

How's Your Workplace Mental Health?

Mental health plays an important role in everyday life and especially at work. A workplace that provides the daily essentials* of mental health

- helps people feel good about themselves and to do well at work
- includes and supports all workers
- is something everyone has a right to, both socially and legally

Try this simple quiz to see if you're getting the "daily essentials" to maintain your workplace wellbeing. For more information on each of the daily essentials, download *The Daily Essentials of Workplace Mental Health: An Occupational Therapy Guide*, available at www.caot.ca in the National Occupational Therapy Month section.

Please answer the following questions:

1. When I am feeling stressed, I can talk to some of my colleagues about it. **True/False**
2. I feel that I have the skills required to do my job well. **True/False**
3. I often stay home from work because I don't like my job. **True/False**
4. I would ask my boss for reasonable mental health-related accommodations if I felt I needed them and they were feasible. (For example, requesting a quiet place to work so I can concentrate better, or working flexible hours so I can work when I have more energy.) **True/False**
5. I fit in at work and feel accepted for who I am. **True/False**
6. I am often distracted at work by thoughts and worries of what's going on in the rest of my life. **True/False**
7. If I felt overwhelmed, stressed or burnt out at work, I would know who to turn to at my workplace for help and support. **True/False**
8. People in my workplace generally respect each other and consider others' priorities along with their own. **True/False**
9. I would be afraid to talk to my supervisor about a mental health issue. **True/False**
10. I feel that my work contributions are valuable to my organization, and I understand how my role fits within the "big picture." **True/False**
11. I feel well suited to my job in terms of my interests and natural talents. **True/False**
12. I often feel overwhelmed by how much work I have to do and have trouble keeping my stress level under control. **True/False**

*Based on a literature review regarding mental health and mental illness in the workplace (Cockburn, Kirsh, Krupa, & Gewurtz, 2004. *Occupational Therapy Now*, 6(5)7-14.)

Use this chart to calculate your score:

Question number	True	False	Question number	True	False
1	1	0	7	1	0
2	1	0	8	1	0
3	0	1	9	0	1
4	1	0	10	1	0
5	1	0	11	1	0
6	0	1	12	0	1

Now find out how you're doing with each of the four daily essentials of workplace mental health!

Daily essential number 1: Education

Add up your scores for questions 1, 9, and 12

If you scored 0–1: Danger! You're ignoring your mental health and are headed for burnout. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your colleagues, supervisor, or someone else you trust when you feel overburdened; it's healthy to air your concerns! You might also consider consulting an occupational therapist, who can teach you how to better plan and pace your work.

If you scored 2–3: Good work! You generally keep your stress level at bay and feel comfortable turning to your colleagues for support. You can continue to manage your workplace mental health and help your coworkers do the same by learning more about depression, stress and mental illness. Consider consulting an occupational therapist (visit www.otworks.ca and click on "OT Finder") to deliver an on-site workshop at your organization.

Daily essential number 2: Job Matching

Add up your scores for questions 2, 3, and 11

If you scored 0–1: Are you sure in the right job? You may lack motivation at work because your job doesn't suit your interests or long-term goals. Consider consulting an occupational therapist, who can help you determine what career might better suit you. If you do want to stay in your current field, try taking some specialized training or making some other changes so you will feel better matched to your position.

If you scored 2–3: It's great that you are satisfied with your job and have chosen a field matches your skills and interests. Make sure to keep your knowledge and skills up to date to help you move toward long-term career goals. If you ever decide it's time for a career change, consider consulting an occupational therapist to help you choose another field that you'll find satisfying and rewarding.

Daily essential number 3: Ongoing Support

Add up your scores for questions 4, 6, and 7

If you scored 0–1: You don't have to tackle every problem all on your own! If you are feeling swamped by the demands of your job and your personal life, you could likely benefit from consulting your Employee Assistance Program or an occupational therapist, who can help you establish a better work-life balance. It's important to seek support *before* your mental health is affected to the point where you'll need to take time off!

If you scored 2–3: Good for you — you aren't afraid to ask for help when things get a little harried. The support you have both in and out of the workplace will assist you in managing your stress levels and in maintaining good mental health. If you ever do find yourself feeling stranded, though, consider consulting an occupational therapist who can help you balance work-related and personal issues.

Daily essential number 4: Positive Work Culture

Add up your scores for questions 5, 8, and 10

0–1: Your work environment is unhealthy and is causing you undue stress. It's time to take charge and improve the situation because everyone has a right — both socially and legally — to be respected and accepted at work. If you have trouble getting along with coworkers, consider seeing an occupational therapist or other health professional for training in assertiveness and conflict resolution. You might also ask your employer to invite an occupational therapist to conduct a group workshop to improve organizational communication.

2–3: You work in a positive environment where you feel valued and included, which is great for your mental health! A friendly, open atmosphere where people respect each other also helps everyone do their job better. Congratulations!

October 2004 is National Occupational Therapy Month, the annual awareness initiative of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists and its affiliate occupational therapy organizations. This year's theme is Mental Health in the Workplace.

- **For more information about Occupational Therapy Month, occupational therapy and workplace mental health,** visit Canada's occupational therapy resource site at www.otworks.ca or call (800)434-2268, ext. 225.
- **To locate an occupational therapist,** visit www.otworks.ca and click on "OT Finder."

Please note: This is not intended to be either a diagnosis or treatment. If you are frequently feeling stressed at work or feel overwhelmed by workplace demands, please consider an appointment with an occupational therapist or visit your health provider.