

Protecting Mental Health at Work
the role of Canada's new National Standard on
Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

George Brown College

“Humanizing the Workplace” 2013

Martin Shain S.J.D.

What is a Standard?

A yardstick, established by a recognized authority, that allows progress toward a desired goal to be assessed or measured.

What kind of Standard is this one?

CSA Z1003/BNQ 9700 sets out the requirements for achieving a psychologically safe and healthy workplace

It is a new **standard of care** in the workplace directed at how we behave toward one another

It is voluntary (at present)

Creating and sustaining a Psychologically Safe Workplace = a key goal of the Standard

A psychologically safe workplace is:

- One that **allows no [significant]harm or injury** to employee mental health in negligent, reckless or intentional ways.
- One in which every reasonable effort is made to protect the mental health of employees [due diligence]

Why is a Standard needed?

- Harm is being done to workers that could be prevented or significantly reduced
- It is called “mental injury”
- Liability for mental injury is a quickly emerging source of risk in all Canadian workplaces

Typical Forms of Mental Injury

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Burnout
- PTSD
- Compassion fatigue??

Conduct that *probably will* lead to mental injury

1. Harassment
2. Bullying
3. Mobbing
4. Discrimination

Conduct that *may* lead to mental injury *if sustained over time*

1. Expecting too much of workers with no heed to the consequences
2. Withholding discretion over work where no business rationale exists
3. Refusing to acknowledge contributions and to assign credit
4. Demonstrating bias in distribution of work or rewards
5. Chronic failure to provide timely and relevant information
6. Not allowing sufficient participation in decisions
7. Not providing psychological support or material resources to get the job done (when such exist)
8. Not paying attention to the legitimate interests of workers
9. Failing to identify and correct abusive situations
10. Failing to accommodate the needs of the mentally ill

The Anti-Standard

☹️ a manager's ten point guide to getting it wrong ☹️

1. Don't listen
2. Don't even try to understand
3. Show that you really don't care
4. Make fun of anyone who's struggling
5. Make fun of anyone who's different
6. Shut down discussion
7. Expect too much
8. Give nothing in return
9. Be arbitrary and capricious
10. Ignore signs of conflict

7 Influences on the Duty to Provide a Psychologically Safe Workplace: “Toward the Perfect Legal Storm”

Labour Relations Law

Employment Standards
Legislation

Human Rights
Legislation

**Duty to Provide
a Psychologically Safe Workplace**

Employment
contract

Law of Torts
(negligence)

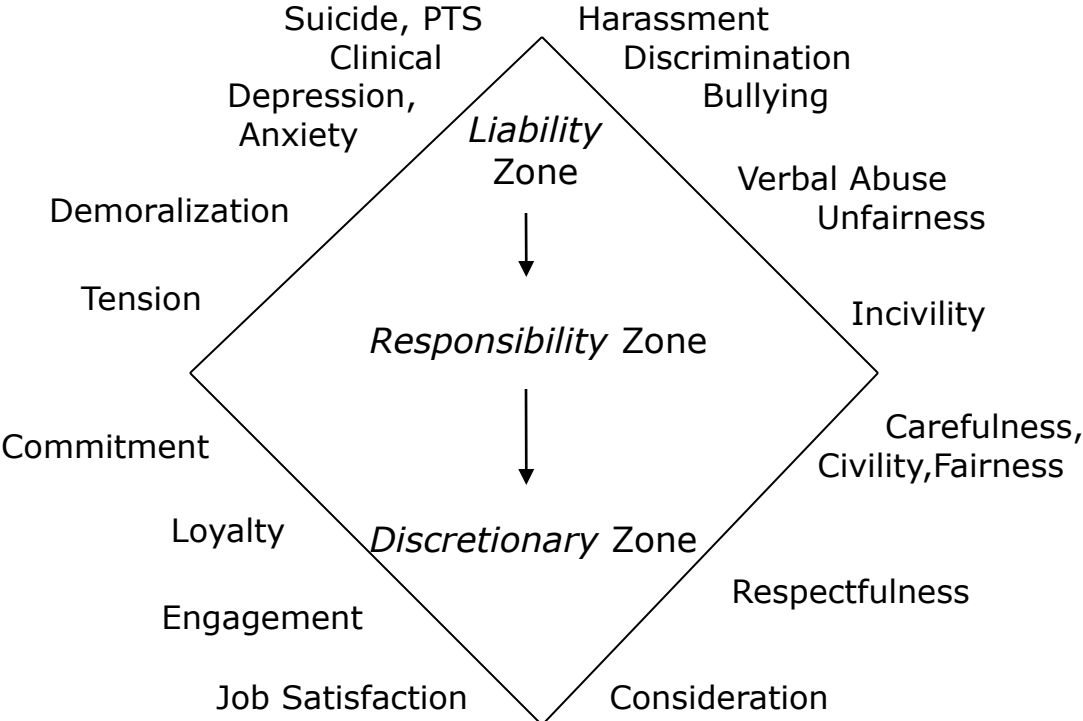
Occupational Health and Safety
Legislation

