

Support your employee as they recover from a psychological injury

1. Find out what will help your employee feel supported.

Talk to your employee as soon as possible (in person, if appropriate) and let them know you are there for support. Listen openly to how they feel. Be reassuring and answer any questions they have. Direct them to your Human Resources department or WCB for questions about the claim process.

Establish a frequent and preferred method of contact that works for all of you. If you can, provide your employee choices that will help them take control over their environment (for example, when and where to meet, whether to fill out claim forms at the office or at home, who they choose to be their point of contact at work).

2. Secure resources and information to assist your employee.

Provide your employee with information about your organization's sick leave policy and/or position on paying medical costs, in order to help plan for the financial impact of the situation.

3. Avoid discussing your perspective of the claim with your employee or the employee's co-workers.

Psychological injuries carry a false stigma suggesting personal weakness. Discussing your opinion of the claim or promoting discussion among co-workers can perpetuate the stigma. Discussions such as these can also damage the employer/employee relationship, which is a significant factor in a successful recovery and return to work.

4. Support treatment programming that involves exposure therapy (sometimes referred to as desensitization).

Worksite-based exposure therapy involves the gradual re-introduction of the employee to the feared object or location in order to help work through the anxiety it causes. Supported by a qualified clinician, it is one of the most effective treatment methods in achieving recovery and successful return-to-work outcomes.

5. Contact the assigned WCB adjudicator or case manager to receive regular updates.

Stay connected with the case manager/adjudicator to ensure you understand how you can help and how you should prepare to return your employee to work.

Return to work

Consider the following to support your employee to prepare to return to work:

1. Participate in all return-to-work planning discussions/meetings with WCB to focus on a return to modified employment.

An occupational therapist may arrange a meeting with you, and, if appropriate, your employee to discuss ideas for modified duties. They will document the return-to-work plan for all involved.

2. Offer work with modified hours and/or duties.

After a psychological injury, some employees have less stamina to cope with their job on a full-time basis. By offering modified hours, you help your employee have time to seek medical support for their symptoms, which may help decrease the probability of a recurrence.

Some employees may not be able to work in the same environment or perform the same duties. Modified duties can assist your employee to stay at work. Think about alternate work locations or duties to accommodate a safe and early return.

3. Prepare co-workers for the employee's return to work.

Many people don't know how to interact with a co-worker who is dealing with a psychological injury. Talk to the case manager or exposure occupational therapist about ways to help your employees manage this transition.

4. Follow-up with your employee after they return to work.

Pay attention to changes in work behavior. For instance, if your employee was never late prior to the accident, but is now frequently late, they could be struggling with their injury. Other signs can include avoiding contact with people, absenteeism, sleep deprivation or memory issues.

5. Know who to call in a crisis.

To manage psychological injuries effectively, your employee should be followed by a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and/or a family physician.

Available community resources, including family/friends, and your local community distress line numbers are all important numbers to have on hand. This is especially important once the employee is back at work.

6. Help the employee be prepared with a contingency plan.

The anniversary of an accident can bring on the same feelings that occurred when the accident first happened. There can also be "trauma triggers."

Triggers can be diverse, such as people, places, images, sensory perception, incidents or circumstances that remind your employee of their accident.

Understanding potential triggers can help you and your employee develop a contingency plan to help your employee deal with a difficult time.

More information for you

You can find information about psychological injuries [here](#).

Information about modified work is found [here](#).

When in doubt, please call us.

Your WCB adjudicator or case manager is a great resource for helping you navigate a psychological injury claim and coordinating a safe return to work for your employee.

We care about your employee's wellbeing and will work with them, the treatment provider and you throughout the recovery process.

