

CAR Approach:

Guide to improve mental fitness and resilience in the workplace



Live, work, play... be well.
Vivre, travailler, s'amuser... être bien.





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and resilience in the workplace

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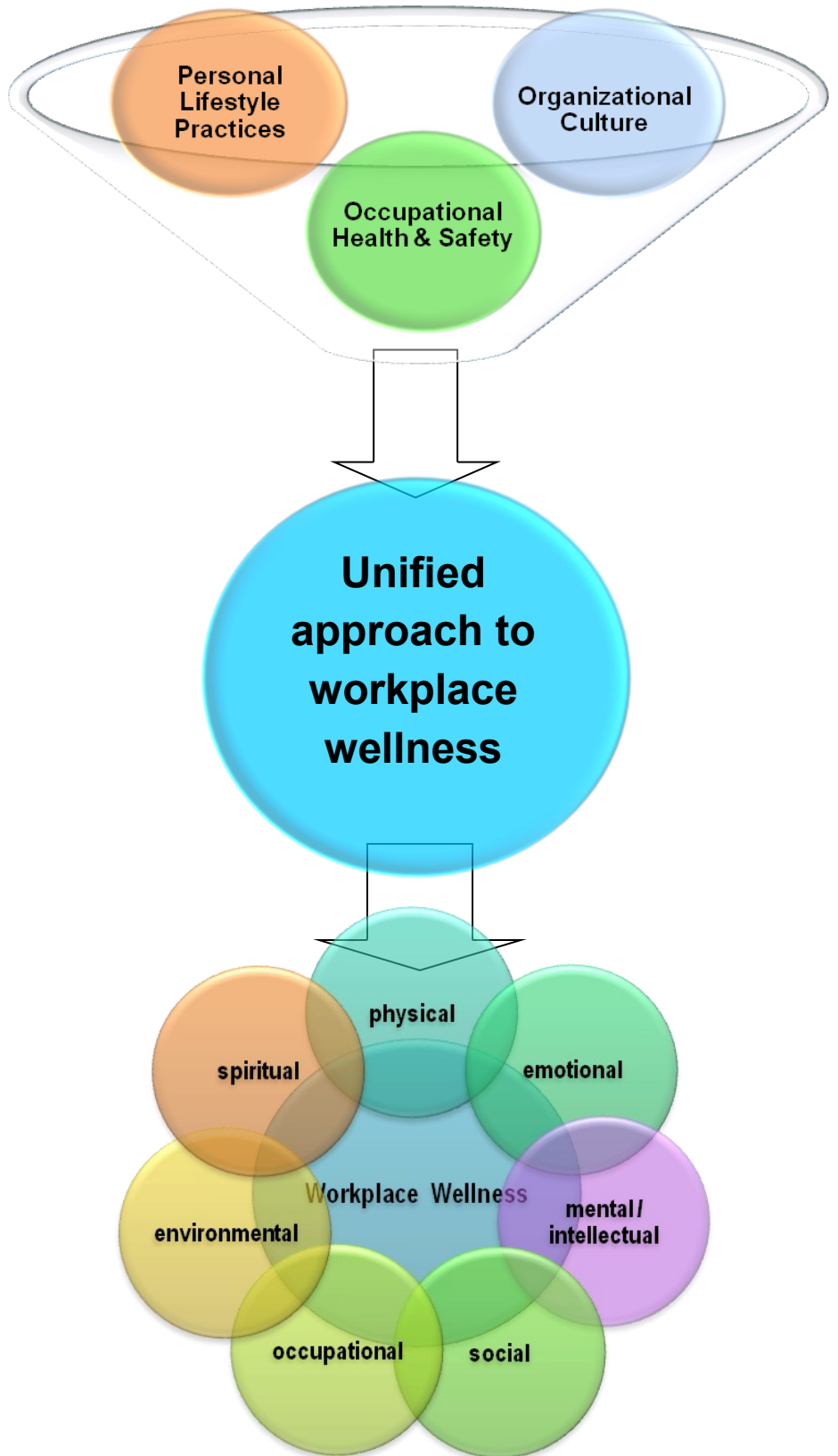
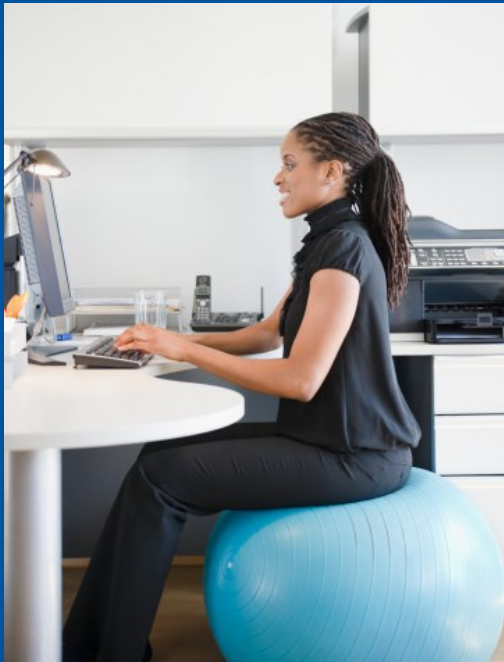
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We would also like to thank the Public Safety team from Madawaska region, who was a great help and inspiration to the development of this guide.





