

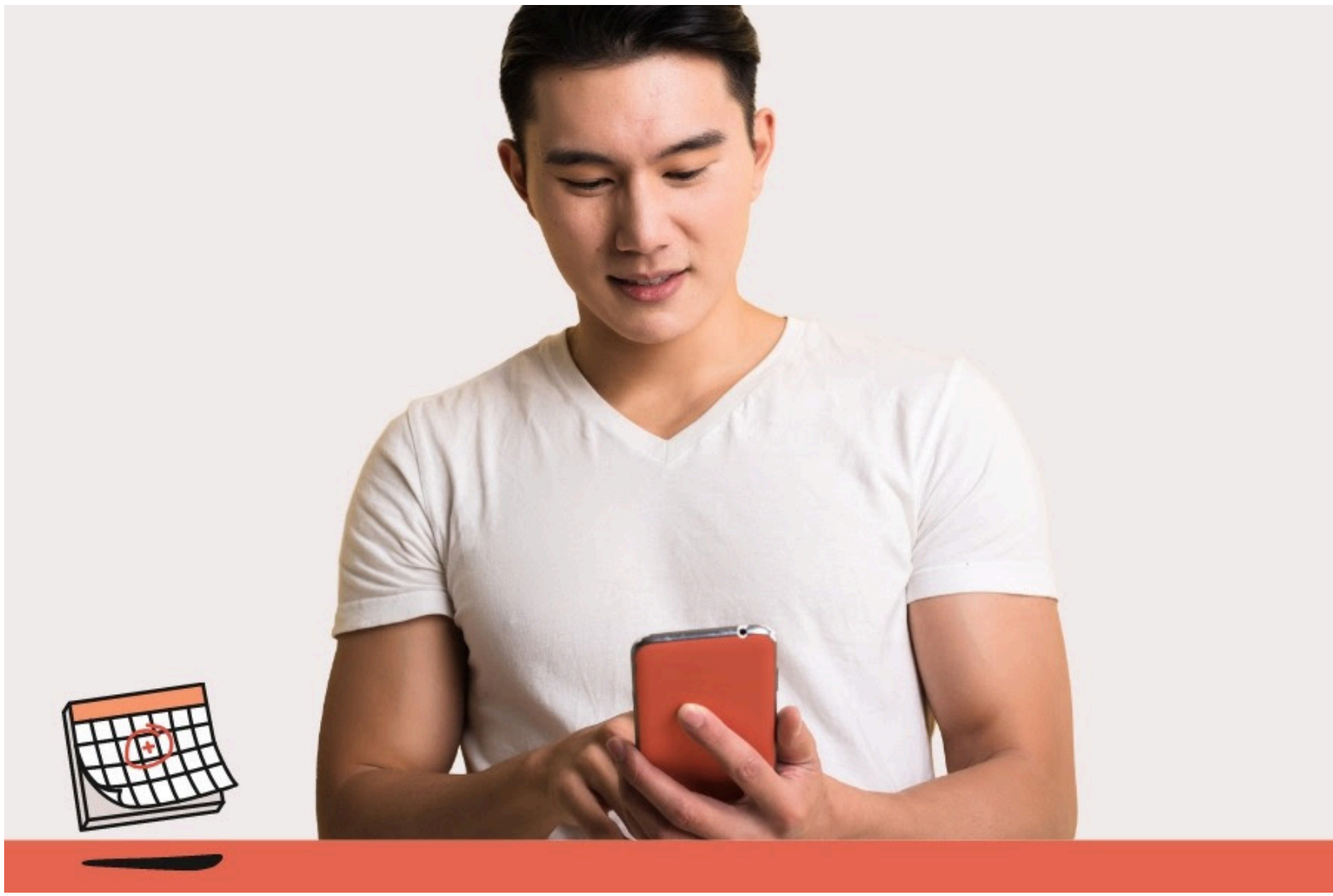
Get a head start on your health for Men’s Health Month

1 message

Maple <hello@getmaple.ca>
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To: jesse.ship@gmail.com

16 June 2022 at 11:22

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Beating the odds – life expectancy and the gender gap

On average, men live four years less than women in Canada. While they’re more likely to visit a doctor, it’s only if they’re feeling sick. In short, men are less proactive with their health, which can lead to higher risks.

June is Men’s Health Month and the perfect time to brush up on putting your well-being first with some tips from our blog. Also, don’t be shy about checking in with a doctor on Maple for specialized advice on men’s health needs.

Learn more



Life feeling like a non-stop action flick?

It’s ok to call in a lifeline every now and then. Our roster of Canadian-licensed therapists can help you build strategies for improving your mental health while identifying and resolving obstacles in your way. Book a visit and get seen today, or schedule an appointment in advance.

Learn more



Hair loss doesn't need to be permanent

Male pattern hair loss doesn’t have to mean goodbye to your locks forever. There are medications formulated to reverse the effects your hormones have on hair follicles and trigger them to bloom again.

Results aren’t immediate but with patience, you can see positive results in just a few months to a year. To see if medication is right for you, book an appointment with a dermatologist on Maple. This service is available in Ontario, Quebec, BC, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nunavut.

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Mental health support, here for you any time

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5 May 2022 at 11:54

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There’s no “one size fits all” therapy



The difference between psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy

If you’re confused by the differences between the roles of a psychiatrist, psychologist, and psychotherapist, you’re not alone.

These mental health professionals all specialize in treating the mind, but how do you know which one is right for you?

Like many things in life, there’s no “one size fits all” approach. Take the time to pause and take the guesswork out of finding help with a little help from our blog.

Learn more



How online therapy works: the benefits of online counselling

Looking for a guide to help you make more sense of the world? Whether you live in the heart of the city or deep in the country, our Canadian-licensed mental health counsellors are waiting to support you, no matter what challenges life has thrown your way. Find out how online therapy can help make a difference.

