Psychological Health and Safety: Legislation, Workplace Factors, and Conflict Resolution

What role does the workplace play in providing psychological health and safety?

A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is one that promotes mental well-being and actively prevents harm to worker psychological health. It is important to identify risks, such as heavy workload, discrimination, and tolerance of conflicts. Factors that contribute to psychological health and safety include:

- Civility and respect (considerate, show esteem and care)

- Involvement and influence (meaningful input into their work, engaged)

- Psychological protection (feel safe to ask questions or report mistakes)

- Psychological and social support (respond appropriately)

- Organizational culture (trust, fairness, honesty)

- Clear leadership and expectations (increases morale, resiliency, and trust)

The workplace also has a duty to inquire and a duty to accommodate. Employers have an obligation to take steps to adjust rules, policies, or practices that negatively impact individuals—or groups of individuals—based on prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Generally, employees are expected to inform their employer should they require accommodation. However, the onus to inquire about accommodation may shift to the employer if they know or ought to have known that their employee may require assistance.

What is conflict resolution and what does it involve?

Conflict resolution can include formal or informal processes that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute. Conflict management may include processes such as mediation, facilitated discussions, or conflict management coaching. Recommended options to explore during conflict resolution processes include accommodating, compromising, and collaborating, while non-recommended options include actions or situations that encourage competitive behaviour.

Psychological safety's role is to provide a space where we:

- Feel safe to speak up

- Are accountable to each other

- Have clear roles, plans, and goals

- Recognize that work has an impact

Effective Communication

Effective communication between parties is essential to building an environment centred on civility and respect. It is important to be mindful of both the intent and impact of your message. It is alright to make mistakes but remember to say sorry when you are wrong and mean it.

What are some tips for having a critical conversation?

- Pick a good time to have a critical conversation
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Recognize the feelings of others
- Stay on topic
- Understand there may not be a perfect ending
- Always:
  - Be curious
  - Listen to understand
  - Focus on your words
  - Encourage the other person to talk
  - Show compassion
  - Do not interrupt

References:

Requirements for employers to prevent harassment and violence in federally regulated workplaces

https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/workplace-health-safety/harassment-violence-prevention.html

A Template for Developing a Workplace Accommodation Policy

https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/resources/publications/a-template-developing-a-workplace-accommodation-policy

Informal conflict management system services

https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/harassment-violence/informal-conflict-management-system-services.html

CCOHS Resources

CCOHS: Psychological Health and Safety Program - Assessing Psychosocial Hazards

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/phs/mentalhealth_checklist_phs.html

CCOHS: Psychological Health and Safety Program - Controlling Psychosocial Hazards

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/phs/phs_controllinghazards.html

CCOHS: Psychological Health and Safety Program - Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/phs/phs_evaluation.html

CCOHS: Mental health - Recognizing and Addressing Stigma at Work

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/mh/mentalhealth_stigma.html

CCOHS: Mental Health - How to Address and Support

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/mh/mentalhealth_address.html

CCOHS: Violence and Harassment in the Workplace - Dealing with Negative Interactions

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/violence/violence_negative.html