Title
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Is work just another 4-letter word? Some would agree, asserting that work is nothing more than a burden to bear. They even may have adopted as their anthem the O’Jays’s song, “But as soon as Friday rolls around, I lay all my weekly burdens down.” To this group, work is something that must be endured.

On the other hand, there are those who view work as an opportunity to meet their hierarchy of needs that begin with group, work is something that must be endured. They understand what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described with, “All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.” Work has the potential to offer dignity and empowerment.

So, who is right? Perhaps, both groups are. If we are in healthy work environments, we can fulfill both basic and higher-order needs. But that is a resounding “if.” There seems to be a constant struggle between creating a healthy environment and sacrificing it in the name of efficiency. For example, the Industrial Age exposed workers to physically unsafe environments. This catalyzed labour advocates to rise up to fight for safer physical conditions for workers. Their legacy is the ongoing development of standards to create working conditions that increase the likelihood that workers return from their shifts intact.

The new century ushered in new environments in which many jobs no longer require heavy lifting with our backs but with our brains. They call for workers to absorb significant quantities of information, to digest it, and to synthesize all of it to successfully problem-solve. Our current age commodifies knowledge and information to the extent that their production and use has increasingly exposed a large proportion of workers to work factors that threaten to compromise their emotional and mental well-being. With this, the Information Age introduced the opportunity to broaden the scope for healthy work conditions.

Around the globe, the mental well-being of workers began to become of interest. Leading North America, in 2013, Canada introduced its Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace standard. In this issue, Sheikh and colleagues evaluate the extent to which these standards have been implemented. A strength of their study is the participation of 1010 employers. Furthermore, among their participants, there was variation in company size and province. Their findings demonstrate one of the challenges to achieving change—lack of awareness. This may highlight one of the main limitations of the standard—it is voluntary.

As organizations face competing priorities, those that are not mandatory may always take second place to those that are. As with other types of occupational health and safety regulations, additional incentives that include both carrots and sticks may be needed. At the same time, this means that metrics must progress to the point that just as we know what a maximum lift load should be, we need a measure of maximum workforce that organizations can apply.

The standard recognizes that addressing stigma is important to creating workplaces that are psychologically healthy and safe. However, the evidence for effective workplace-based antistigma education is in its infancy. The second article in this issue reports the findings of a new education program called Beyond Silence. A strength of the study by Moll et al. is its use of randomization in the study design. One of the barriers to building a strong evidence base in this field of study has been the difficulty that researchers often encounter when attempting to convince employers to agree to the use of randomization.

A second interesting aspect of the study is that it tests the new program using an active control design in which the comparison program was Mental Health First Aid. Both programs provided intensive training (12 hours of in-class training versus 2 days of training, respectively). They report significant changes with respect to mental health literacy, attitudes, and stigma for participants in both programs. However, they did not observe changes for either program with regards to behaviours.

In one sense, the results of both articles are encouraging. They show there are organizations interested in psychological health and safety as well as in helping the field to progress. At the same time, the findings highlight an ongoing challenge; it is difficult to change behaviour. Part of the difficulty lies in the complexity of the problem; the decision to adopt new behaviour may not rest solely with the individual entities but with the environment as well. This suggests that a multipronged approach is necessary to achieving behaviour change. Indeed, the standard seems to acknowledge that psychological health and safety are multidimensional.
The fact that information is not sufficient to inspire change\textsuperscript{5} calls attention to the gaps that research has the opportunity to fill. For example, in addition to education and how it is delivered, what are additional critical factors and the magnitudes of their contributions to change? Kelly and Barker\textsuperscript{5} suggest that a nudge (i.e., positive reinforcement and suggestion) towards change can be effective in supporting change. This begs the following question: in addition to education, what are the effective roles of nudging, legislation, and experience to facilitating behavioural change in individuals and organizations? Ultimately, how can we create more workplaces in which work is less burdensome and workers leave each day feeling satisfaction about what they accomplished and how they accomplished it?

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References