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See the right mental health specialist

You are seen. You are valued. No matter what your needs are, our mental health practitioners are there to guide you on your wellness journey. See a therapist in less than 12 hours today or schedule an appointment at a time that’s right for you.

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June 28 · 🌐



Even if you were the star, you might not do all your own stunts. Sometimes it helps to bring in a professional. Our team of Canadian-licensed mental health therapists are committed to helping you build an action plan that will keep the lights on so you can get into the success zone. This [#MensHealthMonth](#), try talking it out with a mental health therapist on Maple.

Not sure how online therapy works? Get the full rundown here.

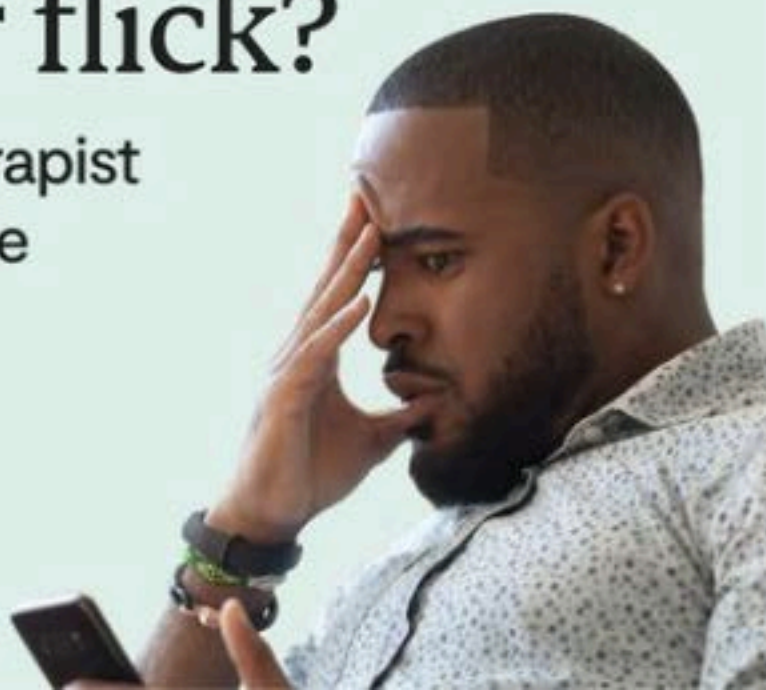
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MEN'S HEALTH MONTH

Life feeling like a
disaster flick?

Talk with a therapist
online on Maple



Turning FOMO into JOMO



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getmaple Instead of comparing yourself to people who seem to be having the best post-lockdown summer ever, turn that FOMO on its head and embrace its lesser-known cousin, JOMO, the joy of missing out.

FOMO (a.k.a the fear of missing out) strikes when you aren't feeling confident about your life choices, or are feeling the pressure to fit in.

Embracing JOMO allows you to:

- ✓ Feel your emotions (the good and the bad)
- ✓ Let go of the need to compare yourself to others
- ✓ Feel secure knowing that you're right where you need to be

[#fomo](#) [#fearofmissingout](#) [#jomo](#) [#joyofmissingout](#)
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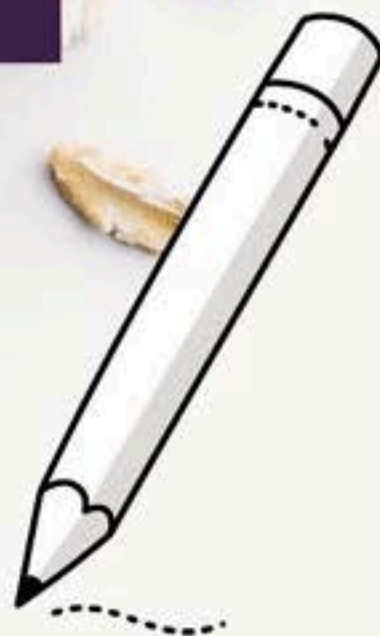
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NUTRITION FACTS:

The whole truth on whole grains

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getmaple Are nutrition labels starting to make more sense? 💡 For [#NutritionMonth](#), we're talking about the truth behind foods made with whole grains. 🍞

Whole-grain foods are made of flour that contains both fiber and nutrient-rich wheat bran and wheat germ. Without these two parts, food manufacturers can't label their products as "whole grain."

Swipe ➡ for the truth behind whole-grain foods and tap the 🔗 in our bio for the full rundown on nutrition labels and what they really mean.

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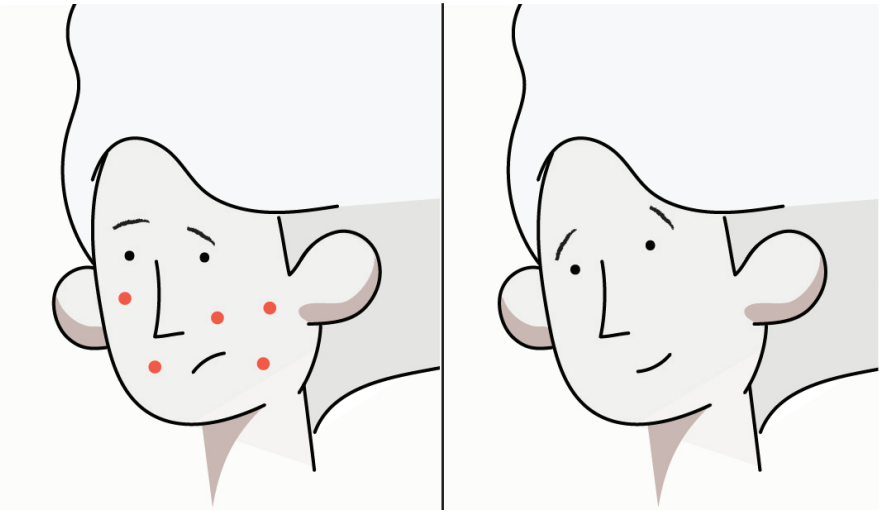
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CONCEPT 2: BEFORE / AFTER

This concept leverages before/after illustrations helping convey positive health outcomes at-a-glance.



