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ONTARIO

TOOLBOX TALK

Topic: Mental Health during COVID 19

Date:

Site/Facility:

Time:

Supervisor or Facilitator:

Information Communicated

Mental Health at Work and at Home

NOTE: Hand out the resource sheet attached prior to the meeting start.

The Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) reports that in any one year 1 in 5 Canadians experience a mental health illness or addiction problem and by age 40, 1 in every 2 people have had a mental illness.

Construction workers can be stressed about many things including work, schedules, weather, time away from home high, risk work- related injuries, and pain. If they fail to seek help they can be at risk for more injuries and mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and even suicide, according researchers at Harvard School of Public Health.

Many construction sites have a macho work culture of self-reliance and the expectation that trades workers can withstand insecure and transient work conditions.

As construction workers some of you may have uncertainty, worry, anxiety, and stress with regards to COVID-19 and this is normal. It seems to be a discussion topic daily as we need to take required precautions (i.e. washing hands thoroughly, practicing safe physical distancing, etc.). Combine this with shut downs, employment uncertainty, kids home from school, loss of routine and fear of loved ones or ourselves becoming ill with COVID -19, any or all of these can take a toll on our mental health.

Some Types of Mental Health Issues include:

Mental Health issues arise in various ways, some of which may not be obvious and not what we normally think of when we think of mental health issues. Although feeling sad or angry from time to time is normal, if you are experiencing these feelings regularly or they don't seem to pass you may be experiencing depression.

Other symptoms include having difficulty concentrating, less patience, being rammy, irritable and argumentative, loss of interest in sex, family or work, insomnia, feeling a sense of impending doom, panic or dread, self-isolation, alcohol or substance abuse and thoughts of suicide. Often depression and anxiety in men manifest as anger and irritability.

Mental health symptoms can also be physical such as tiredness and inability to sleep well, over eating, not eating enough and feeling tired or exhausted.

Take a stand against stigma

Much has been done to lessen the stigma associated with mental health illness in the last 5 years however it remains a major barrier to asking for help. A recent survey showed that less than half of Ontario workers indicate they would tell their manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem. 40% said they have experienced anxiety or depression but have never sought medical help for it.



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We don't have to suffer in silence and can stop the stigma. Support each other and call out negative, macho culture and keep an eye out for coworkers who may need a break.

What you can do to look after yourself?

- Reach out for help when you need and be the help when others need it.
- Stay informed but take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news Too much negativity can impact mood and anxiety levels
- Identify what is within your control and direct your energy towards what most worries you within your control.
- Make time to unwind, walk exercise, listen to music, meditate, read a book.
- Connect with friends, family and others over zoom or other methods of connecting
- . Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling
- Keep good sleep habits and turn your phone off early
- Talk to your doctor

What you can do to look after each other?

- If you, or someone you care about, are overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others, please call 911.
- Watch for symptoms in yourself and coworkers.
- Give each other a break and make a point of checking in with one another
- When someone is not acting like themselves, ask how you can support them

Talk to each other, don't judge and let's help each other through this time. One kind word or act can make a big difference for someone who is struggling.

Resources

Review your benefits plan, available Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Membership Assistance Program (MAP).
Review the resources sheet handed out, and keep it available so that you and loved ones have access to it.
Discuss resources with each other and loved ones.

Feedback

Ask the question: What can we do to reduce stress and support each other?
