Mental health toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.50, 1904.29, 1926.21, 1910.151

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

When was the last time someone on this crew asked how you were really doing, and waited for the answer?

Why it matters

Everyone brings their life to work: money worries, family problems, long hours, time away from home, grief or a layoff. Stress, burnout, anxiety, depression and substance use are health problems, not weakness, and people do get better with help. They also pull your focus off the task, and on a jobsite a lost focus can get someone hurt. Looking out for each other's minds is part of looking out for each other's safety.

Key points

1 Know the warning signs

Watch for changes in a coworker: pulling away from the crew, being unusually quiet or angry, more mistakes or near misses, coming in late or missing days, or drinking or using more. Talk about feeling hopeless, trapped or like a burden is a serious warning sign. You do not need to diagnose anything. You just need to notice and care enough to ask.

2 Ask, then listen

Pick a private moment and ask straight out: "How are you really doing?" Then listen without judging, arguing or trying to fix everything. If you are worried they might hurt themselves, it is okay to ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. Stay with them and help them connect with support.

3 Know where to get help

If your company has an employee assistance program (EAP), find out how to reach it before you need it. Anyone can call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time, day or night. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911 and stay with them. In construction, where 911 service is not available, the phone numbers of doctors, hospitals or ambulances must be posted where everyone can see them.

29 CFR 1926.50(f)(1)

4 Stress, fatigue and substances affect safety

Worry, lack of sleep, alcohol, drugs and some medications slow your reactions and cloud your judgment. On a jobsite, that can mean a missed step, a hand in a pinch point or a wrong move with equipment. If you are not fit to do a task safely today, say so. Asking for a different task is better than getting hurt.

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5 **Keep it private and make it normal**

Leaders set the tone: talk about stress openly, and never joke about someone getting help. If a coworker opens up to you, keep it between you, unless someone's safety is at risk. OSHA's recordkeeping rule treats mental illnesses as privacy concern cases, so the employer may not enter the worker's name on the OSHA 300 Log (29 CFR 1904.29(b)(6)).

29 CFR 1904.29(b)(7)(iii)

6 **Take care of your own head too**

Sleep, food, water and time off the job all help you handle stress. Stay connected with family and friends, and talk to someone you trust when things pile up. Go easy on alcohol, because it can make stress and sleep worse. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

Scenario

Picture this: a reliable crew member has been showing up late, snapping at people and making small mistakes for a couple of weeks. Yesterday he almost stepped off a deck edge without looking. At lunch he jokes that nobody would notice if he did not come back. What should his coworkers and the foreman do today?

Crew discussion

1. What changes in a coworker would make you stop and ask if they are okay?
2. Where can someone on this crew get help, and does everyone have 988 saved in their phone?
3. What makes it hard to talk about stress on a jobsite, and what would make it easier?
4. How can we check on each other without making it awkward?

Bottom line **Ask how people are really doing, listen without judging, and help them get to the right support.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Mental health at work / Salud mental en el trabajo

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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