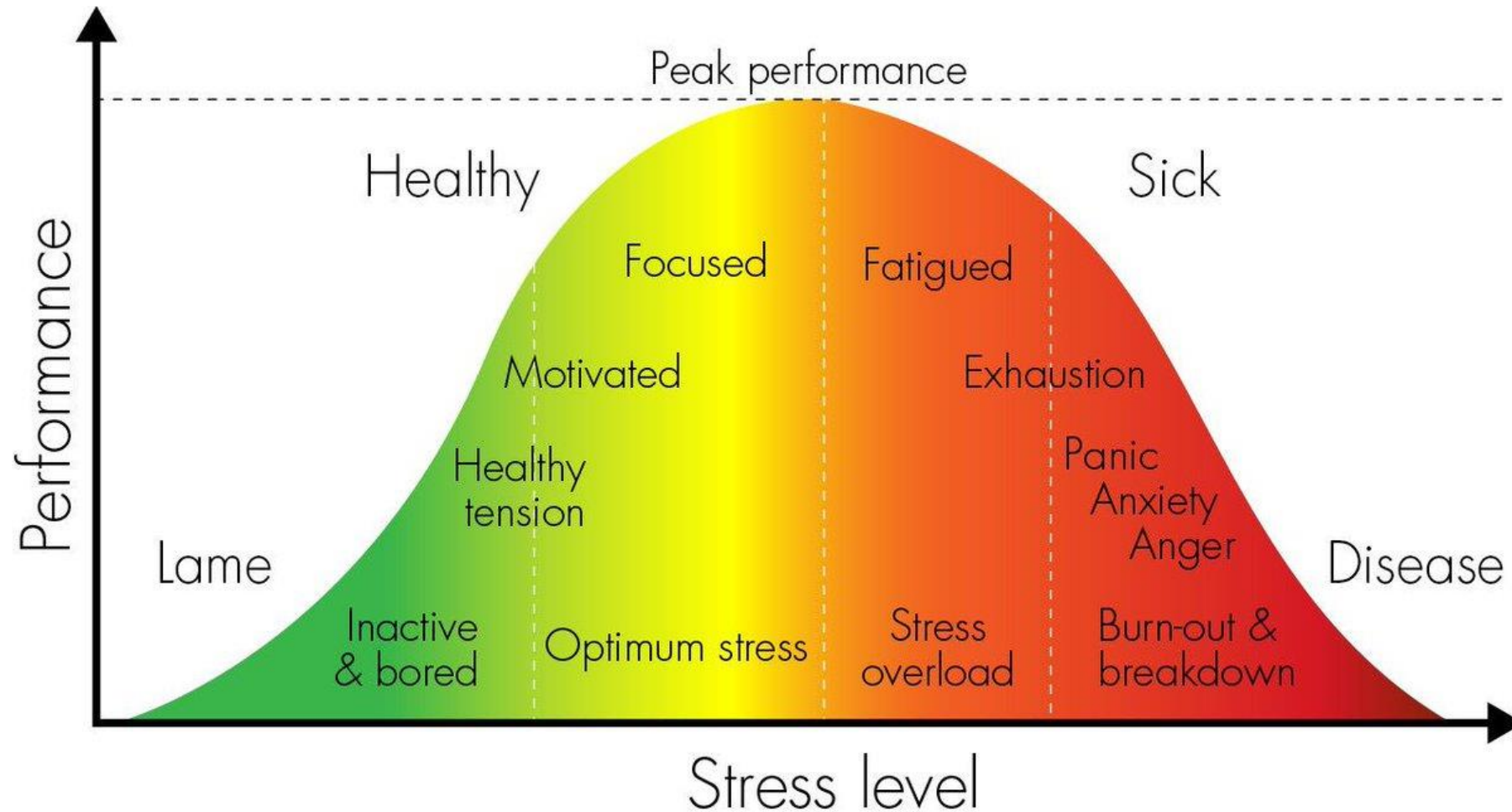
[*Ontario Human Rights Commission’s Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability, 2016](#)