Workers Compensation
Law

Legal Views of the Psychologically Safe Workplace 2001-2010

Psychological Consequences

Conduct at Work



***“lowering the bar on liability”
creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and unpredictability***

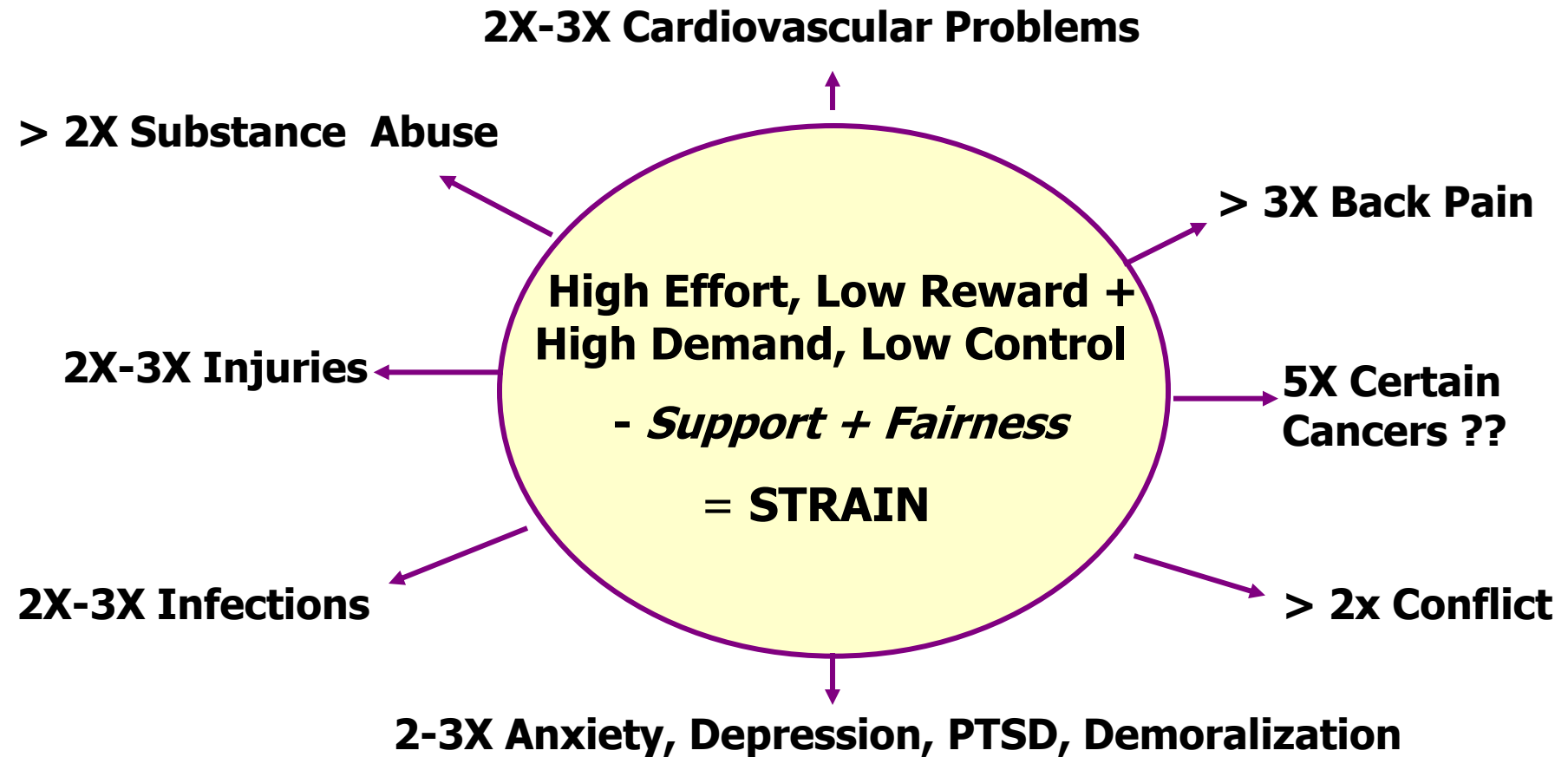
Workplace mental *injury* costs in Canada, per annum, as a fraction of *all* mental disability costs

