

About PSR12: Psychological Protection

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 PSR12 – Psychological Protection?

Guarding Minds @ Work defines PSR12, psychological protection, as present in a work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured. Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when workers feel able to put themselves on the line, ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their job or their career. A psychologically safe and healthy workplace actively promotes emotional well-being among employees while taking all reasonable steps to minimize threats to employee mental health.

Why is PSR12 – Psychological Protection important?

When employees are psychologically protected they demonstrate greater job satisfaction, enhanced team learning behaviour and improved performance. Employees are more likely to speak up and become involved. They show increased morale and engagement and are less likely to experience stress-related illness. Psychologically protected workplaces also experience fewer grievances, conflicts and liability risks.

What happens when employees aren't psychologically protected?

When employees are not psychologically safe they experience demoralization, a sense of threat, disengagement and strain. They perceive workplace conditions as ambiguous and unpredictable. The organization is at a much greater threat from costly, and potentially crippling, legal and regulatory risk. This can, in turn, undermine shareholder, consumer, and public confidence in the organization.

How can I improve psychological protection?

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 psychological protection 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 psychological protection. 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 psychological protection can be enhanced.

Further information about psychological protection can be found at:

- May, D., Gilson, R., & Harter, L. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 77(1), 11-37. <http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=15621608>
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2009). PSR12: Psychological protection. In Centre resources by risk factor. <http://www.gwlcentreformentalhealth.com/english/slides.asp?l1=3&l2=157&l3=159&l4=172&d=159&scroll=12>
- Government of Canada (2010, January). Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. <http://www.ccohs.ca/>
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2009). Crisis Response. In Issues and strategies. <http://www.gwlcentreformentalhealth.com/english/display.asp?l1=7&l2=101&d=101>
- American Psychiatric Foundation. (2009). Partnership for workplace mental health. <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>
- Mental health works. (n.d.). <http://mentalhealthworks.ca>
- Roussin, C. (2008, April). Increasing trust, psychological safety, and team performance through dyadic leadership discovery. *Small Group Research*, 39(20), 224-248. <http://sgr.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/39/2/224>
- Schepers, J, de Jong, A., Wetzels, M., & de Ruyter, K. (2008, September). Psychological safety and social support in groupware adoption: A multi-level assessment in education. *Computers & Education*, 51(2), 757-775. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=MImg&_imagekey=B6VCJ-4PS63HH-2-3&_cdi=5956&_user=1022551&_orig=search&_coverDate=09%2F30%2F2008&_sk=999489997&view=c&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkzS&md5=8211084f4772ec74e2d8b08b236894f2&ie=/sdarticle.pdf

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