Health Care Practitioner

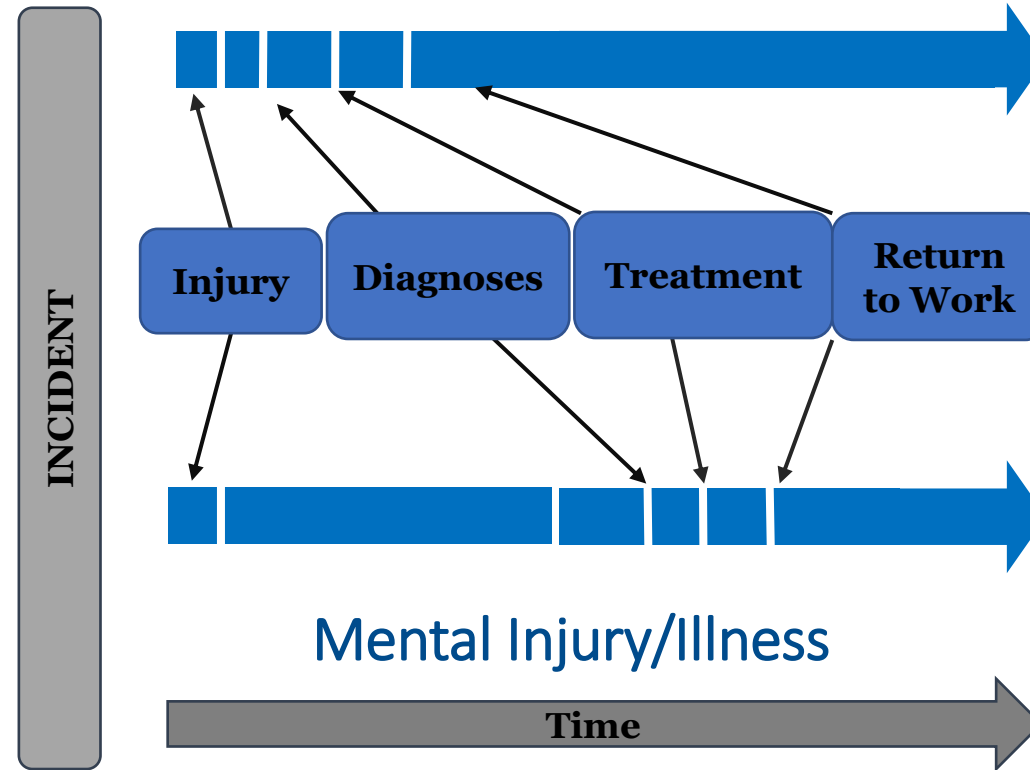


Source: Best advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace, Health Canada, 2000