- Direct Employer costs for *all* mental disability: up to \$2.75 billion per annum
- Transferred Social costs for *all* mental disability: up to \$8.25 billion per annum.
- Total costs for *all* mental disability: UP TO \$11.0 BILLION PER ANNUM.

Up to ONE THIRD of the costs above are attributable to *mental injury* and are *preventable*

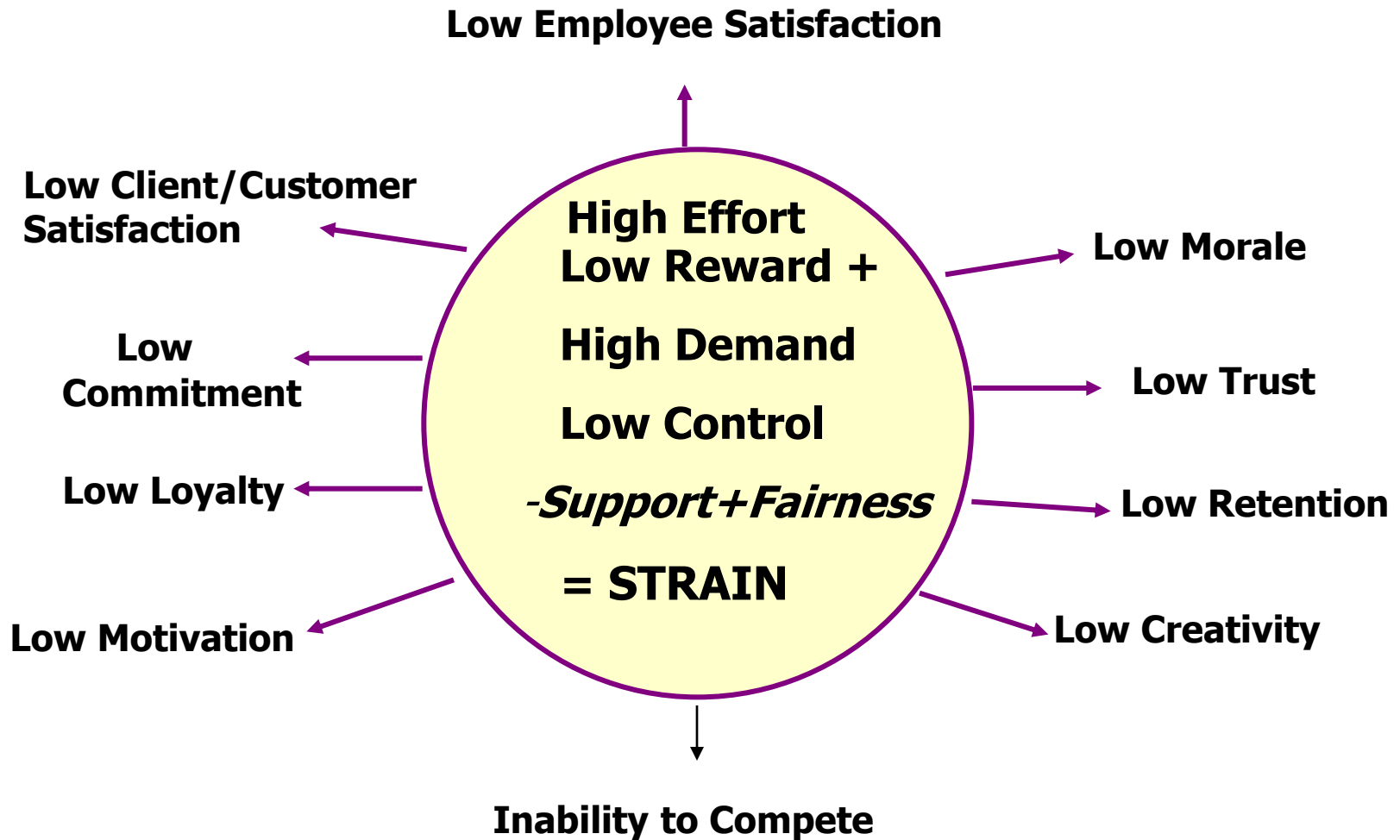
Sources: Levi and Lunde-Jensen 1996; Levi 2002; Concha-Barrientos et al. 2004; Leka et al. 2008; Leka and Jain 2010 Shain, Arnold and GermAnn 2012