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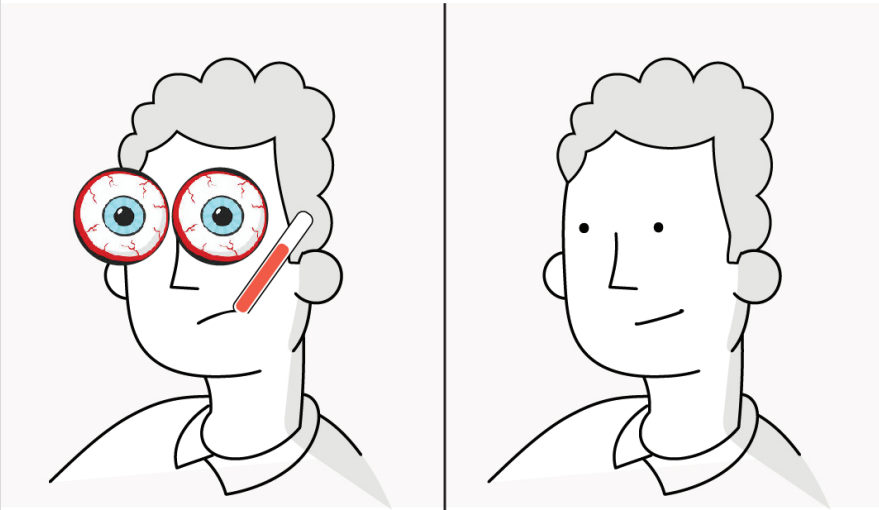
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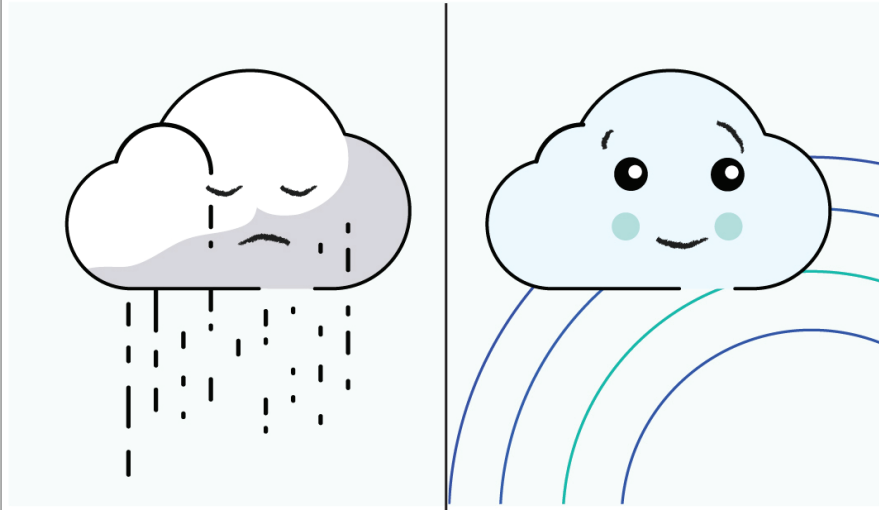
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It's ok to feel 'meh' sometimes. Get a consultation with a Canadian-licensed mental health physician, easily accessible online. Get help. Get Maple.

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April 20, 2022 · 4 min read

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The difference between psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy

Navigating mental health challenges can be difficult — especially with so many professionals who all seem to have complex titles that start with “psych.” That’s why we’re breaking down everything you need to know about three of the most commonly confused terms.

What’s a psychologist? What’s a psychiatrist? What’s a psychotherapist? And when should you see a psychologist vs a psychiatrist vs a psychotherapist? Read on for all you need to know about the differences between psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists.

How psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists approach mental health

Psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychotherapists specialize in human behaviour and mental conditions. But they don’t treat [mental health](#) in the same way.

Psychiatrists	Psychologists	Psychotherapists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a medical degree • Provide assessments, diagnosis, prescriptions and some talk therapy • Treat conditions rooted in biology or neurochemistry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a degree in psychology • Provide a wide array of talk therapies • Trained to provide psychological testing, diagnosis, and counselling/ psychotherapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsellors, social workers, or psychiatrists with additional masters level training in psychotherapy • Can specialize in group or couples talk therapy • Treat conditions rooted in emotions or behaviour

Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists focus on disciplines like biology and neurochemistry to help determine the cause of mental illnesses. They often [prescribe medications](#) to physically treat a condition alongside methods like talk therapy.

Psychologist

Psychologists use psychological science to focus on your personal behaviours and diagnose mental illnesses. They’ll often monitor sleep, behaviours, or eating habits, and probe into the negative thoughts that could be causing your concern.

Psychotherapist

Psychotherapists are mental health professionals that specialize in talk therapy to help you understand yourself better by learning healthy coping techniques. Psychotherapists can include psychologists, psychoanalysts, social workers, and some psychiatrists.

Difference in education and training

While psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychotherapists have to go through rigorous, extensive training in their fields, their education is very different from one another.

Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists are medical doctors, meaning they’ve earned a degree in medicine. They have much of the same training as a doctor you’d see in a family practice, except they’ve chosen to focus their expertise on treating mental illness and undergone an additional four or more years of training specifically in psychiatry.

Psychologist

Psychologists have a PhD in psychology, but aren’t trained in medicine. That’s why a psychologist can’t prescribe medication. However, because of their focus on the behavioural and emotional causes of mental illness, they can provide assessments and diagnosis as well as a variety of therapy options.