Introduction



This guide is an initiative of the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities.

The mission of the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, through the provincial Live well, be well strategy, is to motivate and empower individuals, families, schools, communities, and workplaces to increase their awareness of, participation in, and commitment to wellness (New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy 2009–2013).

The wellness of New Brunswickers is influenced by interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment, and individual behaviors. Collectively, these represent the determinants of health.

What is wellness?



Wellness is a universal phenomenon that is important to the quality of life of all human beings. It is also an ongoing process to enhance the many dimensions of wellness that enable people to reach and maintain their full potential and contribute to their communities.

There are **seven dimensions of wellness**. Closely interconnected, they contribute to a person's overall sense of well-being.

Emotional dimension: The ability to understand ourselves and cope with the challenges life can bring.

Mental/intellectual dimension: The ability to open our minds to new ideas and experiences that can be applied to personal decisions, interpersonal relations, and community betterment.

Physical dimension: The ability to maintain a healthy quality of life that allows us to get through our daily activities without undue fatigue or physical stress.

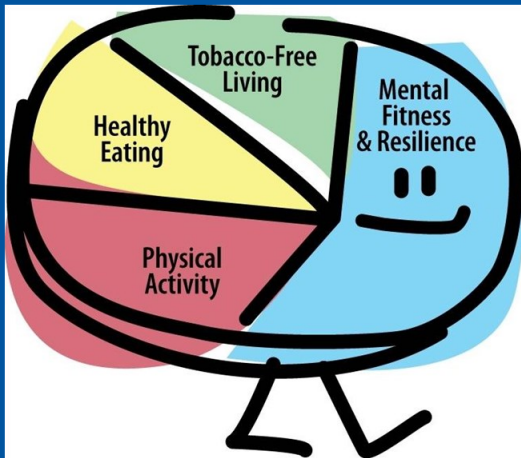
Social dimension: The ability to relate to and connect with other people.

Spiritual dimension: The ability to live in peace and harmony.

Occupational dimension: The ability to get personal fulfillment from our jobs or careers while still maintaining balance in our lives.

Environmental dimension: The ability to recognize our own responsibility for the environment (the quality of the air, the water, and the land) that surrounds us.

New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy



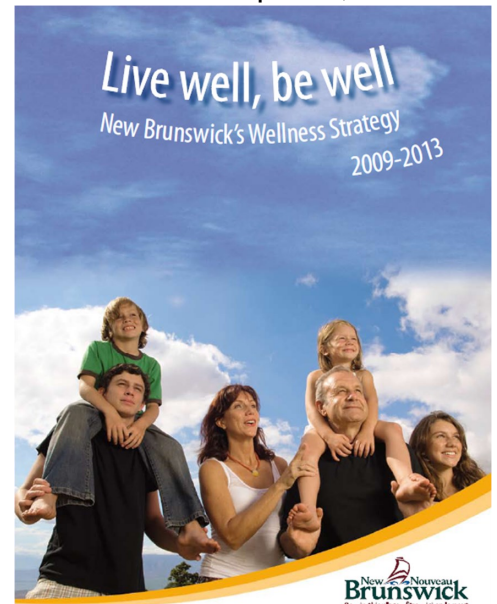
A picture is worth a thousand words...

This image shows the key role that mental fitness plays in our ability to make positive changes in our lives. Mental fitness leads to healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco-free living.

The new and improved Wellness Strategy focuses on wellness pillars related to healthy lifestyles: healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free living. Fundamental to positive behavior change in all the wellness pillars, Mental Fitness and Resilience addresses needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness.

One of the objectives of the Wellness Strategy is to improve the mental fitness and resilience of New Brunswickers.

Improved mental fitness and resilience prepares us for positive lifestyle changes around healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco-free living. In contrast, when the three basic needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) are not met, individuals are at higher risk for experiencing difficulties related to their emotional, social, and physical growth.



What does the research indicate?



Over the past 30 years Edward Deci and Richard Ryan have developed a theory of motivation called the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The mental fitness approach is based on the SDT basic psychological needs of Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness (CAR).

