



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

There's more to me.

#UnmaskingMentalHealth

UNMASKING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AT WORK

People with mental health challenges may routinely hide their true emotions under a mask. When we mask, we hide or suppress emotions, personality traits, behaviours or symptoms from others. People mask for a lot of different reasons, but the primary driver is stigma. The pressure to mask extends to the workplace as well where about three in four working Canadians say they wouldn't tell their leader or coworkers about a mental illness¹.

Unmasking, when it's safe to do so, can help people form deeper connections and boost self-esteem which supports good mental health². In the workplace, being mindful of the ways we speak to and about each other, along with modeling our own vulnerability, can help to dismantle stigma and create a culture where people feel safe to unmask.

How to be a supportive organization

Organizations play a critical role in helping employees feel safe enough to unmask their mental health challenges. By normalizing conversations about mental health, organizations can create a culture where employees don't feel the need to hide their challenges. This encourages authenticity by recognizing that there is no single way to think, feel, or act. Everyone experiences life differently, and policies, training, and leadership practices should reflect this by fostering a culture of acceptance and support. When organizations model vulnerability from the top down, it sends a powerful message that mental health challenges are not a weakness, but a shared human experience.

How to be a supportive colleague

As colleagues, we can support one another by practicing generosity in our assumptions and recognizing that there is always more to someone than what they outwardly show. Unmasking takes courage, and we can help create the safety needed for it by being open about our own challenges and listening without judgment. When we share our own challenges, we give others permission to do the same, fostering deeper connections and mutual support. Small actions, like checking in on coworkers, acknowledging emotions, and responding with empathy can make a significant difference in breaking down stigma and making mental health conversations a natural part of workplace culture.

Want to bring mental health to your organization?

CMHA National has a suite of solutions developed by our in-house experts to help organizations build a more psychologically safe workplace and equip employees with practical skills to improve their own well-being. Explore our options below to learn more!

Not Myself Today®

Not Myself Today® is an awareness and capacity-building program that helps your organization break down stigma, support your employee's mental health and train your leaders on how to support employee mental health. As part of your subscription, you will also receive access to a learning environment specifically designed for managers. Connect with an account manager through our contact form to learn more and get started, or [visit this link](#).

Workplace mental health training

CMHA National offers evidence-based organizational training that is interactive and solution-focused. Our in-house experts collaborate with you to develop unique and catered learning experiences that help create a psychologically safe workplace. For more information visit this link. Reach out to workplace@cmha.ca to see how our team can customize services to meet your training needs.

Psychological health and safety training

CMHA National offers two public sessions focused on how to support psychological health and safety at work through management systems. We offer both an introduction to management systems and the core concepts of the National Standard, as well as a much more in-depth look into assessing, identifying, and responding to opportunities for psychological improvement in alignment with the National Standard. For more information on our public offerings, contact workplace@cmha.ca or [visit this link](#).

¹ National Institute of Mental Health. Mental Health and Mental Disorders. National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537064/#:~:text=On%20the%20contrary%2C%20there%20is,crime%20rather%20than%20the%20perpetrator.

² Milligan-Saville, Josie S., et al. "Workplace Mental Health Training for Managers and Its Effect on Sick Leave in Employees: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, vol. 60, no. 12, 2018, pp. 1007–1015, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7767606/>