

Mental health at work

From powerlessness to inspiration



Working together to promote mental health!

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7 WAYS TO
RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

MOUVEMENT
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One step, one action, one movement...

When one-third of workers report experiencing distress due to a loss of meaning and a persistent deficit in recharge time, **how can we work together to create healthy, caring and effective work environments that support employees' mental well-being?** (Global Watch Conference, autumn 2025)

Mental health is a **dynamic balance between the different elements that make up human life...** but it can be hard to maintain in a context like the current polycrisis we are living through, which can affect our sense of hope, our social relationships and our motivation.

In this document, we suggest some **accessible and concrete steps** you can take, which can benefit every team member of your workplace. These will help you put the Mouvement's **7 ways**—key protective factors for mental health—into action: *Take action, Feel the moment, Accept yourself, Reenergize, Explore, Make choices, and Foster relationships.*

Why not choose one action and challenge yourself to do it this month? Once it becomes a habit, you can try adding a second. One step towards the application of the *Act to modernize the occupational health and safety regime*, which imposes new obligations on employers around psycho-social risk management. (CNESST, *Facteurs de risques psychosociaux liés au travail*)

A QUÉBEC-WIDE PRESENCE THROUGH THE MOUVEMENT AND ITS REGIONAL MEMBERS:

SMQ — Bas-Saint-Laurent | SMQ — Chaudière-Appalaches
SMQ — Côte-Nord | SMQ — Haut Richelieu | SMQ — Lac-Saint-Jean
SMQ — Pierre-De-Saurel | SMQ — Rive-Sud | CMHA — Québec City branch
CMHA – Saguenay branch | CAP Santé Outaouais | Centre Accalmie
Comité Prévention Suicide Lebel-sur-Quévillon | Le Traversier | Nouveau
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**DO YOU NEED HELP
FOR EITHER YOURSELF
OR A LOVED ONE?**

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option 2

Suicide Prevention
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1-866-277-3553
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TAKE ACTION



Being able to give meaning to our work, recognize good things with all their nuances and take action with the means available to us all contribute positively to our psychological well-being in the workplace.

We are never too small to make a difference

Research demonstrates that a social purpose, opportunities to learn and develop, and alignment between the organization's values and practices are all elements that encourage employee engagement. Recognizing what is going well at work and welcoming it helps bring more joy, optimism, attention and energy to the workplace, all while encouraging mutual aid. That mutual support also contributes to our power to act and agency, in gathering the resources needed to obtain an objective.



There are many strategies you can use to develop your sense of meaning, gratitude and power to act

For all members of the organization

- Defining the cause of a problem or nuisance and determining what we can do and what we'd like to do to improve the situation.
- Summarizing the steps that have been taken and what we've learned.
- Exploring the meaning that we give to our work.
- Recognizing what is going well at work.
- Being clear about what is working for you.
- Celebrating progress made towards an objective and other wins.
- Working in the same direction towards a common goal.
- With your colleagues, determining the social purpose of your work.
- Choosing a first step to help break you out of a sense of powerlessness.

For employers and management

- Maintaining alignment between the organization's values, how it operates and its management.
- Setting clear objectives to develop a shared sense of meaning and direction.
- Valuing justice and equity in a safe and healthy environment.
- Planning extra time for social implication from interested employees.
- Showing employees how their role is important within the organization.

AND YOU?

WHAT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IMPLEMENTING OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS?



(in French)

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FEEL THE MOMENT



Our emotions are messengers—they are the spokesperson for our needs. However, the language they speak isn't always easy to understand. At times, our emotions are motivational and push us into action—at others, they call for a retreat. In a professional context, making space for our own emotions and those of our colleagues opens the door to empathy. Empathy allows us to understand other peoples' emotions and perspectives, which encourages better interpersonal relationships, more effective communication and improved teamwork.

Emotions as a barometer

Paying attention to our emotions can give us clues about the ambiance at work and any uncomfortable aspects or situations to address. It can lead us to put in effort to create or support an atmosphere of trust. If we ignore our emotions, we may be less able to recognize and respond to violent behaviours or harassment (psychological, sexual, cyber or other) in the workplace, an obligation under the *Act to modernize the occupational health and safety regime* (Bill 27)¹.

¹ CNESST. *Risques psychosociaux liés au travail – Loi visant à prévenir et à combattre le harcèlement psychologique et la violence à caractère sexuel en milieu de travail*, <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/fr/prevention-securite/sante-psychologique/risques-psychosociaux-liés-au-travail> (in French).



There are many strategies you can use to make space for emotions in the workplace

For all members of the organization

- Asking someone sincerely how they are doing, ensuring you're ready to really listen to the answer.
- Observing the emotional impact of your work.
- Speaking out about challenges and irritants.
- Asking clarifying questions and rephrasing what the other person said without adding interpretation to make sure you understood the message.
- Participating in safe spaces for discussion that encourage conversation and support among peers.
- Creating or participating in a community of practice with coworkers who occupy similar roles to yours.
- Allowing yourself a break when you experience challenging emotions and do something that makes you feel good. Taking some distance can refresh your perspective and improve your ability to respond to your needs in a constructive way.
- Accepting that there will be days where our enthusiasm doesn't show up to work with us, even if we like our jobs.