Extensive research by the SDT community, has explored the relevance of creating an environment that encourage the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs in workplaces. Adopting a CAR approach in workplaces has been shown to:

- Improve employee productivity and performance rates
- Increase employee engagement and motivation
- Demonstrate improvements in attendance rates
- Improve employee moral and job satisfaction
- Demonstrate fewer turn-over rates
- Decrease oppositional attitudes and behaviours such as harassment and bullying
- Lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression
- Increase positive interpersonal relationships (Stone, Deci, Ryan, 2008)

Mental fitness is also closely related to physical health. Research shows a link between subjective feelings of happiness and good health, this holds true even after controlling for chronic disease, smoking, drinking habits, and weight excess (Goodwin et al., 2000). Being active in the company of others provides a sense of belonging and mutual support. Being physically active and eating healthy foods are ways to stay mentally fit.

Evidence has shown that promoting the physical and psychological wellness of employees in combination helps to improve the well-being of the whole population over the long term. This means engaging and educating those managers and senior leaders who influence employees, hence the importance of working with workplaces to enhance the workplace culture so that wellness is seen as a priority (Stone, Deci, Ryan, 2008).

Since the immediate supervisor can have a big influence on their employees (Watson Wyatt, 2005; Conference Board of Canada, 2005), the immediate supervisor can play a key role in satisfying the Basic Psychological Needs (CAR) of the employees. Supervisors and managers have the ability to learn and adopt an approach (behaviors and manners) that will increase the satisfaction of the needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness in the workplace (Forest, Dagenais-Desmarais, Crevier-Breau, Bergeron & Girouard, 2010; Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004).

In return, when the Basic Psychological Needs of employees are met, they are committed to their work (Gagné & Koestner, 2002), experience a greater level of satisfaction at work (Richer, Blanchard & Vallerand, 2002), and have are more effective and perform better at work (Cropanzo, & Wright, 1999; Judge, Thoreseen, Bono & Patton, 2001).

How managers set the stage in the workplace matters to employees' physical, and mental health. Managers play an important role in building and sustaining healthy work environments.

Why use this guide?

This guide is an initiative of the Department of Health and Inclusive Communities.

This initiative encourages a paradigm shift from an intervention and prevention model to a development and promotion model which will have a positive impact on the workplace and the employees within it.

The goal is to help GNB workplaces adopt a mental fitness approach that will in turn improve the mental fitness and resilience of employees. Through the provision of this guide and accompanying workshop. This guide will empower supervisors and managers to have a positive impact on the workplace environment and employees.

Objectives of the guide

The objectives of the guide are:

- To make supervisors, managers and employees more aware and accountable of their responsibility to promote mental fitness and resilience;
- To establish linkages between workplace wellness and mental fitness, and resilience;
- To provide a resource on mental fitness and resilience to complement all workplace wellness initiatives;
- To suggest strategies in accordance with the self-determination theory that will meet employees' psychological needs.



PART 1

Theory and research

Mental fitness

Mental fitness refers to a state of psychosocial well-being that goes beyond the absence of disease or sickness. It means having a positive sense of how we feel, think, and act, which improves our ability to enjoy life. It contributes to our innate ability to self-determine.

Mental fitness is experienced when our needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness are met.

“It is a person’s style of thinking that determines mental fitness, more than genetics, intelligence, or any other single factor.” (Shatté, A., 2002)

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to efficiently respond to life’s challenges, and effectively restore and sustain a state of balance. It is the “ability to persevere and adapt when things go awry.” (Reivich, K and A. Shatté, 2002).

According to the Self-Determination Theory *“when people have had their basic psychological needs satisfied developmentally, they will have the inner resources to be resilient when they face perils and agonies...”* (Deci, 2013)

Improved mental fitness and resilience creates readiness for positive lifestyle changes around healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco-free living. Schools, communities, homes, and workplaces need to better understand mental fitness and resilience concepts in order to integrate them into their philosophies, initiatives and daily lifestyles.

Mental fitness in the workplace increases...

- performance
- productivity
- attendance rates
- pro-social behaviors
- health and wellbeing
- achievements
- success
- growth
- efficiency
- empowerment
- engagement
- conflict resolution
- solution finding

Some effects of increased resilience in the workplace ...

- Offers an alternative to conflicts which pit employees against one another
- Better interpersonal relationships
- Sense of employee and organizational well-being
- Enhanced culture of trust
- More effective communication channels
- Enhanced sharing of thoughts and ideas

What is self-determination?

Meeting psychological needs facilitates self-determination in individuals, which leads them to adopt attitudes and behaviors that contribute to their wellness and the wellness of others.

Self-determination is the idea that individuals have the ability to reflect upon, formulate, and act on personal decisions that contribute to emotional and physical growth.

<http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory>

Self-determination theory

In accordance with self-determination theory (SDT), the mental fitness of an individual is facilitated by a social environment that helps meet the three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness (CAR). Meeting these three needs makes individuals more autonomous in their behavior and therefore contributes to their wellness and overall health.