Impact of Stress

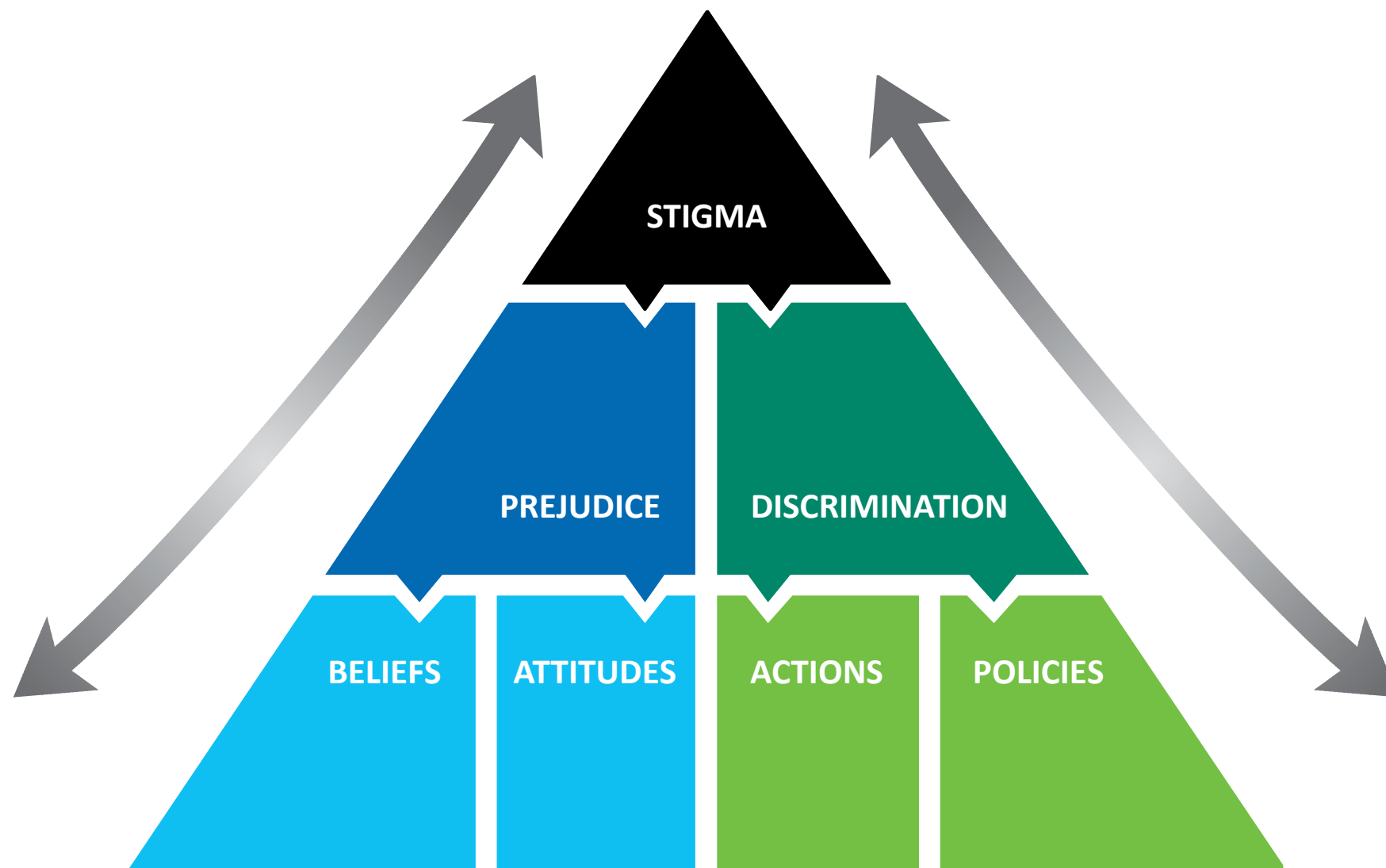


Physical Injury/Illness

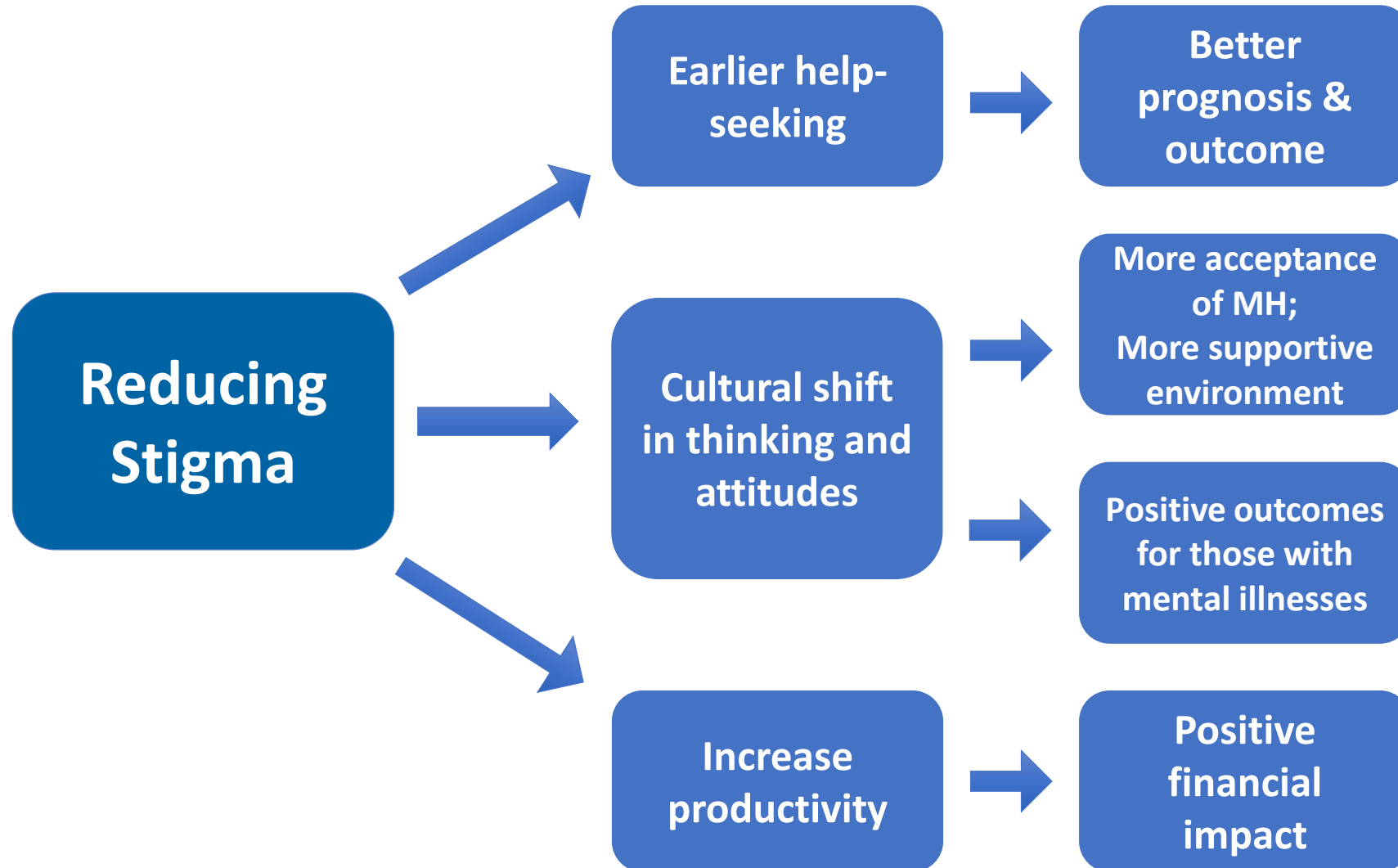


Wang PS, Berglund P, Olsson M, Pincus HA, Wells KB, Kessler RC. Failure and delay in initial treatment contact after first onset of mental disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Arch Gen Psychiatry, June 2005;62(2):603-1

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



The Importance of Stigma Reduction



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

How do psychosocial risk factors affect employee health?



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- 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.

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



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Source: Guarding Minds at Work

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.

Return to Work (RTW)



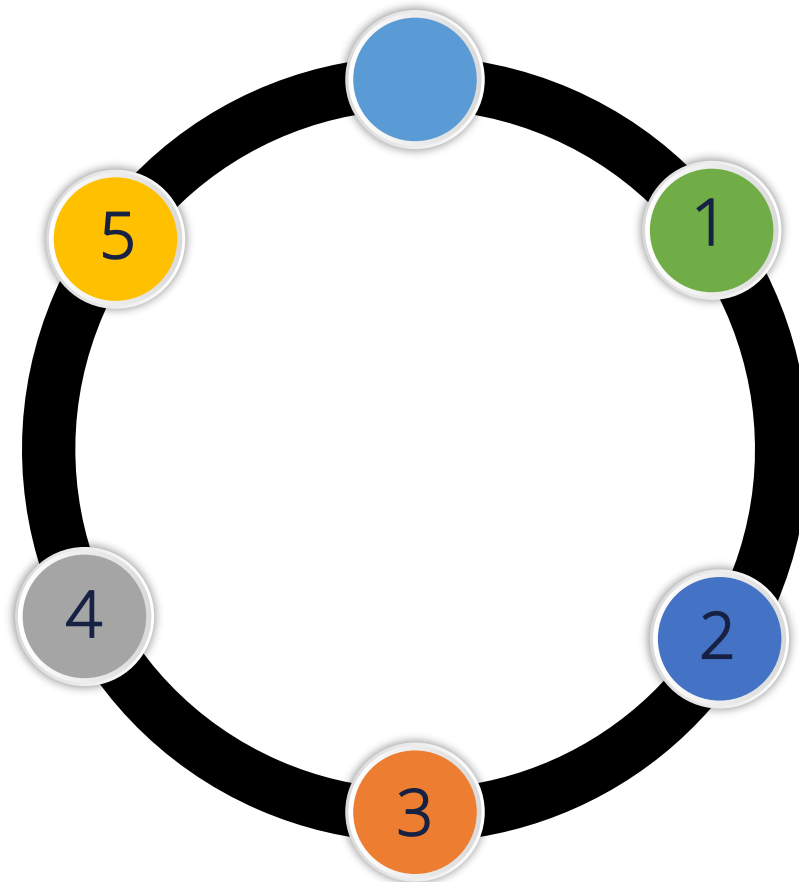
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- RTW focus should be to full regular duties but may involve short term accommodation which may lead to long term accommodation
- RTW where possible should be to the same work unit, same shift, same location
 - Hierarchy of these elements should depend 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

“Accommodation” Process

Implement and monitor the accommodation plan

Determine a suitable accommodation plan



Recognize the need for accommodation or changes to the workplace



Identify the job demands and available resources



Understand the abilities and limitations of the employee

What Does Accommodation Look Like?



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

Psychological Functional Abilities

Issues which may need to be to addressed

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.

Psychological Functional Abilities cont'd



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



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 the 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



Sound disability and accommodation principles



Comprehensive benefits



Effective education and training



Strategic & integrated policies and programs