



A road map to psychological health and safety at work

LADY GAGA, DWAYNE “THE ROCK” JOHNSON, MARIAH CAREY, and more. Celebrities are divulging their struggles with mental illness and addiction and are helping to normalize conversations around mental health. In Canada, figures such as sports journalist Michael Landsberg, singer Séan McCann of Great Big Sea fame, and Canadian comedic icons like Howie Mandel and Mary Walsh have joined their ranks.

Add to this the #MeToo movement, which is breaking long-held silences on workplace harassment, and the time is ripe to look inward at how the entertainment industry can create a psychologically safer workplace.

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Working in entertainment can be a daily adventure. But, it’s important to remember that theatres and concert halls aren’t just places to be entertained but also places of work—workplaces driven by high financial stakes, tough deadlines, long hours, and absences from home. We can all relate to the feelings about work stress expressed by Dakey Dunn, one of comedian Mary Walsh’s alter egos, as he laments, “Sometimes I question my sanity. But lately I feel it’s answering me back.”

Perhaps, like Dakey, you’ll be relieved

to know there is a solution. “I got work boots on my feet to protect me on the job and now, at last, somebody’s got a plan to protect and guard my mind on the job.”

Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and developed by the Canadian Standards Association and the Bureau de normalisation du Québec.



Enter stage right, the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (<https://bit.ly/2chjoFW>).

The standard is a voluntary set of guidelines, tools, and resources that prevent psychological harm and promote good mental health at work. A world-first, it was championed by the

The standard’s flexible framework recognizes that small businesses have different needs and resources than larger enterprises. Implementing it doesn’t have to be daunting. The key is to avoid one-off action in favour of tailoring an overarching mental health plan that tackles your biggest challenges. And the MHCC website has a library of free resources, videos, and support

guides to get you started.

Virtually no organization starts from scratch. For example, unions and most major employers in the Canadian performing arts and entertainment industry have employee assistance programs that include mental health supports. In the province of British Columbia, film industry unions have banded together to create www.calltimementalhealth.com, a website with mental health resources for employees, managers, co-workers, and family members.

The standard can help build a culture where workers feel safe coming forward, knowing that the resources and supports they need are there. And, while we've yet to develop a serenity station next to the eyewash station as envisioned by Dakey Dunn, some practical training tools exist.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), available in the United States and Canada, may be familiar to you given Lady Gaga's promotion of MHFA on her latest world tour, where her foundation helped fund training at every US stop as well as in Toronto. Akin to physical first aid, MHFA helps people recognize when someone is experiencing a mental health problem or crisis and gives them the confidence to help until professional mental health support can be found.

There is also The Working Mind (TWM) program (www.theworkingmind.ca). Designed to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and build resiliency, TWM is for managers and employees alike. It reconceptualises mental health along a colour continuum where we all have the capacity to go from green (good) to yellow, to orange, to red (in distress), depending how we are coping with life's challenges.

"As a comedian, I like to think laughter is the best medicine," says Mary Walsh. "And while humour has probably saved my life, recovery from an addiction or mental health problem requires real world supports." ■

Psychological health and safety resources:

National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/national-standard

Comedian Mary Walsh as Dakey Dunn, makes the case for the standard, video:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKV27oH3qck

MHCC library of free resources, videos, and support guides:
www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/implementing-standard

Mental Health First Aid
 Canada: www.mhfa.ca
 USA: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org

The Working Mind
www.theworkingmind.ca

Call Time: Mental Health
www.calltimementalhealth.com

Free online toolkit, *Assembling the Pieces*
www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/assembling_pieces/

Guarding Minds @ Work
www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/

The 13 psychosocial factors at work using whiteboard animation videos:
<https://bit.ly/2s8Cgia>

"Being a Mindful Employee," a free online course for employees:
www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/mindful_employee/



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