# SafeThink™ Philosophy and Concepts
www.safethink.ca
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> ## The *vision* is zero illness and injury—the *strategy* is SafeThink™
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> Health and wellness are values promoted by industrial societies. Large portions of government budgets are spent to maintain excellent health care systems. As health care budgets continue to escalate, greater emphasis is being placed on *prevention* to reduce health care costs. Product standards, government regulations and enforcement, education, and the promotion of healthier lifestyles are primary preventive methods. Prevention of illness and injury will be most successful within a culture of safety—a culture in which everyone, young and old, takes measures to prevent illness and injury. In a culture of safety, people are vigilant and mentally engaged—throughout the day—in identifying and predicting hazardous situations to prevent illness and injury. And that's how SafeThink makes its important contribution: SafeThink develops a culture of safety.

## SafeThink™—Creating a Commitment to Safety

SafeThink is a *structured critical thinking strategy* to identify and predict hazardous situations. People can SafeThink "on the fly" at work, while driving, at home, and at play. When the strategy is internalized, people are intrinsically motivated to use it to keep out of harm's way. Because the internalized strategy is instantly available, it becomes part of how they think about, plan, do, and follow up on work and personal activities to prevent being harmed.

## SafeThink™—Preventing Illness and Injury

SafeThink places an emphasis on *predicting* hazardous situations, be it a few seconds or several hours before engaging in work or other activities. The SafeThink course also emphasizes controls that can be used to remain safe. What's powerful about SafeThink is that people apply a mental strategy to rigorously think through their work and personal activities and to act safely.

## SafeThink™—Contributing to a Safe Environment

Organizations are responsible for ensuring a safe workplace but cannot do it without the help of their employees. Employees are responsible to work safely—SafeThink helps keep them out of harm's way all day. With SafeThink, employees take a personal initiative to think through the work. When everyone continually looks for and predicts hazardous situations, the risk of illness and injury decreases immensely. The strategy gives employees the tools they need to *remain vigilant* and focused on their work. With SafeThink, employees are rigorous in assessing their environments and actions to identify and predict hazardous situations.

## SafeThink™—Creating a Culture of Safety

Because participants of SafeThink workshops believe that the strategy has personal value, they have an interest in encouraging others to use it. Promoting a culture of safety is more likely to be successful when people have a personal interest in doing so. 90% of workshop participants say that they would feel significantly safer or a major degree safer if their co-workers and peers used the strategy. SafeThink is a cognitive mental strategy. It gives people a reason to make the effort to prevent incidents thereby reinforcing positive safety attitudes. Collectively, groups of employees easily identify with SafeThink, contributing to a culture of safety.

## SafeThink™—The Power of Structured Thinking

SafeThink has several powerful features that make it useful and effective:

- SafeThink provides a framework to make it easier for people to deal with the complexities of health and safety and to be more structured at identifying and predicting hazardous situations.

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In addition, agents of cause common to a broad range of industries are identified as a *set of generalities* (concepts), reducing the number of unique agents of cause. Generalities give people more flexibility in identifying agents of cause in unfamiliar workplaces and environments. Together, the framework and generalities make the strategy easy to apply and reduce the time to identify hazardous situations.

- SafeThink requires that people ask themselves a series of hierarchical questions to identify and predict hazardous situations. When people ask themselves a question, it tends to beg an answer, contributing to thorough analysis of the task and work environment. Self-questioning also helps people to remain mentally engaged in identifying and predicting hazardous situations.
- *What if . . .?* questions can be very useful for determining *What can go wrong?* SafeThink provides a structured way for people to use a set of *What if . . .?* questions so that they are more effective at dealing with potential changes in the workplace.
- Several other critical health and safety issues are also addressed in the SafeThink course, including:
  - developing good safety habits
  - ways to remain vigilant
  - reasons and causes for safe and unsafe behaviors
  - how people's actions can impact others

## SafeThink™—Personalizing the Strategy

More experienced workers have often learned the agents of cause and created their own generalities through trial and error. And their learning may be incomplete—they likely haven't been exposed to a broad set of situations.

It is no longer acceptable for workers to learn by trial and error about hazardous situations and create their own generalities. SafeThink has identified these generalities. SafeThink training ensures that workers know the generalities for agents of cause and the conditions, actions, and events that create hazardous situations. Through a series of learning activities, workers apply the SafeThink strategy to their tasks, workplaces, and personal environments to give meaning to the generalities—they *personalize* the generalities and *internalize* the structured thinking strategy.

## SafeThink™—Integrating SafeThink into the Workplace

SafeThink is cognitive-based. It supports the behavior-based safety model by providing the means to make more comprehensive behavior-based observations. SafeThink also relates to the person-based model in two ways. Firstly, when people are given a rigorous thinking strategy, they become more effective at meeting their responsibilities for working safely. Secondly, when people internalize SafeThink, they are intrinsically motivated to use the strategy on and off the job.

The SafeThink course is a powerful intervention that contributes to developing positive safety attitudes. Collectively, when a group identifies with SafeThink, they can shift individual worker attitudes significantly. (IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, Sept. 2007, Vol. 50, Num. 3, P 232-248)

The biggest payback for employers comes after SafeThink is integrated into daily routines and the organization makes efforts to reinforce the use of SafeThink each and every day.

The culture of safety is enhanced when everyone, young and old, uses SafeThink throughout the day, at work and in their personal lives, to prevent illness and injury.

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