



A healthy workplace is multidimensional

It's Healthy Workplace Month!

A healthy workplace means different things to different people but there are some general considerations which can make a big difference to everyone. Healthy eating, physical activity, proper rest, taking breaks, a safe workspace, open communication, and treating team members with respect are all elements that contribute to a healthy workplace.

Looking for advice and support?

A confidential service provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1.800.663.1142 | **Numéro sans frais - en français** : 1.866.398.9505

TTY: 1.888.384.1152 | **International** (Call collect): 604.689.1717

homewoodhealth.com



Homewood
Health | Santé

October is Healthy Workplace Month in Canada



The goals of Canada's Healthy Workplace Month are to increase awareness of the need for a comprehensive approach to workplace health in Canada.

The weekly themes for this year are:

WEEK 1: Healthy Lifestyles

WEEK 2: Workplace Culture and Mental Health

WEEK 3: Physical Environment

WEEK 4: Corporate Social Responsibility

Homewood is pleased to offer you a healthy workplace kit containing tools and articles to help you improve or maintain your health at work.



WEEK 1

Healthy Lifestyles



Making healthy lifestyle choices

There are so many easy ways to make good choices that will have a positive impact every day. Even small changes can make a big difference.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Our relationship with food can affect our physical and psychological well-being. We become especially aware of this during those times in our lives when our relationship with food changes and becomes unhealthy. When this happens, food is no longer seen as nourishment for the body, but a means of dealing with some emotional or psychological problem. Some people react to these problems by eating too much or going on a crash diet.

Here are some considerations that can help you maintain a healthy relationship with food.

Trust your body's signals

The body is a very reliable instrument. It tells you when it needs food (feeling hungry) and when it does not (feeling you've had enough). An important key to a healthy relationship with food is to trust the signals your body is sending.

The problem with diets

There are several problems with popular weight loss diets. One problem is that weight loss diets upset and distort the body's built-in signals that tell us when we're hungry and when we're satisfied. The other consequence is that diets tend to decrease the body's metabolism, that is, they slow the rate at which the body burns calories. Since burning off calories is how the body controls weight, the diet's result is the opposite of what is intended.

Comfort food is good

Healthy eating does not mean you have to give up your favourite comfort food. Comfort food increases our feeling of psychological well-being which is a healthy place to be. Just remember, the key is moderation.

Food is not a magic happy pill

Turning to comfort food - or any food for that matter - in response to an emotional downturn is counterproductive. Anxiety over work or money, feelings of guilt for not having called a friend or done something you promised to do are often the cue for people to reach for the cookie jar. It may almost become an automatic reaction. Rather than go for the cookie, deal with the problem, whatever it might be. Using food as a magic happy pill just doesn't work.

Look for other sources of gratification

One way to avoid using food to ease feelings of anxiety or guilt is to make a mental list of those things that make you feel good about yourself. These could include your friends and family, your love of gardening, whatever. Rather than reach for the box of donuts, take a walk, weed your garden, call a friend. These are much more reliable sources of well-being, and they are fat free!

Feel good with your body

Some people worry that they don't look like a skinny fashion model or a hunky life guard. This only keeps them from feeling good about their body and themselves. Consider the parts of your body that you like.

Make your coffee break a health break

Rather than another coffee, go for some fruit, fruit juice, or yogurt on your morning or afternoon break at work. A small, healthy snack every three or four hours boosts your energy level and helps reduce your craving for a big lunch or dinner.

Give yourself time to play

Exercise has benefits beyond providing a good workout. While it is good for your physical and psychological health, there is also the satisfaction of learning a new sport or of having fun in a recreational activity.

When to seek help

Some eating behaviours upset our bodies and can pose definite health risks. These include dental problems, menstrual problems for women, and definitive loss of bone supply. If you restrict your food intake excessively, abuse laxatives, practice self-induced vomiting or train seven days a week to burn calories, you should consult your physician.