For employers and management

- Creating a space for check-ins and check-outs before and after meetings. Make sure to adapt the meeting as needed based on people's answers!
- Meeting with staff members individually to carry out a two-way evaluation and see if there are ways to respond to the needs that come up. If this isn't possible, explain the reasons why not.
- Quickly applying realistic and accessible adjustments to reduce irritants.

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ACCEPT YOURSELF



Accepting yourself is all about recognizing your own worth and having a realistic vision of your strengths, skills, challenges and limitations. It also means acknowledging the people around you. A lack of recognition is a frequent common denominator in mental health issues at work and is the number-one cause of demotivation¹.

There can never be too much recognition in the workplace

Recognition in the workplace is considered a major protective factor for mental health². It is an essential tool that should be used without moderation. It improves the atmosphere at work and increases staff engagement, in addition to reducing stress and serving as a motivator.

In a February 2024 Léger survey for Mouvement Santé mentale Québec, **just under 50% of respondents said that they receive recognition from their work colleagues.**

1 CSQ. *Reconnaissance au travail : ce sont les petites actions qui comptent*, <https://www.lacsq.org/magazine/reconnaissance-au-travail-ce-sont-les-petites-actions-qui-comptent/> (in French).

2 INSPQ. *Psychosocial risks in the workplace*, <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/psychosocial-risks-in-the-workplace>.



There are many strategies you can use to recognize the work of others

For all members of the organization

- In team meetings, making a point of naming some recent wins and challenges, as well as the unique contributions each person brings.
- Highlighting your colleagues' and managers' diversity of expertise, aptitudes and skills.
- Participating in trainings.
- Listening to different points of view.
- Inviting a colleague to speak with you about their experience and specific skill set.
- Participating in consultations whenever they are offered.
- Recognizing your colleagues' efforts, even if the result isn't perfect.
- Helping maintain or improve a respectful atmosphere.

For employers and management

- Helping support a sense of safety at work (such as implementing your workplace's anti-harassment policy).
- Providing access to trainings.
- Suggesting responsibilities based on an employee's strengths.
- Providing access to promotions.
- Providing job security.
- Providing constructive feedback that includes the person's strengths as well as what they need to work on.
- Encouraging individual initiatives, even when they fall outside of the person's scope (such as ideas to improve a process).
- Consulting with staff and taking their points of view into consideration.

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REENERGIZE



Recharging your battery is crucial! Reenergizing is all about making space for the things that are good for us. Just like taking breaks **from** work, taking breaks **at** work is an opportunity to reconnect with ourselves and with the people around us, in addition to releasing stress. Nature is a great way to recharge; having a few houseplants, looking out a window at a tree, or taking a walk in a park can all help us feel those benefits too. Taking a break gets our brains out of crisis mode and reduces stress, making it possible to see new outcomes, and encourages innovation, creativity, openness towards others and efficiency.

Changing the pace: a necessary action

For organizations, changing the pace means ensuring that periods with a heavier workload don't become the norm or a regular feature in your workplace. Changing pace at work is not only legitimate, it is an essential way to recharge our batteries on a daily basis.



There are many strategies you can use to change the pace at work

For all members of the organization

- Taking **physical breaks** to move your body or breathe, or **mental breaks** to help get your mind off work.
- Taking a screen break.
- Decorating your workspace with a plant, a poster, or a nature painting.
- Testing out taking meetings outside.
- Celebrating the people who have found strategies to adjust their pace to meet their needs and take inspiration from them.
- As a team, setting priority levels for tasks: urgent, important, to do, or shelve for later.
- Letting team members know about your energy level and, as needed, see how you can work with those circumstances to best distribute the work.
- Planning for focus periods where you dedicate yourself to one task, without notifications or interruptions.
- Building buffer time into your schedule to make room for the unexpected.
- Planning for a short buffer period between meetings.

For employers and management

- Planning for a break during meetings.
- Establishing organization-wide expectations around break times and meals.
- Providing employees with a work-life balance policy that is likely to have positive effects on how they balance work with their personal lives.
- Setting a policy on disconnecting from work that establishes that no communications can be sent outside of work hours except in emergencies.
- Considering offering “health days” rather than “sick days”.

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EXPLORE



Workplaces are evolving. Any change, whether intentional or imposed, pleasant or unpleasant, minimal or important, will provoke reactions. This could include new workflows, new equipment, restructuring the organization, changes to roles, downsizing, choosing not to replace staff who retire, or unexpected additional tasks. Exploring is all about developing adaptation strategies to roll with these changes with a curious and open attitude.

