

Building the RTW Pathway Together

Supporting WSIB's Return to Work (RTW) Efforts: As health care participants in a person's recovery pathway, your expertise is key in helping workers restore occupational function and return to safe and sustainable work at the right time. Psychologists play an important role in supporting WSIB's RTW planning effort, and directly contribute to successful RTW outcomes by establishing therapeutic relationships and making recovery and RTW recommendations.

RTW PLANNING: Key Considerations & Guidelines

ASSESSING A WORKER'S READINESS FOR RTW:

Recognize that one size does not fit all; each worker's RTW journey is different. In most cases RTW efforts will require a phased approach, based on the worker's recovery and employment situation.

Full Recovery is not a pre-requisite for RTW. Promoting appropriately timed RTW is a critical phase in the worker's progress towards functional recovery.

Consider positive and negative prognosticators for successful RTW:

- where the worker is along their recovery continuum (early versus later stages)
- extent of symptoms (e.g. multiple co-morbidities), and response to treatment to date
- length of time that worker has been off work
- extent to which workplace factors that contributed to the injury remain, can be mitigated or removed
- supports that are in place (e.g. peer support)
- past unsuccessful RTW attempts

HOW THIS INFORMATION SUPPORTS WSIB CASE MANAGEMENT & RTW PLANNING:

The right information helps the worker succeed and helps the WSIB Case Management Team (*Case Manager, Nurse Consultant and Return to Work Specialist*) plan for RTW. As with any plan, RTW plans require ongoing monitoring and adjustment where required.

Identification of a worker's abilities, limitations and/or restrictions are used to:

- plan and set RTW goals where RTW is not recommended
- start or open dialogue with worker and/or employer to explore RTW opportunities
- identify suitable jobs (pre-accident/modified) given the worker's abilities/restrictions
- educate employers about types of accommodations required in occupational mental illness
- identify required accommodations to pre-accident/modified duties where no RTW/or previous unsuccessful attempts
- support stay at work cases to continue with RTW plan, while also participating in active recovery/treatment program
- assess if additional health supports are required (e.g. OT, psychiatry) to help with recovery and RTW

DISCUSSING RTW & EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES:

How to prepare workers for a successful RTW: Include discussions about return to occupational functioning from the onset. Help workers understand how the treatment plan will help them restore personal, social and occupational function. This sets expectations and ensures a common understanding of the goals of treatment. While RTW may not be appropriate now, as a partner in the RTW process, providing reassurance that treatment will help RTW in the future, provides a positive message.

A successful RTW Plan is:

- at the right time
- safe and sustainable
- appropriately embedded in the worker's recovery pathway
- includes worker's input/feedback in RTW goal setting & planning discussions
- individualized, taking into account the worker's needs and job requirements
- goal oriented (e.g. SMART goals) with anticipated timelines
- flexible to allow for adjustments over time, or in response to anticipated or not anticipated changes in a worker's recovery path

PSYCHOLOGIST ROLE IN RTW PLANNING EFFORTS:

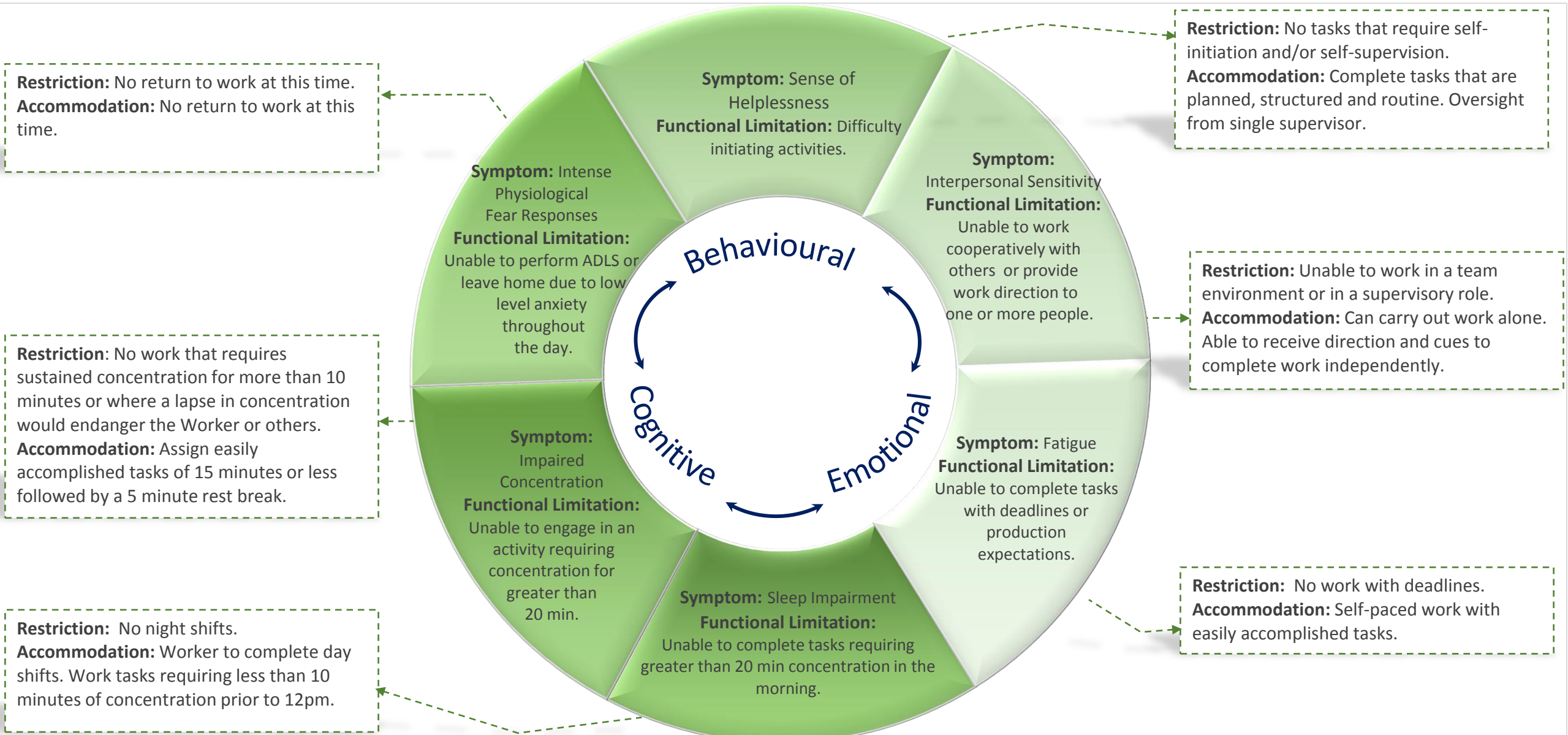
Your relationship and holistic understanding of your client is key in helping support your client along their recovery and RTW trajectory.

Psychologists directly influence successful RTW outcomes by:

- supporting worker's in their recovery and RTW pathway by restoring their personal, social, and occupational level of function
- providing evidence-informed individualized and goal oriented treatment, prognosis and RTW recommendations at the right time
- ensuring timely report submission, including essential information that is linked to workers receiving ongoing access to benefits and WSIB's accountability to employers
- identifying abilities, limitations and restrictions to assist with RTW planning
- informing the most opportune time to begin RTW discussions, if not at present
- dialogue with the WSIB Case Management Team (Case Manager, RTW Specialist, Nurse Consultant)

Building the RTW Pathway Together

RTW RECOMMENDATIONS: IDENTIFYING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS



***Please note the above examples are not meant to be prescriptive**