Several scientific papers reveal that meeting these needs is associated with resilience and the emotional well-being of people, as well as their ability to participate in decisions and actions for a healthy lifestyle.

Supporting individuals, workplaces, and communities to feel connected, independent, and capable enables them to make healthier choices and take more responsibility for their personal wellness and the wellness of others. (Source: Deci, E. and R. Ryan, 1985 and 1991; Ryan, R., 1995; Ryan, R. and E. Deci, 2000)

In contrast, when these needs are not met, individuals are at higher risk for experiencing difficulties related to their emotional, social, and physical growth. [See Resources: Health and Education Research Group (HERG)]



THE THREE BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

COMPETENCE

I have strengths and talents that are recognized by myself and the workplace.

When I use them to meet organisational goals and help my team I feel a sense of value and accomplishment.

AUTONOMY

I feel I have a voice and choices within my workload. I am able to contribute to decisions in my workplace.

My supervisors and co-workers support me in having choices and a voice.

RELATEDNESS

I have satisfying and supportive relationships in my workplace.

My supervisor supports and encourages me within my work and I support and encourage my co-workers.

Adopting a mental fitness approach in the workplace requires, time, patience, and good listening skills. Mastering these skills will lead to employees:

- being acknowledged for their strengths
- providing constructive feedback and contributions
- demonstrating improved alliances and engagement



What is the link between mental fitness and engagement?

What is engagement?

Competence: an engaged employee feels that he has the ability to influence important outcomes of the organization. He feels proud, loyal, empowered and valued.

Autonomy: an engaged employee has a sense of choice and is self-determined when completing a task. He will go the extra mile to finish work, speak highly of their employer and make decisions confidently.

Relatedness: an engaged employee has the experience of having satisfying and supportive relationships in the workplace. He faces fewer conflicts, is more innovative, and show higher productivity.

Healthy work environments are critical in the prevention of stress and other absences from work. Managers play an important role in building and sustaining healthy work environments. A workplace that promotes a mental fitness approach increases its capacity to positively impact employee needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness (CAR).

When managers and staff build effective communication channels through frequent two-way communication, an environment is created where employees feel comfortable discussing challenges and concerns

Setting performance and behavioral expectations then giving employees the autonomy and flexibility to problem solve and make decisions over how their work gets done is critical to employee engagement and the achievement of work-life balance.

Building a resilient workplace, helps employees to easily adapt to change, overcome adversity, be more engaged and productive and can result in substantial benefits for both the employer and the employee.

“Leaders who are credible, respectful and fair are leaders who engage employees. When the employer/leaders show that employees are valued and supported this same attitude permeates into most interpersonal workplace relationships, which is good for everyone’s mental health and productivity.”
(Anne Morgan, Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, 2012)

According to the 2010 Public service employee engagement survey, the most important work factor was “**Being treated with respect and consideration**” (49% respondents) which is directly connected to Relatedness (feel respected) and Competence (feel valued).

The second most important work factor was “doing **challenging and interesting work**” (45% of respondents). This factor is related to competence (Challenging work) and Autonomy (Interesting work).

One important factor to address in the workplace is for employees to **receive meaningful recognition for work well done** and is related to the need for competence. Employees want to feel that their work is meaningful. A simple way for supervisor to satisfy that need is to simply explain how their work is having an impact on the workplace. Also, supervisors have the opportunity to increase that factor by offering daily positive feedback to their employee, focusing on the strengths and skills of the employee and offering immediate positive feedback when the employee is accomplishing the work (Forest et al., 2010).

In conclusion, the Self-determination theory indicate, high employees engagement is an outcome of fulfilling the needs for Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness (CAR). If a manager or supervisor want to increase the engagement levels of their employees they have to work at the root cause(s) of the disengagement which is either one or more need(s) not being satisfied in the workplace environment.

What about motivation?

Intrinsically motivated employees buy in to workplace goals, values, and structures, and are inspired by their passion, pleasure, and interest for their work.



According to Rolland Viau, motivation is an essential condition for success.

He also defines it as follows:

“Motivation is a dynamic concept originating in the perceptions an employee has of himself or herself and his or her environment, prompting him or her to choose an activity, engage in it and persevere in order to attain a goal.”

R. Viau (1996, p.7)

In the SDT approach (Deci & Ryan, 2000), different types of motivation are identified in relation to an individual’s level of self-determination.

The following table shows the link between the level of motivation and self-determination.

Behaviour	non self-determined		self-determined			
Locus of Motivation	None	Not-internalised	Internalised			
Type of Motivation	<i>Amotivation</i>	<i>Extrinsic Motivation</i>			<i>Intrinsic Motivation</i>	
Type of Regulation	Non-regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation

Source: Adapted from Deci and Ryan (2000)

What is intrinsic motivation (IM)?