An unhealthy relationship with food is often related to learned attitudes but it is possible to learn new ones. If you have trouble learning these new attitudes by yourself please seek professional help.

Tips for making healthy lifestyle choices at work

Get vertical!

Getting up out of your chair every 20-30 minutes is good for your body and your mind. You can even throw in a quick stretch while you're standing.

Step it up!

Don't push that elevator button! Standing and waiting around in the hall is boring. Take the stairs and burn some calories. Your body will thank you.

Walky talky!

Try a walking meeting. There's no need to sit across from each other at a desk. Go for a stroll and talk.

Germs be gone!

Take the time to regularly wash your hands with soap and water. To make sure you are doing it long enough, do what the kids do and sing the alphabet song (you can sing it in your head if you prefer) – make it fun!

Safety first!

A healthy workplace is a safe workplace. Ensure your working environment is regularly inspected and that potentially hazardous situations are corrected. For example, dangling power cords can be a trip hazard.

Eat your veggies!

Bring vegetables and fruits to eat while at work. That mid-afternoon craving for something sweet can be satisfied with an apple or a few carrots – and you won't experience a sugar crash afterwards.



WEEK 2

Workplace Culture and Mental Health



Workplace culture and mental health

Do you feel valued at work? Can you share ideas with your team members without feeling judged? Is your input acknowledged? Do you spend more time gossiping than working? Do you laugh and smile, or groan and frown? An important step to being happy at work is avoiding conflict.

A HAPPY WORKPLACE IS A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

While it is important to feel like you can share experiences with your co-workers, there are some conversations that generally don't belong in the workplace. Topics to avoid include those that could create conflict and that might negatively influence the perceptions others have about your ability to do your job effectively. Here are some suggested topics to avoid at work:

1. Religion

Religion is a very personal issue and people can be very sensitive about it. They don't want to hear that you disagree with their religious beliefs or that you believe your religion is the one in which everyone should believe.

2. Politics

This is another sensitive issue, particularly around election time. While you may feel very strongly about your political party or candidate, or have negative views about the opposition, you should not try to win your co-workers over to your point of view.

3. Your Sex Life

Why shouldn't you talk about your sex life? Simply because it's no one's business other than yours and your partner's! Other than that, it makes people uncomfortable. Taken to the extreme, it may even border on sexual harassment.

4. Problems with Your Spouse, Your Children, or Your Parents

When you discuss problems you are having with others, your co-workers and your boss may wonder if those problems are distracting you from doing your job. Talking about your problems with your family will reveal your weaknesses. You don't want to do this, especially if you are in a position of authority.

5. Your Career Aspirations

Talking about how you want to move on to something bigger and better will certainly, for good reason, make your boss and co-workers question your loyalty to your current job. If you are interested in moving up within your current organization, your actions will speak louder than words. Do your job exceptionally well, and of course, let your boss know you want to move up, but don't make it the topic of workplace conversations with anyone who will listen.

6. Your Health Problems

Don't dwell on your health problems at work. If you do, you will give your co-workers and boss reason to wonder if an illness will keep you from doing your job. Of course, serious health issues that will cause you to take time off must be discussed with your employer. No one, however, needs specific details about your health.

AVOID GOSSIP

Do the words “I heard it through the grapevine” conjure up memories of an old song, or maybe a television commercial featuring dancing raisins? For many of us it’s also just another day at the office. Gossip is an unavoidable presence in all workplaces. But, is it also an unwelcome one?

Of course, damaging gossip is unwelcome anywhere. As is gossip that spreads false information.

BE GOOD TO YOUR CO-WORKERS

In offering support to others we can spread the message that help is available, problems are treatable, and that someone cares.

Foster a healthy work culture

Your ability to approach someone in distress will be influenced by the culture of your workplace. In a healthy work environment, a distressed co-worker would be encouraged to share their distress in an appropriate manner. In your workplace, promote attitudes and behaviours that actively reduce stigma and discrimination associated with difference, whether it’s due to mental illness, addiction, or cultural diversity. Seek opportunities to promote tolerance.