Psychologically Unsafe Workplaces and health consequences



Psychologically Unsafe Workplaces

-costs to productivity and re-productivity-



The Stress Satisfaction Offset Score

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		Agree Strongly	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Self Score	
1.	I am satisfied with the amount of involvement I have in decisions that affect my work	(1)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(0)		
2.	I feel I am well rewarded (in terms of praise and recognition) for the level of effort I put out for my job	(1)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(0)		
3.	In the last six months, too much time pressure at work has caused me worry, "nerves" or stress	(1)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(0)		
4.	In the last six months, I have experienced worry, "nerves" or stress from mental fatigue at work	(1)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(0)		
							SSOS	
							=	

What does this voluntary Standard involve?

Requires that employers **assess and address risks** to the psychological health of workers that arise from the ways in which work is designed and people are managed. **It calls for a psychologically safe workplace.**

How is the Standard implemented?

The Psychological Health and Safety Management System (PHSMS)

1. Commitment and Policy
2. Planning
3. Implementation
4. Evaluation and corrective action
5. Review

How the PHSM System affects culture

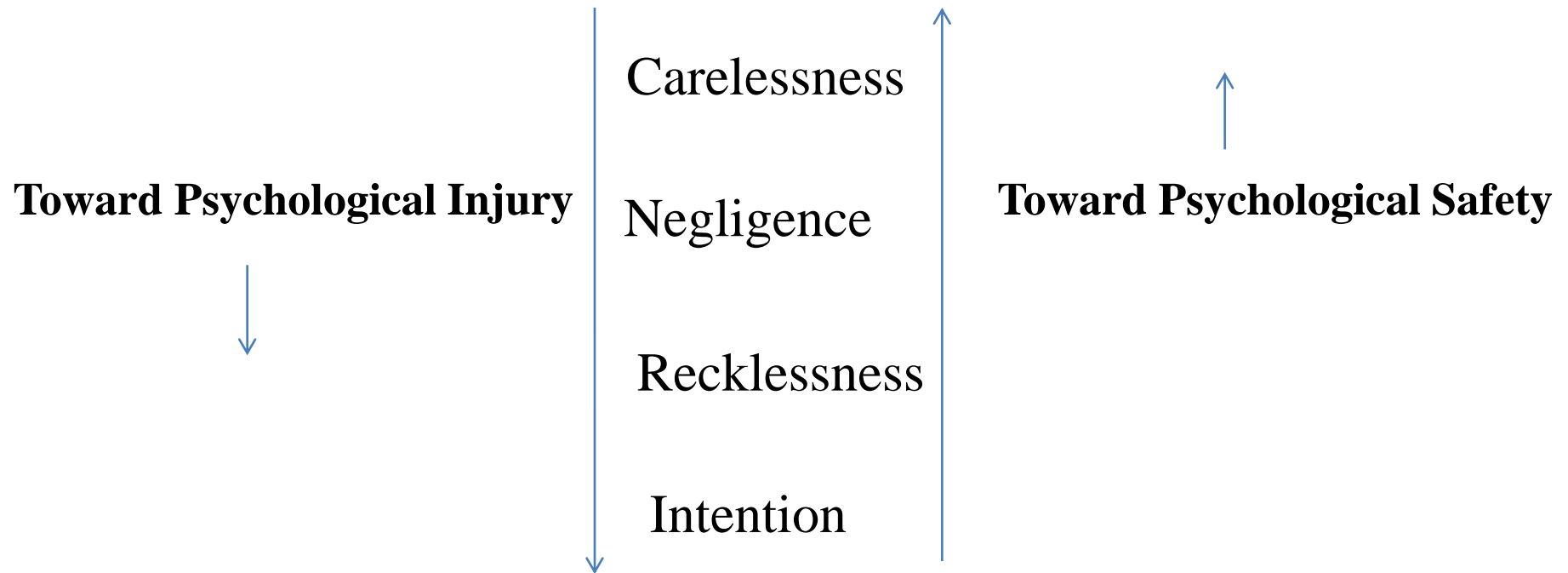
- The purpose of the System is to **shift the culture** of the organization **toward a norm of psychological health and safety**
- A System of this type is meant to be grafted into the organization's DNA so it can't be removed.

What is “culture”?

A set of values, meanings, understandings and practices shared by a stable group or community

From Harm to Care: the Goal of the Standard

Carefulness [diligence]



“Shifting the Culture”

What is a *psychologically safe* culture?

One in which there is.....

- Zero tolerance for mentally injurious conduct
- Strong support for respectfulness and fairness
- Near consensus on the meaning of these terms

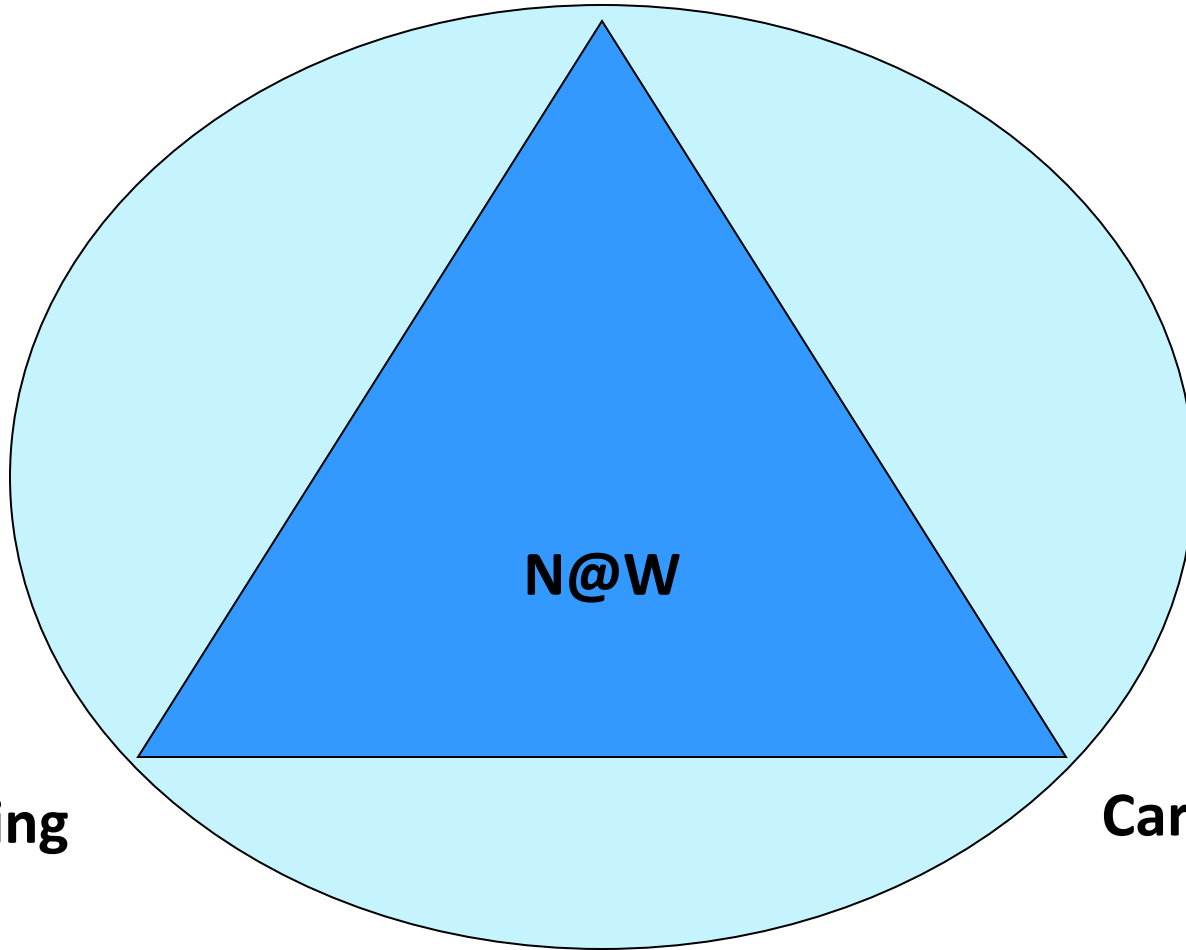
How can a culture of psychological safety be achieved?