Intrinsic motivation (IM) is defined as the tendency to engage in activities for the pleasure and satisfaction inherent in doing them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A person is intrinsically motivated when he or she undertakes an activity voluntarily and out of interest. According to Deci and Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 2000), IM stems from an individual's need to feel competent and self-determined.

What is extrinsic motivation (EM)?

Extrinsic motivation (EM) underlies behaviors that are performed for instrumental reasons. Extrinsically motivated individuals are not necessarily interested in the activity per se. Rather, they engage in it to experience pleasant consequences or to avoid unpleasant ones. (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

What does the research say about the motivational atmosphere in the workplace?

According to Sarrazin, Tessier and Trouilloud (2006), the most self-determined types of motivation are associated with positive consequences (attention, pleasure, persistence in learning, strong performance), while the less self-determined types are associated with negative consequences (quitting early, weak performance, isolating coworkers, conflict).

In the SDT approach, social factors have a major influence over self-determination in that they can facilitate or hinder the expression of the three psychological needs (CAR).

Employees show self-determined motivation when they undertake tasks:

- for the pleasure they derive from accomplishing them, for the pleasure of mastering them, or for the pleasure of learning something new. (intrinsic motivation)
- that are in line with their needs and values (integrated extrinsic motivation)
- they feel importance in reaching personal and professional goals (identified extrinsic motivation)

Employees show a lack of self-determined motivation when they undertake tasks:

- because they feel obligated to perform, for personal rewards (promotions, vacations, privileges, etc.), or to avoid punishment (external regulation)
- because of internal pressure, such as feelings of guilt (introjected regulation)
- by resigning themselves to complete a task and not seeing any link between their actions and their results (amotivation)

PART 2

From theory to practice

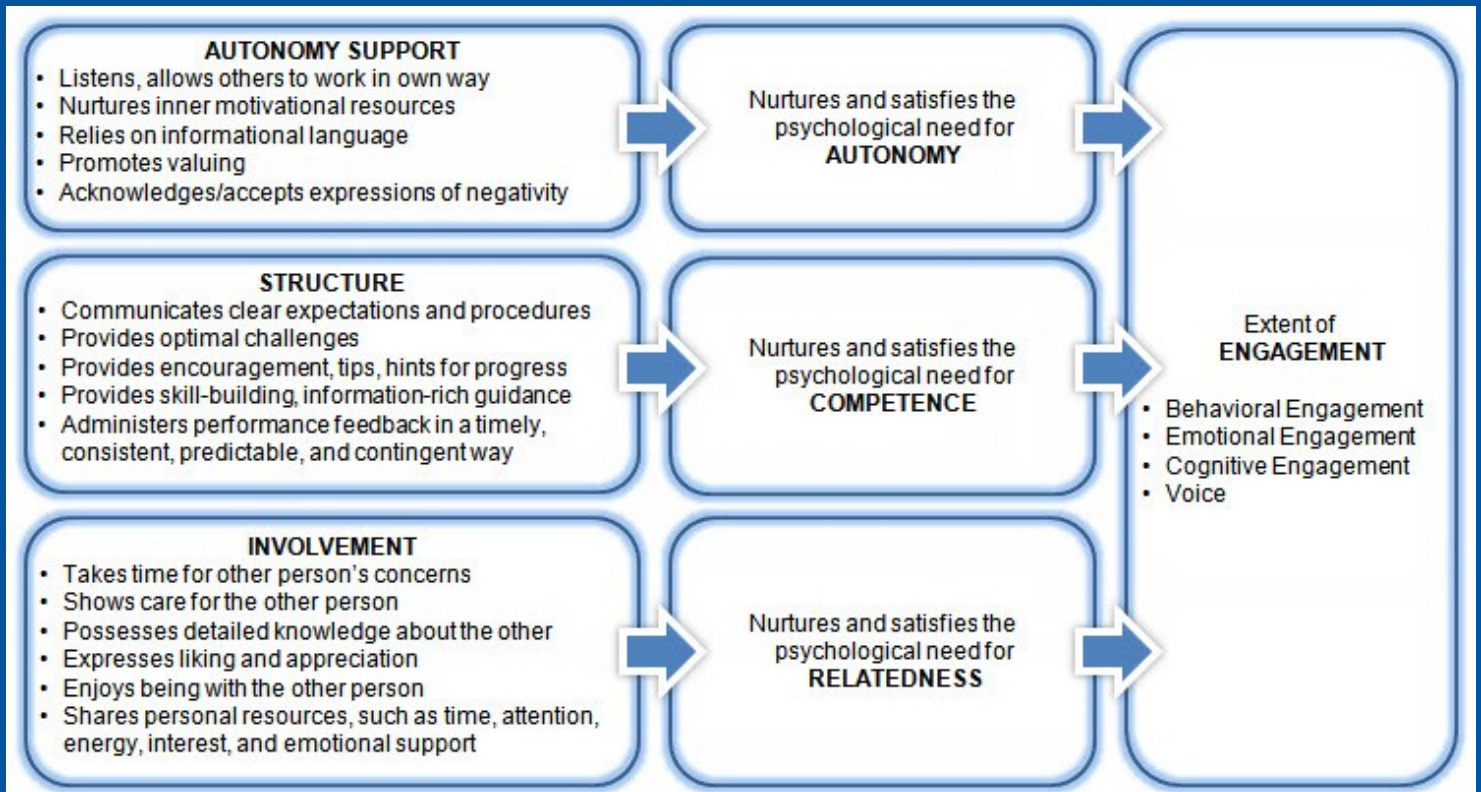
Employee well-being is higher when managers foster and sustain an autonomy-supportive working environment, because this climate facilitates the three basic needs (CAR) and employee motivation and engagement.