Become more self-aware

Resilient people are healthier, live longer, and are more successful. The skills of resilience are attitudinal, emotional, and behavioural. They enable resilient people to cope with external circumstances and maintain an internal equilibrium, even when under pressures. We can learn those characteristics of resilience we weren’t fortunate enough to be born with:

- Prioritize attending to your emotional health.
- Learn to participate in active, adaptive, and confident coping.
- Be socially connected.
- Strive for balanced living.

Take everything you hear with a grain of salt.

Before you act on something you hear, confirm that it’s true. A lot of what comes down the pike is downright false. And then there’s the “telephone effect.” Remember the children’s game, telephone? You whisper something to the person next to you and then he or she whispers what he or she thinks you said to the next person, and so on. Then the last person in the chain says it aloud. The first person in the chain then repeats the original sentence which of course is quite different.

- Consider your strengths and weaknesses.
- Actively seek to develop the skills you need and be open to change and growth.

Develop listening skills

- Focus on what the person is saying.
- Use expression, body language, and eye contact, as well as verbal statements to show you are listening.
- Attempt to understand, not interpret or analyze.
- Ask questions for clarity, if needed.
- Do not try to influence someone.
- Don’t underestimate the value of really being heard.

Know your responsibilities and your limitations

- Take time to care and acknowledge that someone is in distress.
- Offer to listen if they want to share.
- Don’t pry, accept a refusal.
- It is not your role to interpret or “diagnose” another person’s troubles, or tell them why they feel a certain way.
- Share what you have noticed and offer support and encouragement to seek help.
- Do not challenge or confront.
- If they don’t wish to share, leave the door open for another time.
- Be aware of your own reactions.

FIVE Types of People You Will Meet at Work

The workplace, like any place you bring a bunch of people together, is a jumble of many different personalities. In addition to co-workers who are easy to work with, you will also find difficult people at work. What sets the workplace apart from many other places is that everyone – even the difficult people – must cooperate in order to be productive. Here are five types of difficult people you may meet at work and advice for getting along with each one.

The Chatterbox

Let's start with your most affable co-worker. The chatterbox usually means well. He is friendly and wants to share all his thoughts (every last one of them) with you. He isn't trying to cause harm to anyone . . . his incessant talking is just keeping you from concentrating on your work. Here are some things you can do to quiet down your chattering co-worker so you can get your job done. Rather than risk insulting your colleague, put the blame on yourself. Tell your co-worker you have trouble concentrating while you are listening to his very engaging stories. You'd love to hear them at some other time, just not while you're working. Then, if you truly enjoy his company, have lunch with him once a week.

The Gossip

The gossip seems to know everything about everyone and he wants to share it. Should you listen to what your gossiping colleague has to say? Yes, provided the information is work related news and things you need to know about. If the gossip being shared is of a very personal nature, for example he shares with you news of another co-worker's marital problems, change the subject or say that you don't feel right discussing someone behind his back and walk away. If you listen to gossip about others, then it is OK for others to gossip about you!

The Complainer

There's always one person in a group who can never find any reason to be happy. If he's not complaining about his health or his family, he's complaining about his job, the company, or your boss. Of course, some of his complaints may be legitimate, but the incessant whining is getting on your nerves. Generally, the complainer isn't looking for advice so offering it probably won't do any good. Change the subject whenever the negativity begins, or excuse yourself. Your colleague should get the hint after you do this repeatedly.

The Delegator

In almost every workplace you'll find someone who wants to share his work with his colleagues. We're not talking about those who have a legitimate reason to delegate work to others, for example managers or team leaders. We are speaking of those who either can't do all the work they have been given or don't want to do it. If team work is encouraged in your office and you have time to help your colleague you should. However, if managers are the only ones who have the authority to delegate and you already have your hands full, then you have to turn down the request. Tell your co-worker you have your own work which requires your time and attention.