Psychotherapist

[Psychotherapists](#) can be counsellors, social workers, or psychiatrists, with specialized certifications in their field. Psychotherapists primarily use counseling, known as talk therapy, to facilitate personal change.

How psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists treat mental health concerns

Just like their training, there are different treatment methods used by psychiatrists vs psychologists vs psychotherapists. It’s important to note that a [mental health physician](#) can also provide assistance with medication and prescriptions when a diagnosis is available.

Psychiatrist

Because they can write prescriptions, psychiatrists usually use a combination of medications and talk therapy to help address their patient’s issues.

When prescribing new medications, psychiatrists will request frequent updates from their patients to ensure the medications and dosages are helping. It can take some time to find the right dosage and/or balance of medications to help a patient while having the least possible side effects.

Psychologist

Though they don’t have the ability to write prescriptions for their patients, psychologists often use different, more diverse types of therapy to diagnose and treat mental illness.

Certain unique types of therapy, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, may be used to help uncover the underlying emotional causes of mental illness. Psychologists will also specialize in various types of testing, such as IQ or [brain health assessments](#).

Psychotherapist

A psychotherapist, also called a mental health therapist, will focus on different types of talk therapy, such as interpersonal, cognitive-behavioural, dialectical, supportive, and others.

If your psychotherapist is also a psychiatrist, they’ll have the ability to prescribe medication.

To get to the root of the problem, psychotherapy can be offered in different formats, including couples, families, and groups, along with individual therapy sessions.

Common conditions treated by psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists

While there are key differences in the training and available treatments psychiatrists, psychotherapists and psychologists provide, there is often overlap in the conditions they treat as there is no “one size fits all” solution to your mental health.

Psychiatrist

For someone with a very serious mental health problem, which might make it hard for them to take care of themselves, or someone who needs medication to adjust certain chemical levels in their brains, psychiatrists are a good choice.

Some examples of mental illnesses they treat are:

- Major depressive disorder – a mood disorder that results in feelings like [sadness](#), [lethargy](#) and [loss](#).
- Bipolar disorder – a mental health condition that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, concentration, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks.
- Schizophrenia – a mental disorder in which people interpret reality abnormally that can result in hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking.
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder ([OCD](#)) – a disorder in which a person has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts (obsessions) and/or behaviors (compulsions) that they feel the urge to repeat over and over.

Psychologist

By the same token, if you have long-term emotional issues, are having difficulty processing traumatic events, or have recently noticed changes in your emotional well-being, psychologists could be a good fit for you. Psychologists use a variety of approaches directed toward the maintenance and enhancement of physical, intellectual, emotional, social and interpersonal functioning.

They help treat neuropsychological disorders and dysfunctions such as:

- Anxiety and panic disorders – a variety of disorders that can result in excessive fear, [anxiety](#), and panic attacks.
- Insomnia – irrational or excessive fears that are present for more than six months.
- Schizophrenia – a sleep disorder that can make it hard to fall asleep, stay asleep, or cause you to wake up too early and not get back to sleep.
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder ([PTSD](#)) – a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a traumatic event.

Psychotherapist

Psychotherapy can be beneficial if you are troubled by mood disorders, but it can also be applied to anyone interested in learning new coping skills or looking to better understand their thoughts and life experiences.

They can help treat conditions such as:

- Addiction and substance abuse – a chronic condition marked by substance use or behaviors that continue despite negative outcomes.
- Eating disorders (e.g. anorexia, bulimia) – disorders characterised by disturbances in behaviours, thoughts, and attitudes to food, eating, and body weight or shape.
- Personality disorders – a type of mental disorder in which you have a rigid and unhealthy pattern of thinking, functioning, and behaving.
- Work stress – the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities.

Bottom line

To summarize, psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychotherapists are different means to the same end. They each identify and treat mental illnesses for their patients. However, they generally offer different types of therapy treatments and solutions based on their training and expertise.

They all examine factors that could be causing mental illness, but psychiatrists can offer prescriptions to their patients, while psychologists can’t. Psychologists are trained in a different variety of specialty therapies for treating patients than psychiatrists that don’t have a psychotherapy practice.

Maple has you covered for a number of [online therapy services](#). Book now for a [visit with a psychotherapist](#). Visits with a [mental health physician](#) are also available. No matter what your needs are, our Canadian-licensed mental health practitioners are there for you.

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November 24, 2021 • 5 min read

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How online therapy works: the benefits of online counselling

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many areas of life to move online, from grocery shopping to day-to-day work. Even in this environment, many people still hesitate to speak with an online therapist, as they worry therapy through a screen won't be as effective as in person. But why do many people prefer online counselling therapy over face-to-face treatments? And what advantages do online sessions have over in-person meetings?

Here's how to tell whether or not online therapy is a good fit for you, and how you can get the most out of online therapy.

Is online therapy a good idea?

Though online therapy may seem like a recent innovation, video-based therapy has been around [for decades](#), and its effectiveness has been demonstrated time and time again. For example, recent studies have shown [that online sessions can be just as effective](#) as traditional face-to-face meetings.

[In one study](#), researchers found that when combined with clinical care, online cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), a type of therapy, can effectively treat depression, anxiety, and emotional distress. [A review of 17 studies](#) also demonstrated that online CBT was even more effective than in-person CBT at reducing the severity of depression symptoms.

Online therapy can be a great option for many people, especially if:

- It's difficult for you to find the time to go to a therapist's office in person
- You live in a small town or remote, where there aren't a lot of therapists available and the closest one to you still lives far away
- You need more flexible hours than most therapy offices can provide
- You feel more comfortable using an app than talking to a stranger in person

Simply put, there's strong evidence that online therapy can be just as effective as in-person sessions. In other words, online mental health therapy is here to stay and will most likely only gain in popularity in the next decade or so.