Exploring in a context of change

Employees and staff may react in different ways when a change is implemented: with excitement, motivation, anxiety, a loss of meaning, etc. While some changes are net positives for the organization, are they positive for its employees? It is both expected and legitimate for people to be concerned when they are directly affected by changes. Change may be met with resistance. Depending on how it's implemented, there may be impacts on staff reactions and well-being.



There are many strategies you can use to confront changes

For all members of the organization

- Leaning on what is stable and on your strengths (get to know them here: viacharacter.org) as well as your team's.
- Participating in implementing the change and remaining curious about the reasons behind it.
- Recognizing and welcoming the emotions that the change evokes in you.
- Sitting with the temporary discomfort that the transition brings.
- Determining the benefits and downsides of the situation.
- Agreeing to participate in trainings.
- Drawing lessons from the situation to reduce feelings of frustration.
- If needed, resisting! Support your opposition with relevant documentation and propose alternative solutions.
- Taking an interest in your colleagues' work.
- Seeking out support in your social circle and listening to different points of view.

For employers and management

- Explaining the reasons behind decisions in a clear and understandable way, and setting clear objectives.
- Consulting with others; make space for curiosity and creativity to emerge as you search for the best strategies.
- Supporting staff by providing them with the training they need.
- Accepting that some new approaches or techniques may come with successes as well as failures, creating opportunities to learn.

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MAKE CHOICES



Choosing collective well-being is a decision made at the organizational and individual level, facilitated by self-determination, a true vitamin for our brains. This means having the agency you need to act voluntarily based on your values—having a sense of control. It also means being aware of your expertise, the combination of knowledge and skill needed to carry out your work. All of this is accompanied by reciprocal connections based on mutual respect and trust.

Self-determination, a vitamin for your brain

Autonomy is a protective factor for our mental health at work. In the workplace, some guidelines are firmly established, which makes full autonomy a rare possibility. However, having some agency encourages a sense of self-determination. Autonomy and motivation support our self-esteem, satisfaction and creativity. They help us confront challenges and encourage holistic well-being. In the workplace, supporting skill development is key. We can contribute to this through mentorship, training and peer support.



There are many strategies you can use to develop self-determination

For all members of the organization

- Providing constructive feedback: avoid harming others' self-esteem.
- Acknowledging the meaningful contributions of each person around you.
- Taking the time to reflect and decide what is best for you in the present moment.
- Identifying your strengths and don't let things get under your skin; try to let go of what is beyond your control.
- Agreeing to support group consensus without betraying your ideas or convictions.
- Taking the time to identify your own values, those of your team members and those of the organization. This way, you will have a better sense of what is important for each party and whether the things that are important to you align with what is important to the others.
- Recognizing that every individual has unique experiences and limitations that affect their degree of agency.

For employers and management

- Ensuring that information and policies are clear when determining the level of agency attributed to each person.
- Supporting motivation when offering choices, tasks or mandates.
- Involving employees when making decisions that will affect them.
- Highlighting each person's contributions.
- Providing resources and training to help them feel and be more competent and better equipped with the skills they need.
- Ensuring that employees have the tools they need to do their work.

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FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS



Warm, satisfying, caring and honest relationships contribute to the sense of meaning that we give to our work and help us feel like we belong. The quality of our relationships is extremely important to how we rate our quality of life at work. When we have good relationships, the sense of trust that they generate helps us take action to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace, and act quickly if they are present.

Social relationships are a superpower!

Positive social relationships at work are a driver for motivation. They can reduce stress, improve teamwork, stimulate creativity, prevent burnout and help us overcome challenges.



There are many strategies you can use to develop social relationships

For all members of the organization

- Greeting your colleagues on a daily basis, whether in person or virtually.
- Instead of sending them an email, stopping by a coworker's desk.
- Organizing or participating in meetings and social or informal activities—team-building, the “Fete des voisins au travail”¹, games, birthdays, sports, or others.
- Sending relevant and useful information to ensure a good understanding and appropriate responses to the files or tasks to be completed.
- Taking your breaks or sharing meals with coworkers.
- Taking an interest in your colleagues—what they like, their hobbies... find common ground.
- Developing dynamics of mutual aid; offer yourself as a mentor.
- Speaking out against and refusing to accept any kind of discrimination.
- Actively participating in building a healthy workplace without gossip, violence or intolerance.
- Recognizing your allies.

For employers and management

- Ensuring your team has access to an online group chat.
- Organizing team meetings to foster discussions, support and sharing expertise.
- Sharing a common vision and objectives.
- Making yourself available to support, collaborate with, listen to, and help your colleagues.
- Implementing onboarding processes for new hires or people returning to work after an absence.

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¹ Learn more about the “Fete des voisins au travail” and how to celebrate it: mouvementsmq.ca/sante-mentale-et-travail/fete-des-voisins-au-travail/ (in French)

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