

Assessing your mental health

Mental health and physical health are similar concepts: they both refer to states of well-being. Mental health includes your thoughts and emotions, feelings of connection to others, and ability to manage life's highs and lows.

We all have mental health challenges, just as we all have physical health challenges, from time to time. It's important to monitor your mental health and seek help and support if you are concerned.

Explain dangers

Tradespeople and workers in the construction, transportation, and utilities sectors are at heightened risk of mental health challenges for many reasons. These range from financial and family pressures to workplace injuries, chronic pain, and substance abuse.

Likewise, mental health concerns present themselves in many ways, including:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoidance of friends and social activities
- Difficulties relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or a feeling of constant tiredness/lack of energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, where you experience and sense things that don't exist)
- Inability to perceive changes in your own feelings, behaviour or personality
- Overuse of alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (e.g., headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains")

- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle "everyday" problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance
- Thinking about suicide.

Identify controls

Educate yourself: Learning about mental health risks and warning signs is the first step to addressing your own mental health challenges. It can be helpful to know what *good* mental health looks and feels like. Common factors include:

- A sense of purpose
- A good sense of self
- Strong relationships and feeling connected to others
- Coping with stress
- Enjoying life.

Do a self-assessment*: Check in with yourself every so often. Are you experiencing any of the warning signs noted earlier? Unlike diabetes or cancer, there is no medical test that can diagnose mental illness with 100% certainty. But by monitoring your mental health, you can identify changes and seek professional help when needed.

Ask for help: Only a medical professional can diagnose a mental disorder. They will work with you to create an individualized treatment plan that may include medication, therapy, or other lifestyle changes.

If you are struggling with your mental health right now, reach out for support and talk to someone. If you are in a crisis, remember that you are not alone. Call your local crisis line or go to the nearest emergency department.

Demonstrate

Play your part in establishing good mental health at the workplace by starting a conversation about it with coworkers. Listen with understanding and offer support to those who may need it.

*Reputable groups such as the Canadian Mental Health Association offer free, online self-assessment quizzes.

Assessing your mental health

facilitator support resources

Prepare

Review

[How to Talk About Mental Health at Your Workplace](#), IHSA's guide for supervisors delivering safety talks on mental health.

Watch

The introduction Man Therapy's [20 Point Head Inspection](#). Then consider taking the accompanying self-assessment questionnaire.

Read

[Mental Health: What is it, Really?](#) describes what good mental health looks like.

Dive in/Bookmark

[HelpGuide.org](#) offers free resources on a number of mental health and wellness topics.

Post

[10 Healthy Habits for Mental Fitness](#) poster

Reinforce

Play your part in establishing good mental health at the workplace by starting a conversation about it with coworkers. Keep learning and practising how to [listen with understanding](#), offer support to those who may need it, and encourage your colleagues to do the same.

Next steps

- Share HelpGuide.org's page on [building better mental health](#), which offers mood-boosting strategies for improving mental health.
- Encourage team members to share their own tips about how they manage their mental health and physical well-being.

More resources

- The Canadian Mental Health Association offers [comprehensive resources](#) on many topics that can help you identify potential areas of concern in yourself and others.

- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health curates a number of [self-assessment questionnaires and tools](#) to help assess mental health concerns.
- [How to get help](#) for mental health concerns—and the people who may be able to offer support.
- A list of telephone, online, and chat-based [crisis lines](#), which offer confidential assistance to callers in need.
- Don't forget to direct workers to any workplace and union supports that are available to them, too.

Questions

Consider asking your crew these questions after delivering the safety talk:

- If you experienced physical pain that lasted two weeks or longer, would you go to the doctor to have it checked out?
- if you experienced *emotional* pain that lasted two weeks or longer, would you go to the doctor to have it checked out?

Note to facilitator: Explain that many of us don't seek help for mental health concerns in the same way we do for physical symptoms.

- For most people, staying in top physical condition takes work—exercise, healthy eating, etc. Can you name a few fitness tips to help your *mental* conditioning? Can you commit to adding one of these to your mental fitness routine?

Note to facilitator: Refer to the poster [10 Healthy Habits for Mental Fitness](#) to help generate discussion if the group has difficulty answering the question above.

Do *you* have questions? Did your crew have questions you couldn't answer? Remember, it's okay to not have all the answers.

For further comments, concerns or requests, please contact info@ihsa.ca