How talk therapy can help, whether online or off

In many ways, online therapy is no different than in-person sessions. Consulting a licensed therapist can help you observe and analyze your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in a neutral environment.

Your therapist will listen, provide an objective analysis of your experiences, and help you make connections or identify recurring patterns you may have failed to notice. In this way, therapy can empower you to rewrite the story you're telling yourself about your life, which can help you take action outside of your therapy sessions.

Along with self-discovery, a licensed therapist can help you set personal goals, celebrate achievements, and stay accountable. By shedding light on complex problems or obstacles, therapy can help you make adjustments so you can better meet your self-care needs. A licensed counsellor will work with you to develop various coping strategies you can use to improve your well-being.

Your relationship with your therapist differs from your relationship with a friend or an acquaintance. Unlike with a friend, you don't have to give back or worry about how unloading your feelings on them might make them feel. That's what they're here for! Let your therapist be a safety net that can catch you when you stumble.

What are the advantages of online therapy?

There are many advantages to seeing a mental health counsellor from home through an online platform, which is why many people choose online counselling therapy over in-person treatments. Some advantages include:

- Convenience: You can see a therapist from the comfort of home, without having to travel to an office. Just make sure you have access to a nice, quiet room that offers you privacy and you're good to go!
- Accessibility: Mobility is often an underrated issue when it comes to accessing care for mental health. Online sessions make therapy far more accessible for people who are disabled or housebound.
- Privacy: Online therapy can offer you more privacy than in-person sessions. For example, if video makes you uncomfortable, you can chat live with an online therapist over text message or a phone call. Seeing a licensed therapist online also means you'll never have to worry about accidentally running into someone you know at your therapist's office.
- Wide range of providers: You're not limited to seeing therapists who live in the same city as you, which means you can choose from a wide range of licensed therapists with different areas of expertise including trauma, grief, loss, cross-cultural issues, addiction, or work life.

Finding the right therapist

Qualifications and experience are important, but it's often the relationship you develop with the therapist that influences how much progress you make over time. Your online therapist should be your partner in growth, so look for someone who makes you feel understood and supported. Talking with someone you feel you can trust can help you open up about difficult topics and share intimate details honestly, without holding back.

Preparing for your first session

Let's say you've decided you want to explore online therapy and that you've scheduled your first appointment with an online counsellor. What's next?

First, whether you're using a phone, tablet, or computer, make sure your equipment is in good working order. Find a quiet room that offers you privacy. If getting privacy at home is difficult, sitting in a parked vehicle can be an excellent alternative.

Your first session with a therapist often provides a good opportunity to ask questions about their practice. Here are a few questions you'll want to ask:

- What experience do you have helping people with my condition?
- What does a typical session with you look like?
- What type of therapy do you offer?
- How does your approach differ from other therapists?
- How many sessions do you usually have with a client?
- How many on average do people need to see change and progress?

Conversations can go in different directions, so try making a list ahead of time of topics you'd like to discuss in case you forget them during your session. Having a pen and some paper with you can also be helpful during your sessions, as it can make it easier to take notes.

Difficult emotions can come up during therapy, so having something to anchor you can be helpful, like a photo of a loved one or a keepsake. Even a warm cup of tea or coffee can help. Just make yourself cozy.

Next steps

After your first three to four weeks of therapy, it can be a good idea to take a step back and ask yourself a few questions to know if you're heading in the right direction.

Try asking yourself:

- Are my symptoms improving? Are they less frequent? Do I feel better about myself?
- Have I established coping techniques to deal with stress and negativity?
- Am I able to focus better on the things that matter most to me?
- Have I identified bad habits that I want to change for the better?
- Does my therapist really "get" me?
- Are my sessions productive?
- Have I gained new skills or perspectives?

If you answer "no" for many of these questions or if your sessions don't feel quite right, be open to making a change and working with a new therapist. Trust your instincts.

How to schedule an online therapy session through Maple

Through Maple, you can schedule an online appointment with [a Canadian-licensed therapist](#) or choose to speak with a professional as soon as possible, in 12 hours or less. You can consult a provider by text, audio, or video chat, and the service is available in all Canadian provinces. Each session is 50 minutes in length and many benefit programs cover the fee of an online therapy consultation on Maple.

To get started, simply open the Maple platform and click the "Get care" button and select "Psychotherapy". Choose the Canadian certified counsellor you'd like to speak with and a time and date that works for you. That's it! All you have to do then is get ready for your session. In the meantime, try journaling, which can help you identify topics or issues you'd like to discuss with your therapist.

Want to know more about our licensed therapists? You can meet a few of the mental health counsellors you can work with on Maple [here](#).

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February 3, 2022 · 4 min read

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How to strengthen workplace culture in 2022 and beyond

What exactly is a positive “workplace culture”? Opinions can vary depending on the type of workplace and industry, but there are certain commonalities all can agree on. That is, it’s the culture’s responsibility to obsess over meeting customer needs, increase employee engagement, and decrease employee turnover.

According to a [PWC 2021 Global Culture Survey](#), 66% of C-suite executives and board members believe culture is more important to performance than the organization’s strategy or operating model, and 72% of senior-level management report that their culture helps support and implement successful change initiatives.

So how can forward-thinking organizations that have endured the COVID-19 pandemic, and new workplace dynamics, strengthen their workplace culture in 2022 and beyond to create a positive work environment? They should seek to create psychologically safe working environments, facilitate hybrid working models, and improve the transparency of communication.

Create an environment of psychological safety

Psychological safety is the belief that you won’t be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

It’s a critical driver of high-quality decision-making, group dynamics, interpersonal relationships, innovation, and execution within organizations. It was a popular topic before the pandemic, and it still is due to its relevance to agility, diversity, inclusion, and [remote work](#).