The Credit Grabber

The credit grabber does not acknowledge any help he receives from others. He accepts all the praise for a project without mentioning that he didn't do it alone. The first time this happens, consider it a mistake. Mention it to your colleague and ask him to let others know about your participation. If he doesn't, or if this happens again, make sure you let others know about the role you played in getting a project done. Then, unless you are mandated to work with this person, direct your energy to cooperative co-workers. If the problem persists, ask your supervisor for help with resolving the issues.



Negative interactions with co-workers and managers can leave team members feeling alienated, disrespected, and not appreciated. These types of interactions are not productive and can lead to stress, ineffectiveness, and a general feeling of being unwell. Nip this in the bud by cutting out nasty gossip and unnecessary conflict in your workplace.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

1. How do you react when someone in your workplace is acting negative towards you (e.g., over-bearing, dominating a conversation)? Do you find yourself reacting in a disrespectful way (e.g., name-calling, shouting)?
 - If so, how can you change your behaviour so that you react assertively, but not disrespectfully?
2. Do others criticize your communication style (e.g., do they suggest you are pushy or overbearing with them or with customers or clients)? If so, do you think there is any truth to their criticism?
 - What is one step you can take today to communicate more assertively or positively with others?
 - If you have offended someone, what action should you now take (e.g., apologize)?

3. **Observe co-workers dealing with conflict.** Watch their reactions as they interact with each other in negative and confrontational ways, versus those who interact with each other in positive and assertive, solution-focused ways.

- What are some of the differences that you see?

- Is there anything that you can learn from what you have observed that you can apply to yourself?





WEEK 3

Physical Environment



Physical Environment

SCENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

Oh those lovely scented air fresheners, that lovely perfume, that fresh aftershave, that fruity shower gel, and that hairspray.

Many of us enjoy the scents of these lotions, creams, and air fresheners. But what you may not realize is that what you may enjoy may be harmful for someone else.

Scents are included in a very large range of products:

- shampoos and conditioners
- hairsprays
- deodorants
- colognes and aftershaves
- fragrances and perfumes
- lotions and creams
- soaps
- air fresheners
- household cleaners
- cosmetics

Unfortunately, scents are not so pleasing for everyone. Scents can have adverse effects on a person's health. Many people report having symptoms when exposed to scents:

- headache
- dizziness
- nausea
- fatigue
- upper respiratory symptoms
- shortness of breath
- difficulty concentrating
- skin irritation
- and more

These symptoms may be mild or severe. Those with asthma report that even certain odours can trigger an attack.

As a result of these health concerns, many workplaces are scent-free.

What is a scent-free workplace?

It is a workplace that has implemented a policy that does not allow the use of any scented products, including cleaning products, within the work area. It applies to all employees and visitors of that workplace.

The Takeaway

So, enjoy your scents at home and be sensitive to those around you.

Take Action

Did you know that if you are someone who is sensitive to scents and your workplace does not have a scent-free policy, you can discuss this issue with your employer? If your workplace does have a scent-free policy, there are a few points to consider when choosing scent-free products.

When the terms "scent-free" and "unscented" are used, the product may actually contain ingredients that are used to mask or hide the smell of other ingredients.

Also, labels on household products only require identification of immediate hazards such as burns, explosion, fire, and poison. Therefore, reading labels and some research may be required.