How is self-determination theory (SDT) applied in the workplace?

To better understand the impact of the SDT approach on motivation, behavior and learning, it is essential to recognize the importance of the relationship between the manager, the employee and his or her social environment.

The links between the SDT approach, the workplace, and mental fitness and resilience are explained below:

The workplace...a place to thrive and be well!



Reeve, J. (2009). 5th edition. *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*. New York: Wiley Press.

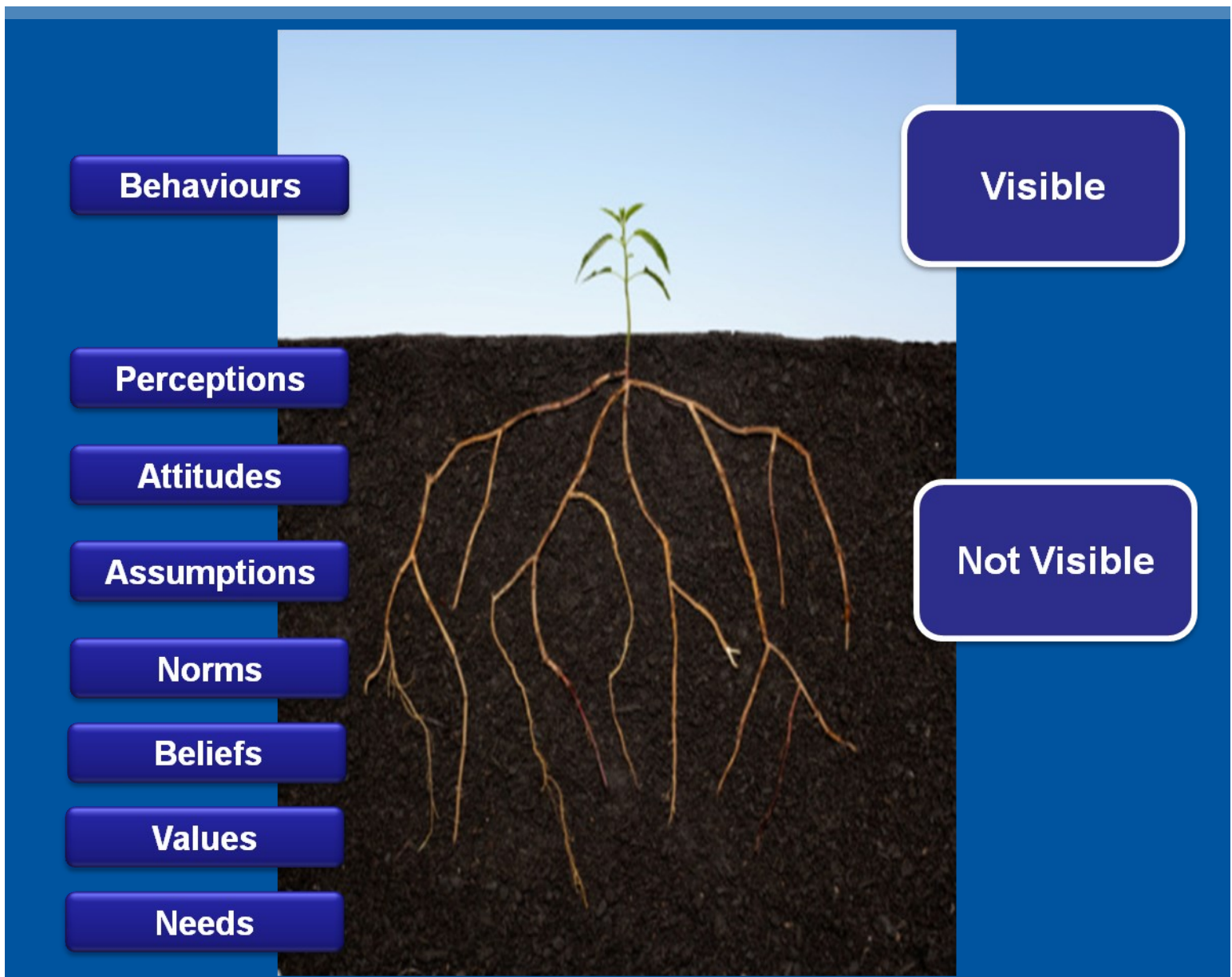
A CAR APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE BEHAVIORS WE SEE IN THE WORKPLACE

