



## **Toolbox Talk: Let's Build a Stronger Workplace Culture**

Today, we're talking about something just as important as physical safety: our mental health. In our industry, there's often a "tough guy" culture where we feel like we have to hide our struggles and problems. But that culture is dangerous, and it's time we started talking about it.

### **The Stats**

- **High Suicide Rates:** Construction has one of the highest suicide rates of any profession. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that the suicide rate for construction workers is four times higher than the national average. That's not just a number; it's our friends and coworkers.
- **Substance Use:** The high-pressure, physically demanding nature of our work can lead to a reliance on drugs or alcohol to cope with pain and stress. This increases the risk of addiction and makes it harder to deal with mental health challenges.
- **Low Treatment Rates:** A study by the American Psychological Association found that construction workers are less likely to seek treatment for mental health issues compared to other professions. This is a direct result of the stigma that tells us we should handle everything on our own.

### **What Leaders Can Do**

- Leaders on this job site have a huge role to play in changing the culture. You can help by:
  - **Speaking Up:** Talk openly about mental health during safety briefings and toolbox talks. By showing that you take this issue seriously, you give others permission to do the same.
  - **Providing Resources:** Post information about our company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), mental health
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hotlines, and local support services in visible, private areas like bathrooms and break rooms.

- Leading by Example: Take time off when you need it and encourage others to do the same. This shows that rest and recovery are valued, just like hard work.

### **What Employees Can Do**

- Every single person on this site has the power to make a difference. You can help by:
  - Checking In: Ask your coworkers how they're really doing, especially if you notice a change in their behavior. Listen to their answer without judgment. A simple question can save a life.
  - Using Supportive Language: Be mindful of the language you use. Avoid jokes or comments that make fun of someone for showing emotion or struggling.
  - Reaching Out: If you're struggling, talk to someone you trust, whether it's a leader, a coworker, a family member, or a professional. Remember, getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
  - Let's work together to build a strong foundation of support here. Let's make this job site a place where everyone feels safe, both physically and mentally.

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