

# What do we mean by autonomy?

For many people, work is a way to develop and grow in society. Autonomy is an essential part of this as it relates to notions of control and self-realization. Autonomy is stimulating, but does not manifest the same way for everyone. The degree of autonomy sought can differ according to personality, desire or job.



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**Lack of autonomy and  
influence at work**

  
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## What should autonomy and influence in decision-making look like?

We must claim a workplace that offers and values:

- ✓ creativity and initiative;
- ✓ development of competencies to perform new tasks or take on new roles;
- ✓ participation in management decisions;
- ✓ some leeway in the way work is performed;
- ✓ consultation before, during, and after organizational changes;
- ✓ the creation of semi-autonomous work teams;
- ✓ flexible schedules and choice of break times.

## What does a lack of autonomy look like?

Workers lack autonomy when they:

- want to take initiative but can't;
- have little or no control over the execution of their tasks (pace of work);
- have no leeway between what they are asked to do and the completed task;
- don't take part in organizational decisions that concern them;
- have no influence over work methods and practices;
- are not informed or consulted before, during, and after organizational changes;
- are unable to develop their competencies in the course of their work.

## What are the risks of a lack of autonomy and influence at work?

Several studies have found a link between limited autonomy at work and health issues.

In addition, an organization that is rigid and does not allow workers to be autonomous can prevent them from building their sense of identity and, in some cases, weaken their psychological wellbeing.

Finally, when a person experiences this situation combined with a heavy workload, there is an increase in the risk of cardiovascular disease and mental health illness (depression, psychological distress or an increased consumption of psychotropic substances).

## How can the situation be improved?

If you feel discomfort or have needs that are unmet due to one or more of the elements above, you may be lacking autonomy or influence. However, requesting more autonomy or influence when an organization does not value these needs can be difficult.

**TALK TO YOUR UNION.**

By raising the subject with your union, you alert them to your situation. They may already be aware of other workers experiencing the same problem and be able to put you in touch with them. Together with you and other affected workers, your union can analyze the situation and come up with a way to solve the problem.

The problem is not in your head. The organization of work is at fault and it can make you sick. Talk to your union.

**Together, we have the power to act.**