

An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

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Creating Your Own Workplace Plan

A workplace plan is a tool you can use to help figure out what changes you may want at work in order to be successful. It can be used to find what accommodations you may want, and also can be used when formal accommodation is not happening, but when workplace issues are hard to resolve.

Sample Workplace Plans

To see samples of workplace plans that have been used successfully by employees, and to learn more about the process, go to:

http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/workplace_planA

And

http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/workplace_plan.

If you have a disability, including a medical condition such as depression or anxiety, that requires a formal accommodation, go to:

<http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/accommodations> for more information about how to request an accommodation.

A workplace plan is a document that helps you identify what you want to be successful at your job. It is not a legal contract, but is actually a request from you to your employer asking for reasonable changes that will allow you to be successful at your job. It helps because as you develop it, it puts your suggested solutions “on paper” and gives you and your manager a way to discuss your wants. Other people could help you develop this plan including your manager, human resources representative, occupational health nurse or doctor, your union representative, or even a trusted co-worker.

How to Move Forward

This plan can be an informal way to move forward through workplace issues whether you are at work or returning to work. It is recommended that if you are returning to work, it be done gradually, allowing you to build up your strength and confidence as you get back up to speed. Ideally, you would work together with your manager to develop your workplace plan. It does not supercede any existing company policies, collective bargaining agreements or legislation. It is developed in good faith with the intention of having you be successful at work while maintaining a balance between productivity and health. Your manager may not know how to help you. This process can give your manager ideas that are right for you. It is suggested that you and your manager review your workplace plan regularly to see if any changes want to be made to ensure your continuing success at work.

The Mental Health Works Workplace Plan

The following Mental Health Works workplace plan process is used in a variety of circumstances ranging from everyday issues to complex return-to-work planning. We are sharing this with you to give you a process to help yourself and help your manager to better support your success at work.

The plan asks you to answer three questions:

- What do you want to be successful at your job?
- How do you want future issues to be addressed, should they arise?
- For your contribution to being successful at your job, what will you commit to?

Consider what you think of as problems at work. We’ve given you some ideas and examples below. Also consider what you expect your manager to identify as problems. Then come up with possible reasonable strategies that you and your manager can discuss to meet your wants and the wants of the workplace. The examples show possible solutions. Your situation may require different solutions. These examples are not the only solutions, just ideas to stimulate your own thoughts.

The way work is assigned

An employee who is struggling with competing demands at work and last-minute requests from his manager may write in his workplace plan:

“I understand the desire to be flexible around last-minute client requests. Last-minute requests that interrupt my other tasks may cause me to feel overwhelmed because I am then unable to finish my other tasks on time. When my manager asks me to take on a last-minute task, I will ask my manager to help me prioritize my other tasks.”

The way your work is monitored

An employee who would describe his or her manager as a “micro-manager” causing distress: “I understand my manager’s want to monitor my work for quality and accuracy. When my manager interrupts my work to make changes several times a day, I become agitated and lose focus and confidence in my abilities. I would like to be able to give my manager regular updates with a schedule that works for both of us. And I would like my manager to wait until our scheduled meeting to give me feedback or make changes, unless the issue is urgent.”

A different person may welcome the immediate feedback. Another employee may request to have feedback given in writing.

The way information and direction is given to you

An employee who has difficulty remembering verbal instructions: "I prefer to have instructions about my tasks given to me in writing. Or, they can be given to me verbally and I will immediately write down what I've heard, and check back with the person who gave me the directions to make sure I've got it right."

The way others interact with you

An employee who regularly cries at work: "I would like to have people at work not worry or react if they see me crying. I would like them to just allow me a few minutes to compose myself. If this happens during a meeting, I will excuse myself and return as soon as I am able to participate calmly in the meeting." How do you want future issues to be addressed, should they arise?

You can help your manager by anticipating where you may have difficulty, and giving concrete suggestions on what to do. Here are some examples:

If you appear to be distressed or unwell

"If I appear to be angry with a raised voice, I would like my manager to say to me, 'I notice you seem uneasy, would you like to continue this discussion at another time?'."

If there is a performance issue that wants to be addressed with you

"If my manager notices that the quality or quantity of my work is dropping, I would like my manager to send me an email, asking to speak with me about the specific tasks that she is worried about. Receiving the email will give me time to collect my thoughts before we meet to discuss the problem and knowing which specific task is the problem will help me prepare."

Another person may have a different request for the same situation:

"If my manager notices that the quality or quantity of my work is dropping, I would like my manager to speak to me face-to-face as soon as possible, saying, 'I've noticed changes in your work and I'd like us to find a time to talk about it'. I would prefer that my manager not send me an email about it because that will just increase my anxiety."

If there is conflict

"When my manager and I experience conflict between us, I ask that we both refrain from speaking in anger, we may want to request to discuss the issue at another time when each of us is calm enough to have a civil conversation."

For your contribution to being successful at your job, what will you commit to?

Sharing what you will do to be successful at work shows your manager that you are engaged in the process and gives you strategies that are specific to your wants. Here are some examples:

An employee who often feels groggy and unwell in the morning and avoids calling his or her manager:

"I will make every effort to let my manager know if I am going to be late because I understand that not knowing where I am is disruptive to my manager's day."

An employee who has had emotional outbursts at work:

"I will make every effort to control my emotions at work. If I feel that I am not able to maintain my composure, I will remove myself from the workplace for a few moments until I feel in control of my emotions. I will leave a note on my chair so that people know where I am."

An employee who doesn't take breaks or lunch:

"Every morning and afternoon I will leave my desk to take a break for 15 minutes. I will also take a break at lunch away from my desk. Taking these breaks will help me keep a healthy perspective on my work."

An employee who gets caught up in work and misses counseling appointments:

"I will leave work to go my scheduled counseling appointments, knowing that attending my appointments contributes to my ability to do my job well."

Thinking about and offering solutions, instead of focusing on problems, is often an effective way to move forward toward a better working situation.

Mental Health Works, Great West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, and Mood Disorders of Ontario. Creating Your Own Workplace Plan. Retrieved from. Retrieved June 21, 2014, from http://workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/WTI_LeadersGuide.pdf (page 31-32)

Parenting Corner

Helping Children Cope with Trauma

Search: [30 ideas - Essential ideas for parents of children with ADHD](#)

Search: [Dan Siegel – How to model good parenting](#)

Search: [Preventing school violence: A sustainable approach](#)

Mobile Apps

[Virtual Hope Box App](#)

The Virtual Hope Box app contains simple tools to help patients with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking.

Net News

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful:

Search: [Spyware's role in domestic violence](#)

Search: [How to turn down the heat on fiery family arguments](#)

Search: [Working through it: Workplace strategies for mental health](#)

Self-Help Corner:

City of Edmonton Community Resources: 211

Support Network / Distress Line: 780-482-HELP

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868