Through attention to 3 key aspects of relationships

1. Awareness
2. Understanding
3. Carefulness

NEIGHBOUR AT WORK: 3 *LEGAL* PRINCIPLES

Awareness



N@W

Understanding

Carefulness

Being a good “Neighbour at Work”

a good “Neighbour at Work” is someone who tries their best to:

- Be aware of *who* is influenced by their words and actions and *how* they are influenced [*“awareness”*]
- Understand and accommodate up to a reasonable standard the legitimate needs, interests and points of view of others in their *circles of influence* [*“understanding”*]
- Act upon their awareness and understanding by being careful of others in their circles of influence and by not doing them foreseeable harm [*“carefulness”*]

Design and sustain a psychologically safe workplace culture

- Recruit
- Hire
- Train
- Promote
- Evaluate

Using *additional* criteria of interpersonal competence

Three Key Responsibilities that underlie the Duty to ensure a Psychologically Safe Workplace

1. Keep demands within the known capacity of employees *(don't push in the dark)*
2. Enable basic “voice” *(make it safe to speak up)*
3. Monitor and respond to signs of conflict/distress *(be vigilant for warning signs and act on them)*

The 75% solution!

Six Action Levers

Demand

Control

Effort

Reward

Support

Fairness

What senior leaders can do

Establish, Implement and Monitor

- **Psychologically Safe Workplace Policy**
- **Procedures for assessing and addressing risks to mental health at work**
- **Ensure selection, hiring, promotion for interpersonal skills**
- **Relevant programs and services where needed**

Using the resources in the new national standard

What line managers/supervisors should do to be compliant with the Standard

Develop a “psychologically safe” management style

= a floor level of interpersonal skills

A “Balanced Expressive/Directive Style” is

- Communicative
- Supportive
- Participative
- Cooperative

While being, when needed:

- Decisive
- Directive

Roles of union members and officials in: protection & restoration of mental health

And in building a culture of fairness

- Bargaining for more information and participation
- Modelling awareness, understanding and carefulness in mediation and conflict resolution situations
- Facilitating accommodation and RTW conversations
- Getting mental health on the OH&S agenda
- Negotiating for psychological safety (assessment and abatement of risks to mental health)

Looking forward

- **A new standard of care** for mental health protection in the workplace is finally being set after 150 years of occupational health and safety development – an historical moment!
- We are all part of the solution: we all benefit