



Daily Toolbox Talk: Healthy Mind, Healthy Body

May 4, 2021

Being safe means paying attention to both mind and body. It extends beyond wearing hardhats and safety glasses. It means recognizing how important mental health really is to everyone's overall safety. From suicide to distractions that lead to devastating accidents, it is important that we all recognize the importance of total well-being. When workers are physically and mentally safe everyone wins.

Today, more than ever, the construction industry is prioritizing mental health well-being. Often referred to as "the silent epidemic," construction has the second-highest suicide rate by occupation in the United States. To face this silent epidemic, we must first understand what causes it and continue to work together to overcome it.

Our industry is often labeled as an "old school" or "tough" culture, but we must realize this is changing. For co-workers dealing with a mental illness, this may be a barrier to reach out for help. Embracing the culture of caring that is sweeping our industry creates the workplace support network that is critical for workers in need. Work away from home and long hours means we often spend more time with our co-workers than our family. Taking a genuine interest in your team members' well-being can be our best tool to overcome mental illness. Know the warning signs such as significant mood changes, withdrawals, tardiness, and substance abuse. Stop, take the initiative, and intervene. You just may be the help that person needs or even save a life.

Many employers have also adopted an employee assistance program or direct talk/ text therapy service. Encourage the use of these tools and always remember help is available.

People are indeed the most valuable asset we have, and to preserve our people's longevity, we must take an active role in our physical health. Hard manual labor, long hours, and lack of rest can take a toll on the body. With an aging workforce, the focus must turn to healthy lifestyle choices. Participation in daily stretch and flex, as well as proper lifting techniques has shown a significant impact on soft tissue injuries. Adequate sleep and a healthy diet play an integral role in your overall health. Aim for eight hours of sleep a night, maintain a healthy balanced diet, and stay hydrated throughout the day. Remember that small changes each day can have a tremendous impact over time on your physical well-being.

Striving for a healthy mind and healthy body means you are one piece of the puzzle that shapes a healthier future for our industry. Together we can make a difference.



Discuss these questions with your crew. Possible answers are listed below each question.

1. **How can you help someone that seems to be struggling with mental health?**
 - a. *Listen to what that person is saying - show understanding*
 - b. *Talk about well-being and keep questions open-ended*
 - c. *Don't try to diagnosis an issue or guess feelings*
 - d. *Offer seeking professional support and provide ways to do this*
2. **What resources are available to support a healthy mind?**
 - a. *Family and close friends*
 - b. *Trusted co-workers*
 - c. *Your doctor or mental health professional*
 - d. *Employee Assistance Programs*
 - e. *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255)*
3. **What adjustments can you make to your daily routine to support a healthy body?**
 - a. *Eliminate unhealthy habits like excessive drinking, smoking, or other substance abuse*
 - b. *Participate in a daily stretch and flex routine - listen to your body*
 - c. *Maintain a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of water*
 - d. *Aim for 8 hours of sleep each night*
4. **Encourage sharing and storytelling:**
 - a. *What advice would you give to a younger worker?*
 - b. *What ideas do you have to make your workplace better?*
 - c. *Has a mental or physical health problem ever affected you or a co-worker?*

Crew Signatures:

