

Resource for RETAIN States: Mental Health Continuum Model

Overview. A model that portrays mental health as a continuum has gained traction in Canada and is displayed on the attached handout. The handout is the result of a collaboration between the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the Canadian Department of National Defence, and the Calgary Police Service. It is a product of Canada's [The Working Mind](#) initiative, which is an evidence-based program designed to promote mental health and reduce the stigma around mental illness in the workplace.

The Mental Health Continuum Model acknowledges that *every* conscious human being has certain thoughts and emotions and engages in certain behaviors both when life is going well and when it is not. The continuum is divided into four phases: Healthy, Reacting, Injured, and Ill. The model shows the differences in our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors when we are healthy and when we are responding to stressful situations that have degraded our mental health. The handout includes additional content with a simple and self-help focus aimed at the affected individual and/or those who encounter them in everyday life. It includes actions that people can take during each phase of the continuum.

It is likely that some (or many) RETAIN candidates or participants whose lives and livelihoods are being substantially disrupted by a new injury or illness or the worsening of a chronic condition will be in the *Reacting* or *Injured* phases of the continuum. Some participants or candidates—especially those who have already had problems with anxiety, depression, or other mental illnesses, whether previously diagnosed or not—are more likely to find themselves in the *Injured* or *Ill* part of the continuum.

The considerations of this continuum for RETAIN include the following:

- RETAIN participants who are under stress that is challenging their mental health can use this model and these materials to help themselves cope better.
- RETAIN staff—and in particular, Return-to-Work Coordinators—can use this model as a guide to assess participants and provide mental health assistance.
- RETAIN staff can use this model to help determine if a participant should be referred to a mental health professional or consider integrating mental health professionals into their services.

Explicitly acknowledging that workers are under stress and expressing a willingness to provide emotional support resources during a challenging time may make RETAIN an even more attractive proposition.

This resource was prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Disability Employment Policy, as guidance to Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) state grantees. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

Mental Health Continuum Model



Signs and Indicators

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal mood fluctuations Calm/confident Good sense of humour Takes things in stride Can concentrate/focus Consistent performance Normal sleep patterns Energetic, physically well, stable weight Physically and socially active Performing well Limited alcohol consumption, no binge drinking Limited/no addictive behaviours No trouble/impact due to substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervousness, irritability Sadness, overwhelmed Displaced sarcasm Distracted, loss of focus Intrusive thoughts Trouble sleeping, low energy Changes in eating patterns, some weight gain/loss Decreased social activity Procrastination Regular to frequent alcohol consumption, limited binge drinking Some to regular addictive behaviours Limited to some trouble/impact due to substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness. Negative attitude Recurrent intrusive thoughts/images Difficulty concentrating Restless, disturbed sleep Increased fatigue, aches and pain Fluctuations in weight Avoidance, tardiness, decreased performance Frequent alcohol consumption, binge drinking Struggle to control addictive behaviours Increase trouble/impact due to substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive anxiety, panic attacks, easily enraged, aggressive Depressed mood, numb Non compliant Cannot concentrate, loss of cognitive ability Suicidal thoughts/intent Cannot fall asleep/stay asleep Constant fatigue, illness Extreme weight fluctuations Withdrawal, absenteeism Can't perform duties Regular to frequent binge drinking Addiction Significant trouble/impact due to substance use

Actions to Take at Each Phase of the Continuum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on task at hand Break problems into manageable tasks Controlled, deep breathing Nurture a support system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize limits, take breaks Get enough rest, food, exercise Reduce barriers to help-seeking Identify and resolve problems early Example of personal accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to someone, ask for help Tune into own signs of distress Make self-care a priority Get help sooner, not later Maintain social contact, don't withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow care recommendations Seek consultation as needed Respect confidentiality Know resources and how to access them
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The Big 4

GOAL SETTING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific: your behaviour Measurable: see progress Attainable: challenging and realistic Relevant: want it or need it Time-bound: set finish time 	SELF TALK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of self-talk Stop the negative messages Replace with positive Practice thought stopping: "I can do this." "I am trained and ready." "I will focus on what I can do."
VISUALIZATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be calm and relaxed Use all senses See positive mental images Keep it simple Use movement 	TACTICAL BREATHING <p>Rule of 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhale to count of 4 Exhale for count of 4 Practice for 4 minutes <p><i>Breathe into the diaphragm</i></p>

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ACKNOWLEDGE that something has happened, and listen.
INFORM: Check in and apply the Mental Health Continuum Model.
RESPOND: observe and follow up.

If you are concerned about signs of poor or declining mental health in yourself or a buddy, get it checked out. Resources include:

- Buddies
- Mental Health Team
- Chaplains
- Leaders/Supervisors
- Crisis or Help Lines
- Community Mental Health Services
- Family Doctor



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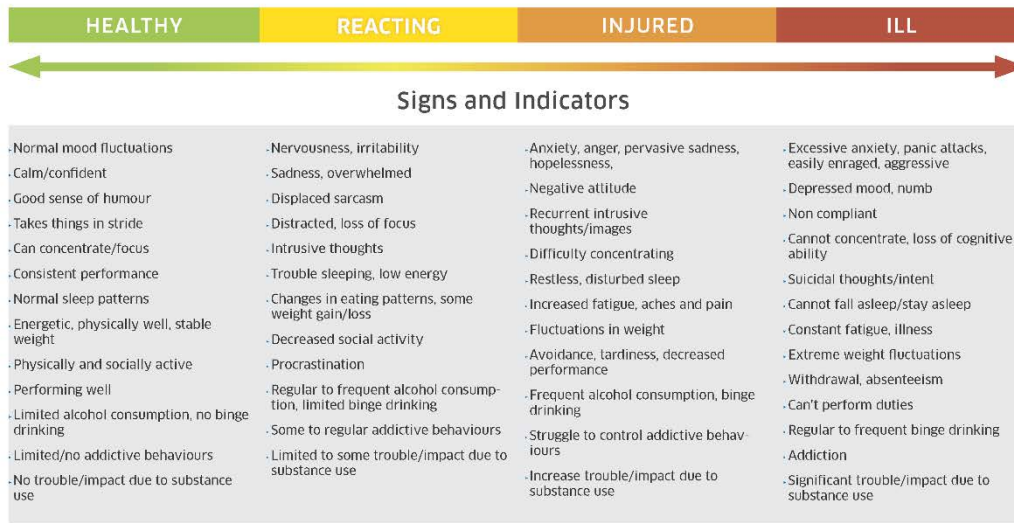


This poster was created through a collaboration between The Department of National Defence, Calgary Police Service, and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The Mental Health Continuum Model and R2MR Program were originally created by The Department of National Defence. For more info about R2MR, email r2mr@mentalhealthcommission.ca



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Mental Health Continuum Model



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