ERGONOMICS IN THE WORKPLACE

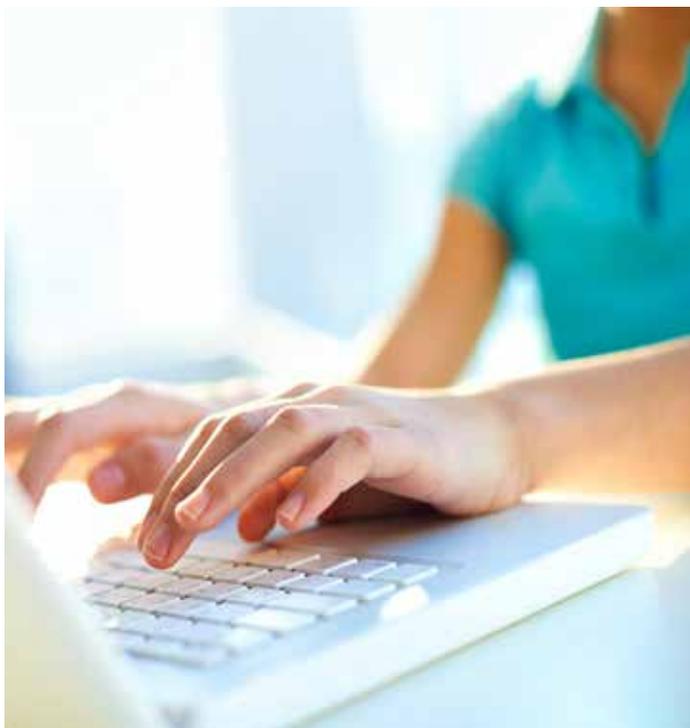
We live in an increasingly complex technological world. More and more of what we do every day revolves around our computer including: working; social networking; paying bills; and watching movies. As a result, our bodies now remain in one position for prolonged periods of time as we look at a computer monitor and tap away at our keyboards or scroll with our mouse.

Our bodies were meant to be moving and active. Remaining in one position for long periods of time, particularly when muscles are contracting or staying under pressure can lead to pain and injury. Ergonomics is the science of adjusting your surroundings (in this case your work space) to meet your physical needs while using the computer. Here are some things to consider when working on your computer.

Laptop & Desktop Use

The optimal work position is as follows:

- Sit up straight, head over shoulders, and shoulders over hips.
- Your eyes should be level with the top of your screen (if you wear bifocals or progressive lenses the screen may need to be slightly lower to avoid neck strain).
- Your arms should be straight out in front of you with your elbows flexed at approx. a 90 degree angle.
- Avoid flexion or extension at the wrist - try to keep it neutral.
- Use an external mouse and keyboard when possible.



Workplace Settings for Laptops

Airplane/airport:

- Sit far back in your seat; use a back cushion if needed.
- Use your carry-on as a footrest if that helps to provide hip flexion at a 90 degree angle.
- Get up and walk around every 15 or 20 minutes, or at the very least, stretch your arms and legs while sitting.
- Bulkhead or exit rows give you a bit more space for your laptop to be open.

Hotel:

- If possible, use the desk in the hotel room. If you are sitting on the bed, use a pillow or briefcase to raise the laptop from your lap and avoid eyestrain.
- Remember the basics about your optimum body position - neutral (no strain on neck, shoulders, arms, wrists, low back) and 90 degrees of flexion at elbows, hips, and knees.
- Support your low back with pillows or rolled towels.
- Avoid working on the coffee table or other low surfaces.

Carrying your Laptop:

- Use a carrying case with a padded handle or a backpack with padded shoulder straps.
- When flying, place extra batteries in checked luggage to reduce the carrying weight.
- Shift the load between your hands when carrying for prolonged periods to avoid overusing muscles on one side of your body.
- Wheeled cases work very well.



WEEK 4

Corporate Social Responsibility



Corporate Social Responsibility

Being a responsible employer means being a good corporate citizen both inside and outside of the workplace.

Some organizations promote volunteerism and giving back to local non-profit organizations, others attempt to reduce their carbon footprint by printing fewer documents or buying airline carbon offsets, and some encourage the promotion of mental health awareness. Part of being a good employer and a good employee includes being aware of mental health issues in the workplace.

Here are some mythbusters about mental illness that you can reflect on in your role as a good corporate citizen in the workplace.

MENTAL ILLNESS MYTHBUSTERS

Myth 1: Mental illness is a single, rare disorder.

Mood disorders, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, impulse control disorders, and addiction disorders are all mental illnesses. There are multiple types of mental illness, each with its own features and underlying causes. Similarly, each mental illness relates to brain chemistry gone awry, affecting things like mood and perception. But each of these illnesses has its own specific causes, features, and approaches to treatment.

Myth 2: People with a mental illness never get better.

Treatments for mental illnesses are more numerous and more sophisticated now than ever before. As well, researchers continue to discover new treatments. Because of these advances, many people do recover, and others are able to keep conditions under control. While some conditions might wax and wane in severity throughout a person's adult life, symptoms can be kept under control with proper treatment. Full recovery is attainable, and it may involve more than just drugs; it also may include being socially and physically active, because recovery means getting people back to 'leading normal lives.'

Myth 3: Psychiatric disorders are not true illnesses.

Unlike a broken leg or heart attack (which are easily detected by simple tests), mental illness has traditionally been an invisible disease. This inability to see what's wrong adds to the perception, and even fear, of mental illness. But mental illnesses are bona fide medical conditions. They involve complex physiological processes, as well as changes or imbalances in brain chemistry.

Myth 4: Children don't get mental illnesses.

Parents naturally want their children to do well, so some may brush off or explain away behavioural problems or other childhood difficulties as being mere growing pains. However, numerous psychiatric conditions, including depression, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder and anxiety disorders, can and do occur in childhood. Roughly one in every 33 kids and one in every eight teens suffer from depression.

Myth 5: People with a mental illness lack intelligence.

Intelligence has nothing to do with mental illnesses. On one hand, many people with mental disorders are brilliant, creative, and productive people. On the

other hand, some people with mental disorders are not brilliant or creative. Overall, the level of intelligence among people with mental illness likely parallels the patterns seen in any healthy population.

Myth 6: People with a mental illness shouldn't have jobs.

People with mental illness can, and do function well in the workplace. They are unlikely to miss any more

workdays because of their condition than people with a chronic physical condition such as diabetes or heart disease. Employees may not even be aware that a co-worker suffers from a mental illness. Similarly, a stress-ridden workplace may be a breeding ground for the development of stress-related mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety disorders, and threaten the delicate work-life balance.

Mental illnesses are not just feelings or reactions to experiences or events. There are different kinds and each can be identified by a collection of different symptoms that persist for a specific period and significantly interfere with a person's roles, activities, relationships, and/or capacity for self-care.

Mental disorders can affect almost every aspect of a person's life over a considerable period. The more we know about them, the more able we are to dispel the myths and clear up the misconceptions surrounding them.

GIVING BACK IS GREAT – AND IT FEELS GREAT TOO!

Giving back in your local community is a great way to show your support. Whether it's volunteering your time or making a donation, there are numerous organizations that will really benefit from your generosity.

You can make a real difference in your community and make it a fun team-building activity!

Here are some ideas on how you, or your team, can make a difference:

- Volunteer at your local food bank
- Donate books to your local library
- Spend an afternoon cleaning up litter in your community
- Donate school supplies to your local schools
- Host a toy drive during the holiday season
- Collect grocery store receipts to donate towards various causes in your community



- Volunteer at an animal shelter
- Organize a clothing drive
- Volunteer at your child's school
- Plan fun events to raise money for local causes
- Organize a team to walk/run for a cause

If you're still not sure where to start, a quick internet search will give you lots of ideas.

Contact Us

Looking for advice and support?
A confidential service provided 24 hours a
day, 7 days a week.

1.800.663.1142

TTY: 1.888.384.1152

Numéro sans frais - en français :
1.866.398.9505

International (Call collect): 604.689.1717

homewoodhealth.com



Homewood
Health | Santé