Based on the current level of understanding with respect to the relationship between SDT and mental fitness, workplaces have a social responsibility that goes beyond employment.

When managers face challenges or conflict with employees, they can choose to either:

- A) **See the employee as a problem:** Managers adopt an approach built on assumptions that can block opportunities for change or to find solutions; **OR**
- B) **See the employee with needs that can be satisfied with a CAR approach.**

Managers have the opportunity to identify the needs that are not satisfied in the workplace and address the **root causes** that contributes to high levels of stress, low productivity and low levels of engagement.



How can you introduce the concepts of mental fitness and resilience without adding a new program?

Controlling work environments diminish the CAR needs and create situations where motivation in the workplace is to obtain rewards which are external to the work itself (i.e. promotions, financial benefits).

When work is performed to avoid guilt, or to feel like a good or worthy person, people experience work as an obligation and their feelings of self worth are diminished.

1. By creating an atmosphere in which perceived organizational support and management strategies help to meet the three basic psychological needs (CAR) while achieving the performance outcomes of the organization.

The mental fitness approach nurtures an interest in the intrinsic importance of work. This approach has been shown to link to better productivity gains especially in the complex, creative and solution based environment of today's workforce.

2. By integrating the three psychological needs (CAR) into the organizational culture, an environment which supports a more proactive and more psychologically adjusted workforce is created.

Integrating strategies into daily activities in the workplace

The boxes on the following pages suggest that strategies can be divided into two groups. The first category (communication/differences and diversity) is tied to the general atmosphere in the workplace. These strategies can be integrated into daily work activities. The second category (strength/competencies/collaboration/cooperation) is concerned with planned or occasional strategies that are more closely linked to clearly defined times in the work setting.

These suggestions reflect only a small portion of the information presented in the various resources that deal with the topics of motivation and self-determination theory.

COMMUNICATION

- Use the employees' first name.
- Give clear instructions.
- Explain why a task is important and to what it is connected.
- Check that employees have understood your instructions by having them repeat.
- Clearly explain the reasons for the limitations being set.
- Use appropriate and rich vocabulary.
- Use modelling and guided practice (employees and managers).
- Explain, practice, and adopt effective communication and listening techniques.
- Empower employees to express their ideas clearly.
- Get the employees to participate in the discussion.
- Listen to and consider employees' opinions when making decisions.
- Give words of encouragement, appreciation and support.
- Validate your perceptions with the employees.
- Identify and express feelings and emotions.
- Demonstrate pro-social attitudes such as saying hello, thank people for their good work, recognize skills.
- Build a rapport with employees.

STRENGTHS/COMPETENCIES

- Acknowledge and take into account employees' abilities.
- Assign task based on abilities.
- Encourage employees' involvement in a variety of task focusing on interests and preferences.
- Empower and encourage employees to make decisions.
- Encourage employees to find their own solutions to specific problems.
- Emphasize accountability and acceptance of consequences of one's choices.
- Give employees the opportunity to identify and use their strengths
- Allow employees the opportunity to experience success.
- Allow employees to see others experience success (modelling).
- Allow employees to receive words of encouragement and affirmation from others.
- Develop stress management skills.
- Promote the development of social skills.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY

- Use centres of interest.
- Give choices (work schedule, tasks, action plan, timeline, projects, etc.).
- Vary tasks within a given activity.
- Assign challenges based on employees' strengths.
- Take learning styles into account.
- Show respect for different kinds of intelligence.
- Accept differences.
- Emphasize acceptance of differences among employees.
- Allow and encourage inclusion – engage withdrawn employees.
- Focus on integration and social justice when employees are working in teams.

COLLABORATION/COOPERATION

- Involve employees in learning plans and make them active participants in their learning.
- Post steps/instructions for a project to ensure they are visible and accessible.
- Encourage collaboration/cooperation.
- Suggest activities that foster interaction (initiatives, projects).
- Pair employees according to their needs and interests without regard to the intellectual strengths of individuals.
- Use a sociogram to understand relationships in your team and help with collaboration.
- Have employees use problem-solving and conflict-resolution steps.
- Get employees involved.