According to a [Deloitte Insights study](#), for employers who invest in mental health, the ROI after year one was found to be \$1.62 for every \$1 invested. As well, a [2017 Gallup report](#) found that if organizations increase psychological safety, it makes employees more engaged in their work, leading to a 27% reduction in turnover, and a 12% increase in productivity.

To learn more about how you can implement psychological safety in your organization, you can consult [online guides](#) from the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) or take [leadership training courses](#) from the likes of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). In Canada, we also have the [Psychologically Safe Workplace Awards](#), a national, evidence-based annual competition that highlights outstanding employee experience with respect to workplace mental health. The organization also offers a wide range of useful online resources, such as [How to become a psychologically safe leader](#).

Studying what makes some teams better communicators than others can also prove valuable. In [Patrick Lencioni’s](#) Five Dysfunctions of a Team, the author reveals why teams, even the best ones, often struggle. He outlines a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team.

While the book is a worthy read, it can be summarized in the five key points below.

1. Absence of trust, seen as an unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group
2. Fear of conflict, manifested by seeking artificial harmony over constructive passionate debate
3. Lack of commitment, demonstrated by feigning buy-in for group decisions, creating ambiguity throughout the organization
4. Avoidance of accountability, a ducking of responsibility to call peers and/or superiors on counterproductive behavior which sets low standards
5. Inattention to results, a focusing on personal success, status, and ego before team success

Creating a high-functioning and psychologically safe work environment isn’t easy, but should be looked to as a bedrock for any organization hoping to strengthen its productivity and workplace culture.

Improve your quality of communication

[Transparent communication](#) is the act of both good and bad information being shared upward, downward, and laterally throughout an organization, in a way that allows all to see the why behind the words. Naturally, it’s a good practice that facilitates accountability in any organization. With the onset of the pandemic and companies switching from in-office to remote work, there was a significant boost in transparent communication that greatly helped facilitate the change, one that workers benefited greatly from as well.

A study by the [MIT Sloan Management Review](#) saw the average culture rating across Culture 500 companies experience a sharp jump between March and April 2020. In the early months of the pandemic, one theme that stood out was the quality of communication from leaders. Employees of Culture 500 companies gave their leaders much higher marks in terms of honest communication, transparency, and ethical behaviour during the first six months of the coronavirus pandemic compared to the preceding year.

Employees were twice as likely to discuss the quality of communication by top leaders in positive terms during the early months of the pandemic than they were at the same time the year before. In fact, employees were 88% more likely to express positive sentiments about leaders’ honesty and transparency. Employees also had a more positive view of transparency (42%) and communication (35%) in general.

Now that remote working has been normalized, the challenge is to maintain these increased levels of communication. To ensure optimal productivity and satisfaction, remote employees require increased touchpoints with management and fellow team members.

Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE)

Results-only work environment (ROWE) is a human resource management strategy that rewards employees for results rather than number of hours worked, with more control over where and how they work. Its creators, [Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson](#), co-authored the best-selling book Why Work Sucks and How To Fix It in 2010.

The core concept of ROWE is that each person in the organization is entirely accountable and autonomous, meaning all employees have clear objectives and measurable results.

The four pillars of a successful ROWE strategy are:

1. Employees understand what their role in the company is
2. Employees understand what they’re responsible for
3. Employees understand how results are measured
4. Employees understand the repercussions of failing to meet results

The system was designed to increase productivity while eliminating constraints that reinforce the idea that people can’t be trusted with complete autonomy. This is what the ROWE system identifies as “sludge”, which can take the form of gossip, cliquiness, passive-aggressive banter, employee squabbles over requests for time off, office distractions, and more.

Naturally, a ROWE is a good fit for remote workforces. For companies with hybrid or in-person work environments, this management strategy can also be a solution for presenteeism. Thanks to the increased flexibility that ROWE provides, employees can more easily work around appointments and other duties. As a result, they use fewer sick days and take less time off.

While ROWE might not be suitable for every organization, many companies could benefit from borrowing concepts from this strategy to manage a remote workforce.

Competitive advantages

Whether considering implementing ROWE, pursuing a team-optimization plan using Lencioni’s model as a reference point, or embarking on a discovery project to improve your team, some overarching key points can be leveraged to strengthen workplace culture. A recent roundtable talk that was hosted by [Slack and the Financial Times](#) unearthed these insights:

- Bake flexibility and openness into your processes and systems so that everyone’s voice can be heard
- Remind leaders to encourage staff input to build trust and open the floor to innovative ideas to help boost productivity
- Embed your corporate culture into every part of your business, from staff hiring and onboarding to continuing professional development
- Stay curious. Try new technologies, or use existing ones in different ways.
- Get inspired by how other fast-moving companies have adapted corporate culture to fit a radically different working environment

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to shift their offices to remote or hybrid work environments. While the initial shift to home offices resulted in a boost in transparent communication that employees have benefited from, maintaining these efforts as the pandemic drags on has posed a challenge.

To strengthen their workplace culture and maintain productivity, organizations may need to pivot their management style and experiment with new team-building approaches to nurture and motivate employees. As always, delivering innovative, high-impact employee benefits can make a big difference in enhancing company culture and supporting employees to help them deliver results. Adding a quality virtual care program to your benefits, for example, can improve retention by helping your team members save time and reducing stress.

If you’d like to speak to one of our experts on how to bring your employee benefits to the next level, please reach out. We’d be happy to share our insights with you as Canada’s leading provider of virtual care.

