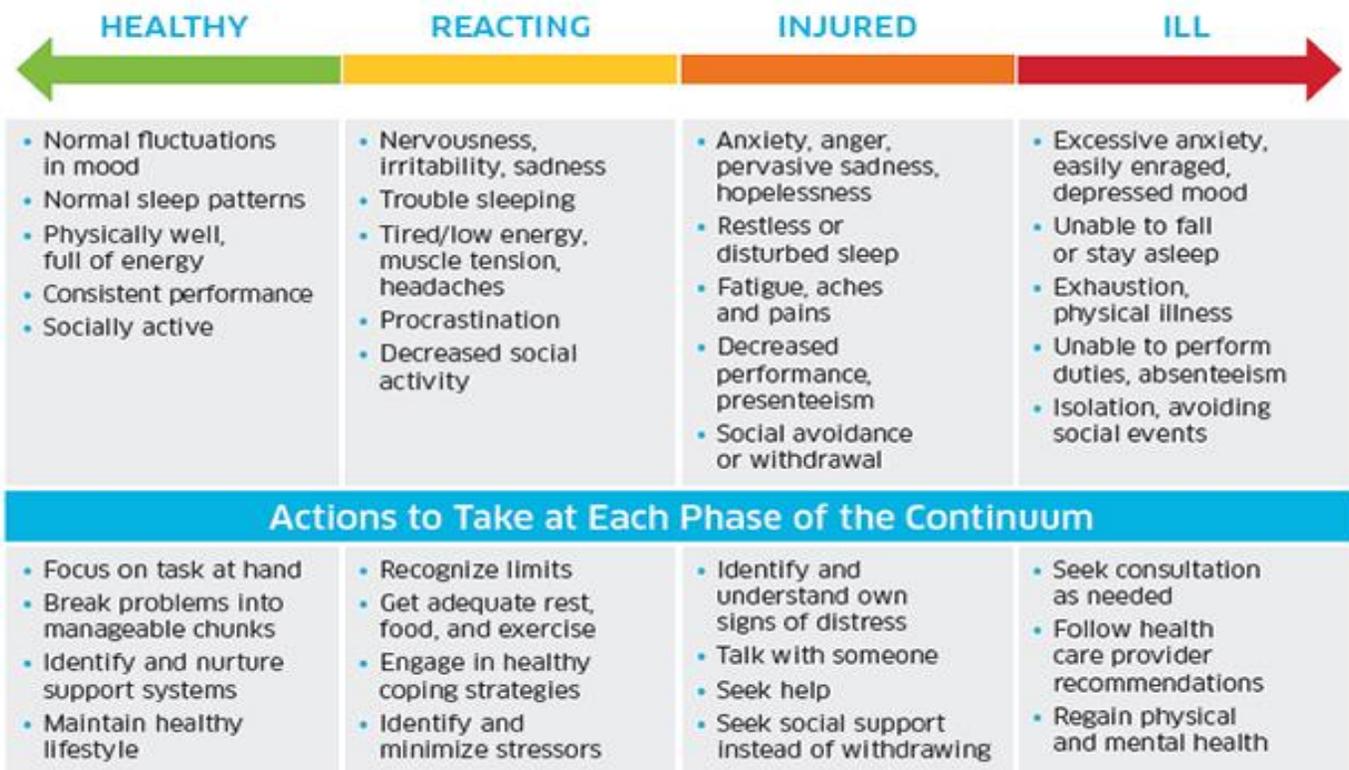




Maslow's hierarchy of needs

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL



Starting the Conversation

It can be difficult to know how to start the conversation when you suspect – or know – that a mental health challenge, disorder or illness is a possible factor in something you are working on. A steward may ask you to speak to a member who might be facing discipline or termination, a return to work situation, or discussion about a possible accommodation.

Here is an approach that can help:

1. Who is the best person to have the conversation?

Think about:

- Privacy and confidentiality: Who else knows? Who needs to know? Who doesn't need to know?
- Your relationship with the member – is there trust?
- Whether there is another steward or union executive member with a better relationship with the member.
- Who might the member respond well to? Who might they not respond well to?
- Your own state of mental health and availability at the time.

2. Use the “5 Step Process” (based on a CMHA tool) to start the conversation (see next page).

Know that the person might or might not agree to talk with you. Also, it might take more than one conversation.

This isn't about the outcome, it's the process that's important.

3. After the conversation, follow up on any solutions that you discuss. Get back to the member.

4. No matter how the conversation goes, try to check in with the member at a later time.

*The 5 Step Process

1. **“I’ve noticed”/“It’s been brought to my attention”...**
(followed by factual, neutral, non judgemental observation)
2. **Listen....“Tell me more”**
3. **“I’m worried”....**
(followed by something that you’re worried will happen if we don’t address what’s being noticed)
4. **Listen.... Talk back and forth.... “Is there anything going on?” ...**
5. **Find possible options together....**
(followed for example by getting agreement to deal with the employer, or to talk to a doctor, or share resources)

*Note: This gives you a general idea of how a conversation might go. The most important things are to listen and to stress that the union is on their side.

When someone discloses a mental illness

Listen...

- Acknowledge the risk they are taking.
- Listen. Let them tell their story.
- Reassure and refer.
- Monitor your reaction.
- Refrain from counselling.
- Ask the person what they need.
- Discuss next steps and the possibility of an accommodation.

What not to say

“You can do it!”

“You could cheer up if you tried.”

“I’ve been there” (unless you have been there.)

Don’t try to diagnose.

When someone is returning to work

Silence can be hurtful. Treat mental illness like any other illness:

- “It’s good to have you back.”
- “You’re looking well.”
- “Are you feeling better?”
- “Let me know if you need a hand.”

Note: One of the things that you can do in your role as a LCA, is to model this behaviour and make sure the person returning feels welcome. Always follow up to see how they are doing in the weeks to come.

*Revised from the CUPE Mental Health Toolkit for Stewards developed with CMHA & PSAC

Resources – COVID-19 Related:

1. United Way Winnipeg Covid-19 Union Resources:
<https://unitedwaywinnipeg.ca/covid-19-labour-union-resources/>
2. Canadian Labour Congress Covid-19 Resource Centre:
<https://canadianlabour.ca/home/covid-19-response/>
3. Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Covid Resources:
<https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>
4. United Way Covid Responses:
Winnipeg - <https://unitedwaywinnipeg.ca/covid-19-fund-launch/>
Saskatoon - <https://unitedwaysaskatoon.ca/covid-19/>
Regina - <https://www.unitedwayregina.ca/servlet/eAndar.article/246/New-Homepage>
Calgary - <https://calgaryunitedway.org/covid-response-fund/>
Edmonton - <https://www.myunitedway.ca/covid-19-info/>