



Mental Wellbeing During Coronavirus/COVID-19

Toolbox Talk: Self-Care

Note: Please maintain proper “physical distancing” of six feet or greater, in accordance with the CDC Social Distancing guidelines, while discussing this Safety and Mental Health Toolbox Talk.

Coronavirus/COVID-19 is having a major impact on the economy. Every day it seems the negative news keeps on coming. There seems to be more uncertainty with no end in sight to the bad news.

Recently a construction publication reported a survey that ranking growing anxiety among our workers as the top issue of concern for contractors. Many construction workers are experiencing stress over the economy. These workers are anxious about their health and the safety and wellbeing of their families. Many are fearful of losing their jobs, healthcare coverage and their retirement dreams.

These are trying times for construction workers and their families. The stress and anxiety are growing as more states are requiring non-essential employees work from home. At the same time, schools are closing, and families are being pushed to the limit with these pressures. The rising uncertainty will increase stress, anxiety and fear. Higher levels of these emotions can lead to depression.

Why is this so important? Approximately 20% of the United States population has an underlying diagnosable mental health condition. Construction is a high-risk industry for mental health challenges, substance use disorders and suicide. It is important to have a safety net where no worker is left behind.



What can we do about to reduce this stress and anxiety? Here are a few practical tips to share with all crew members:

1. It is important to have a safety net where no worker is left behind. Supervisors and crews need to build a caring jobsite culture that helps promote respect and care for every worker. This is called psychological safety and it builds trust and a sense belonging to a crew.

During times of stress, workers are easily distracted, and safety lapses occur leading to higher incidents and injuries. Foremen are encouraged to hold Daily Safety Huddles and take safety timeouts to keep crews focused on safe work.

2. Encourage workers to talk to their families and loved ones. It is healthy to acknowledge one's fears and to discuss what is stressing you out, how it makes you feel and why you're experiencing stress. Oftentimes, this venting is a stress reliever.
3. Workers are encouraged to take time for self-care for themselves and for their families. Focus on some good healthy living basics:
 - ✓ Eating nutritionally balanced meals at regular times
 - ✓ Minimizing high caloric snacks and substitute "smart snacking" (fruits, vegetables, nuts, protein bars, etc.)
 - ✓ Staying properly hydrated with water and avoiding sugary sodas or energy drinks
 - ✓ Enjoying outdoor walks and exercising (with physical distancing)
 - ✓ Reducing alcohol intake and avoiding drugs
 - ✓ Setting limits on watching news programs
 - ✓ Sleeping well

Mental wellbeing is part of the safety, health and wellness culture in our company and our industry. We can help make a difference for ourselves and our crewmates if we practice self-care on and off-the-job. We'll feel better and so will our families.

Thank you for taking time to think about self-care. You're more than essential workers to us; you're a member of our work family! We care about you and we'll get through Coronavirus by working together.