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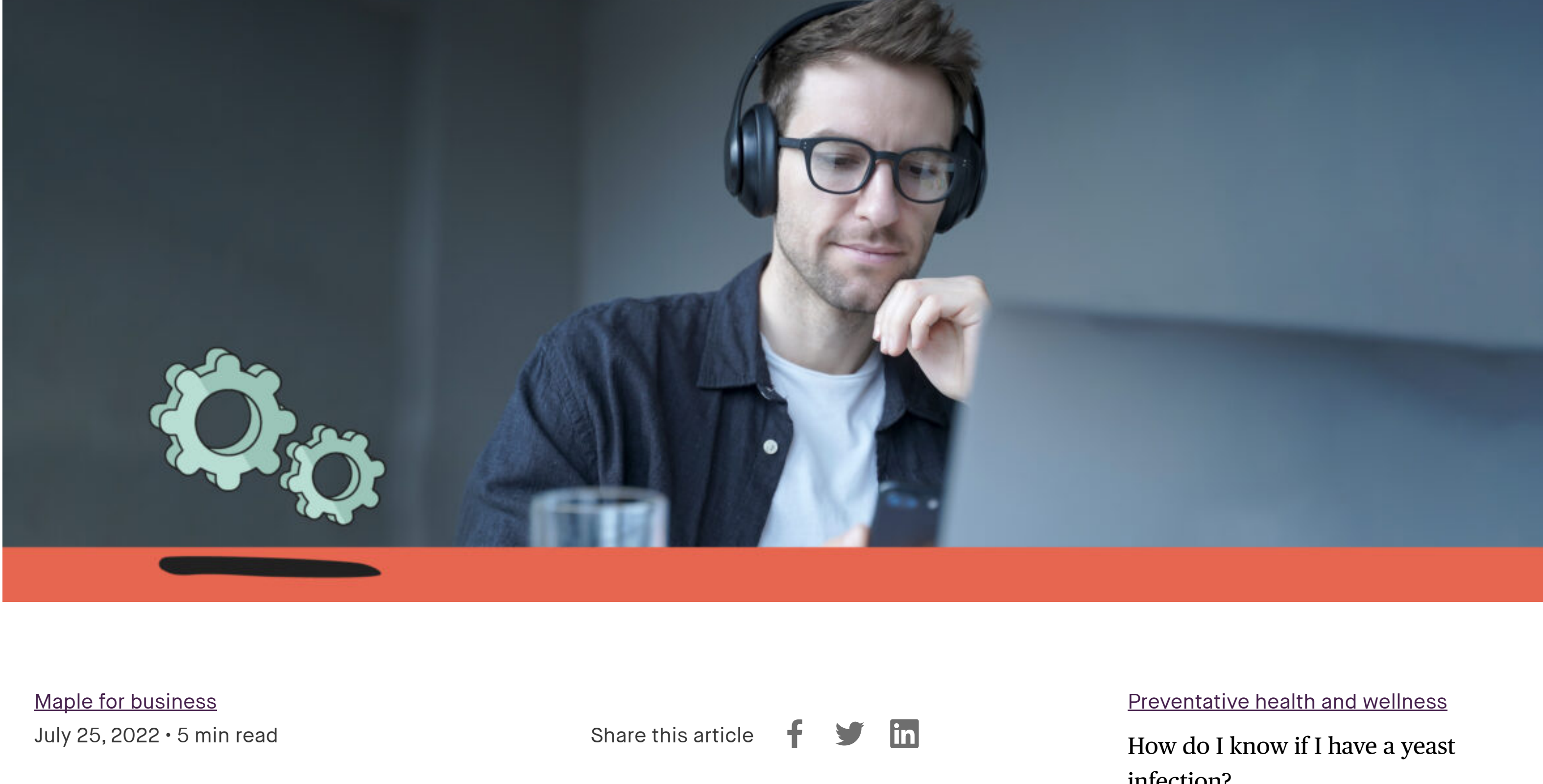
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Neurodiversity and inclusion in the workplace

In July 2021, Sir Richard Branson, CEO of the Virgin Group, went on record to commend LinkedIn for its [inclusion of "dyslexic thinking"](#) as an official skill, stating that people with dyslexia think "creatively and more expansively." Branson described the new initiative as a "breakthrough" in acknowledging the potential benefits of dyslexia in the workplace.

The billionaire boss identifies as dyslexic and added that he hoped companies will be actively seeking out dyslexic thinkers in the coming years. Was this a biased statement or is there underrecognized value to hiring talent with perceived learning disabilities to develop an inclusive work environment?

What is neurodivergence?

Dyslexia is a learning disability characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, and poor spelling and decoding abilities. It can take away an individual's ability to read quickly, automatically, and retrieve spoken words easily, but, as Branson implied, [it doesn't dampen their creativity and ingenuity](#).

Learning disabilities such as dyslexia fall under the larger umbrella of "neurodivergent" thinking. [Harvard Health](#) defines neurodivergence, or neurodiversity, as "the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one 'right' way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and [differences are not viewed as deficits](#)."

The term "neurodiversity" was coined in the 90s and refers to [the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits](#), regarded as part of normal variation in the human population. It's often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as Tourette's syndrome, OCD, dyspraxia, and learning disabilities.

It's also important to note that about [15-20% of the global population](#) identify as neurodiverse – and that's not accounting for the undiagnosed struggling to understand why they can't just "fit in."

Like many neurodevelopmental conditions, they often are comorbid with mental health conditions that can put one at a disadvantage in the hiring process. Social Anxiety Disorder symptoms flare up during high-stress situations like job interviews, leading to perceived character or culture deficits through indicators like a lack of strong eye contact.

Depression can lead to a lack of confidence, enthusiasm, and/or know-how to showcase one's talents. And there are many other reasons that can make the job search more difficult – partly due to [recruiter bias and systemic ableism](#).

"I had to be taught how to socialize in the corporate world while in the internship program," said Danny Lakes, Manager of Global Business Services at P&G, who has ASD and was a guest on [HBR's The Anxious Achiever](#) podcast, a series devoted to creating cultures of inclusion, and embracing neurodiversity in the workplace. "If you don't have those basic social skills down, then people pick up on that and it really lowers your chances of being hired, from my experiences anyway."