Occasional and Planned Strategies

As professionals, managers must be aware of the importance of taking a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach in the workplace.

DISCUSSION

- Ask open questions
- Invite participation
- Provide the time for employees to have their say
- Plan staff meetings
- Practice active listening
- Ask what's new?
- Acknowledge employee perspective
- Express gratitude

INTRAPERSONAL

- Encourage self-regulation
- Encourage employees to become autonomous by allowing them to choose their work methods
- Embrace the learning styles
- Share the information/knowledge to enhance competence and autonomy

EXTRAPERSONAL

- Show leadership
- Give responsibilities
- Offer choices within structure
- Organize activities involving the entire staff
- Provide clarification of responsibilities
- Work together for problem solving
- Show gratitude
- Provide positive feedback
- Provide Non judgmental feedback about problems
- Acknowledge initiatives
- Minimize comparisons with others
- Be thankful: Today I'd like to say thanks to ... for ...
- Do friendly things just for the sake of it

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

- Support and organize workplace wellness activities
- Participate in wellness profile assessments
- Encourage physical activity
- Promote healthy eating
- Provide a smoke free living

What does a mentally fit employee look like?

Portrait of competency

- I am able to use my strengths and talents constructively
- I have the feeling that I have accomplished something
- I feel efficient and capable
- I like challenges; they do not frighten me
- I am motivated and interested
- I persevere
- I make an effort when faced with a new task
- I am committed
- I feel valued
- I am optimistic
- I am proud of myself
- I believe in myself
- I have high self-esteem

Portrait of autonomy

- I am curious and interested in learning
- I agree to make an effort at work
- I put the necessary time into my learning
- I am motivated
- I feel free to make decisions
- I make choices that are important to me
- I accept responsibility for, and the consequences of my choices
- I feel free to do, or not to do, certain things
- I can find solutions to certain problems
- I am responsible for my behavior
- I respect myself
- I am respectful of others

Portrait of relatedness

- I like going to work: I feel good there
- I have a place within my team and within the workplace
- I have friends in my workplace
- I am committed and involved
- I like interacting with others
- I take part in a variety of activities or committees
- I am enthusiastic
- I feel encouraged and supported by others
- I feel that I am liked and accepted
- I respect others
- I am respected
- I am generous with others, and I pay attention to them
- I help others
- I am authentic in my relationships with others

Conclusion

The approach proposed in this document is designed to engage managers and employees both actively and interactively by having them experience a work culture that enhances their mental fitness and provide build their resilience. The workplace is viewed as an environment where employees are:

- inter-related
- incorporating the basic psychological needs (CAR) into their leadership styles
- helps employees become aware of their own identity and their interdependent relationships with others in their work and social environments.

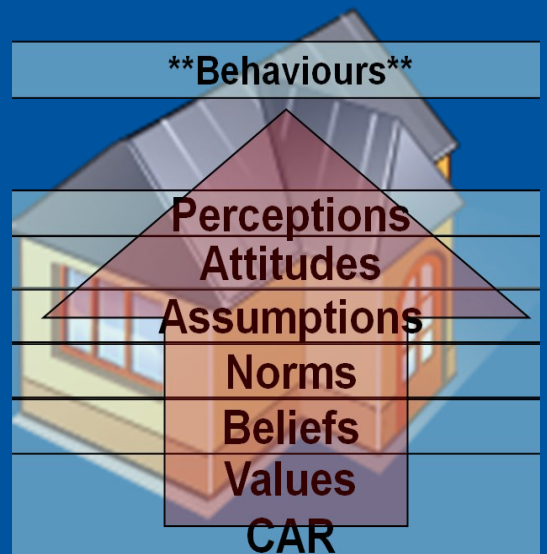
The aim of the proposed strategies is to enable employees to assimilate their knowledge and expand their awareness of mental fitness and resilience so they can become engaged, productive and healthy citizens who are ready to meet the challenges they face in the work setting.

The Department of Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities would like to see this document shared with workplaces throughout the province as a tool for adopting a mental fitness approach and fulfilling the employees needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness.

The proposed strategies encourage the creation of an environment that helps all employees develop and optimize their mental fitness, their resilience, and by extension, their contribution to the workforce

“Evidence supports the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness for productivity, creativity, and happiness [...] employees who perceived greater autonomy support from their managers felt greater need satisfaction at work, performed better at their jobs and had lower levels of anxiety and depression. Many applications in health care also show physical and mental benefits form meeting core psychological needs.”

Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2008 p.5



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3. http://wellness.ucr.edu/seven_dimensions.html (in English only)
4. www.unbf.ca/education/herg
5. www.selfdeterminationtheory.org
6. Mental Health Commission of Canada , Psychological Health and Safety, An Action Guide for Employers (January 2012)





CAR APPROACH

Guide to improve mental fitness and resilience in the workplace