

About PSR11: Balance

What is Guarding Minds @ Work?

Guarding Minds @ Work (GM@W) is an evidence-based strategy that assists employers in protecting and promoting psychological safety and health in the workplace. GM@W provides a comprehensive set of resources employers can use to effectively address the impact of 12 psychosocial risk (PSR) factors known to have a powerful impact on organizational health, the health of individual employees, and the financial bottom line. The PSRs were identified by researchers from the Consortium for Organizational Mental Healthcare (COMH) in the SFU Faculty of Health Sciences on the basis of extensive research and a comprehensive review of empirical data related to national and international best practices. The determination of the factors also reflects existing and emerging Canadian case law and legislation.

What is PSR11 – Balance?

Guarding Minds @ Work defines PSR11, balance, as present in a work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family, and personal life. This factor reflects the fact that everyone has multiple roles: as professors, parents, partners, etc. This complexity is enriching and allows fulfillment of individual strengths and responsibilities, but conflicting responsibilities can lead to role conflict or overload.

Why is PSR11 – Balance important?

A work environment where employers recognize the need for work-life balance makes employees feel valued and happier both at work and at home. When employers recognize that work-life balance is important, they realize the need for greater workplace flexibility. This flexibility helps minimize conflict by allowing them to accomplish the tasks necessary in their daily lives. Balance reduces stress and the possibility that home issues will spill over into work, or vice versa. Balance allows staff to maintain their concentration, confidence, responsibility, and sense of control at work. Organizationally, this translates into enhanced employee commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviours (discretionary behaviours that are beneficial to the organization and are a matter of personal choice) and job performance. In turn, balance is associated with enhanced well-being and reduced stress. These effects have been demonstrated over time, showing a direct causal relationship to physical and psychological health.

What happens when balance is compromised?

Job stress is on the rise, surging from 20 percent in 1990 to 33 percent in 2000. Employees with higher job stress are more likely to be dissatisfied with work and be absent either physically or mentally. One source of stress is conflict between work and family roles. When work-family conflict occurs, health and well-being are undermined. This imbalance can lead to constant tiredness, bad temper, and inability to progress. These can, in turn, lead to additional stress-related illness, as well as higher cholesterol, depressive symptoms, and overall decreased health. The impact on the organization is increased costs due to benefit payouts, absenteeism, disability, and turnover.

How can I improve balance?

Start by having the organization or work team conduct the Guarding Minds @ Work Assessment (Organizational Audit, Initial Scan and/or PSR-12 Employee Survey) and reviewing the resulting reports. If balance is identified as an area of concern, refer to the relevant Action Tools for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggestions that can improve balance. It is also important to discuss the findings with concerned employees within the organization to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input and participation in determining useful corrective actions. Also, consider the information in the readings and resources identified below. Finally, refer back to the GM@W website on occasion for new ideas about how balance can be enhanced.

Further information about balance can be found at:

- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2003, November). Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the Gallup studies. http://www.arnoldbakker.com/fileLib/Engagement%20Gallup_Harter.pdf
- Gallup Management Journal. (2006). Unhappy workers are unhealthy too. <http://gmj.gallup.com/content/14545/gallup-study-unhappy-workers-unhealthy-too.aspx>
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 692-724. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/256287?cookieSet=1>
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2009). PSR11: Balance. In Centre resources by risk factor. <http://www.gwcentreformentalhealth.com/english/slides.asp?l1=3&l2=157&l3=159&l4=171&d=159&scroll=11>
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2009). Work schedule. In Creating healthier workplaces. <http://www.gwcentreformentalhealth.com/english/display.asp?l1=4&l2=43&l3=46&d=46>
- Health and Safety Executive. (n.d.). Work related stress: Health and safety in the workplace. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>
- Byrne, U. (2005). Work-life balance: Why are we talking about it at all? *Business Information Review*, 22(1), 53-59. <http://bir.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/22/1/53>
- Casey, P., & Grzywacz, J. (2008). Employee health and well-being: The role of flexibility and work-family balance. *Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 11(10), 31-47. http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/841191_770885140_792434166.pdf
- Grzywacz, J., & Carlson, D. (2007). Conceptualizing work-family balance: Implications for practice and research. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 9(4), 455-471. <http://adh.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/9/4/455>
- Higgins, C., & Duxbury, L. (2005). Saying "no" in a culture of hours, money and non-support. *Ivey Business Journal*, 69(6), 1-5. <http://www.ivey.com/hk/executive/Saying%20No%20in%20a%20Culture%20of%20Hours,%20Money%20and%20Non-support.pdf>

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