According to a [2015 StatsCan report](#), 12% of Canadians with a disability reported having been refused a job in the previous five years as a result of their condition. Among 25-to 34-year-olds with a severe or very severe disability, the percentage was 33%.

Moreover, a 2017 [Public Health Canada survey of disability](#) reported by Deloitte's ["Embracing neurodiversity at work"](#) guide found that neurodiverse individuals remain underrepresented in the workforce, with a similar percentage of one in three Canadian adults with autism between the ages of 20 and 64 reporting being employed.

Why it matters

"Every member of society has an opportunity to participate in our nation's social and economic prosperity", states the Deloitte report. "All Canadians should be able to engage in work that's personally suitable and meaningful, capitalizing on their unique talents and strengths."

Too often, learning disabilities and neurodivergent traits are seen as a hindrance by organizations, requiring extra support. But many neurodiverse individuals don't view their condition as a disability. Rather, they frame it as being differently-abled.

A disproportionately high percentage of neurodivergent workers have been found to excel in areas like data analytics and mathematics. Neurodivergence can also bring a capacity for sustained attention with the capacity to focus – or hyperfocus – on complex, repetitive tasks, sustained over a long period of time.

[Researchers found](#) that autistic employees also have an information processing advantage and are better able to detect critical information, which may account for their higher-than-average prevalence in IT positions.

People with autism excel at pattern recognition and spotting irregularities, such as cyber intrusions. This is one of the reasons the Australian Government Department of Defence has found success with its [cybersecurity neurodiversity program](#).

That being said, it's important to note that neurodivergence is not a "superpower". While it can come with specialized skillsets that can bring a competitive advantage to your organization, it's also not something to be fetishized. Popular media has a way of doing so with savant-like characters such as Dustin Hoffman's portrayal of Ray in Rain Man or Jim Parsons portrayal of Dr. Sheldon Cooper, the ambiguously autistic physician from TV's The Big Bang Theory.

If you're looking to boost the diversity, equity, and inclusiveness of your workforce with regards to neurodivergence, certain accommodations, initiatives, and programs will need to be put in place.

Trailblazing companies

When it comes to fostering a culture of neurodiversity, some companies are trailblazing the path. Microsoft, for example, has created the [Microsoft Neurodiversity Hiring Program](#). The software giant believes that "neurodivergent individuals strengthen a workforce with innovative thinking and creative solutions...while enriching their performance, products, communities, and the lives of their employees."

EY has also made strides in diversifying its hiring strategy. The multinational organization launched the [Neurodiversity Centre of Excellence in Toronto](#) in November 2020, intending to recruit employees with autism, ADHD, or other sensory and cognitive differences.

"We're dying for talent as an organization," Anthony Rjeily, EY's neurodiversity program national leader, told [the CBC in April 2022](#). "So we wanted to see if there was any talent pool out there that we could potentially tap into."

Since the launch of the program, the company has recruited 45 neurodiverse employees to their Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax, and Montreal offices — and plans to expand recruitment in other cities in Canada.

There's more proof to the pudding. The four largest US neurodivergent hiring programs (SAP, JPMorgan Chase, Microsoft, and EY) all have [retention rates above 90%](#), which is higher than the average retention rates for their industries.

Furthermore, JPMorgan Chase reports that professionals in its [Autism at Work](#) initiative make fewer errors and are 90 to 140% more productive than neurotypical employees.

How to create a more inclusive workplace

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) falls under the Ontario Human Rights Code and is intended to recognize the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario. Part of its goal is to reduce and remove barriers for people with disabilities while fostering a psychologically safe work environment. Some of the recommendations in the act include:

- The right to accommodation plans like flex hours for staff to adjust to their optimal work hours.
- The right to accommodation also advises creating an environment that ensures optimal work output. This can include allowing people to wear noise-canceling headphones while at the office to help reduce distractions or building distraction-free workspaces.
- Designing customized career development and advancement plans that take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities.
- Setting clear expectations between managers and employees to ensure that work objectives and deliverables are met in a fair and timely manner.

Adding a telehealth service like Maple to your benefits package can support your recruitment efforts and improve employee wellness by providing accommodations for staff who may feel more at ease seeing a doctor from the comfort of their home.

But providing accommodations is not always a cut-and-dry situation, and it can require thoughtful consideration to navigate.

For example, according to the [Right to Accommodation](#) guidelines, a person may approach their employer to ask for accommodations because they're losing their hearing. At Maple, staff that have trouble prioritizing tasks and workloads have been able to make accommodations.

"I have a very difficult time with context switching and I rely on uninterrupted blocks of focused time to be productive," said Leah M. who identifies as neurodivergent. "After hearing this feedback, my team has ensured we condense meetings and back-and-forth correspondence to the morning chunk of the day so that my afternoons are nearly always uninterrupted which allows me the heads-down time I need."

Alternatively, the person may feel reluctant to approach the employer because they fear stigma if they disclose that they're gaining a disability.

However, the employer may notice that the worker seems distracted or less productive than usual. The employer should take time to discuss whether this behaviour could be due to challenges the worker is experiencing and whether workplace accommodations could help reduce these challenges.

In either case, the worker and employer can then begin discussing what the worker's disability-related needs are and how the employer can provide accommodations that will allow the worker to be productive again.

Diversity at work

Having a disability or neurodivergent traits does not equal savant-like capabilities, nor does it necessarily give one the power to become a billionaire CEO, like Sir Richard Branson or Elon Musk, for that matter.

But organizations can do more to allow for better outcomes and opportunities for differently-abled candidates by challenging recruitment bias, focusing on inclusion "culture fit" in the workplace and looking at skillsets of neurodiverse talent that go beyond "culture fit".

If you'd like to speak with a member of our team on how to bring your employee benefits to the next level, please reach out. We'd be happy to share our insights with you as Canada's leading virtual care platform.

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