

TOOLBOX TALK #6

Protecting Your Mental Health



In the construction industry, we take pride in looking out for one another. We show up when times get tough. Whether it is helping a crew member through personal struggles or just being there to listen, that sense of brotherhood and sisterhood runs deep on our job sites. But while it is important to be there for each other, it is just as important to protect your own mental health in the process.

You Don't Have to Have All the Answers

It can be heavy when someone opens up about their mental health. We care deeply about the people we work alongside with and that can make it hard to walk away from those conversations unaffected. But remember: you are not expected to have all the answers. You don't need to know how to fix everything. Being there, listening without judgement, and helping point them toward professional support is often the most helpful thing you can do.

Know Your Limits and Boundaries

When helping a crew member through a difficult time, it is easy to give more of yourself than you have to spare. You might find yourself lying awake thinking about their problems or feeling emotionally drained. That is a sign to check in with yourself.

Setting boundaries doesn't mean you care less. It means you are making sure you are well enough to keep showing up. You can't pour from an empty cup.

Effective Ways to Support Others

- **Listen without trying to solve:** Sometimes people just need to feel heard.
- **Validate their feelings:** Say things like, "That sounds really tough" or "I am glad you shared that with me."
- **Encourage additional support:** Suggest they talk to someone trained to help, like from TEAM or through the 988 Lifeline.
- **Follow up:** A simple, "Just wanted to say I am here if you ever need to talk again." or "Did you get a chance to talk to anyone or use any of those resources we talked about." or "Anything you need help with this week - on or off the job site?" can go a long way.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. **What does it look like to "listen without trying to solve" when someone shares something heavy?** How do you remind yourself not to take on too much?
2. **What would a healthy crew culture around mental health look like to you?** What steps can we take to build that together?

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Know the Signs in Yourself

If you notice any of these signs in yourself, it might be time to take a step back and check in.

- You feel emotionally drained or exhausted after conversations.
- You feel responsible for their mental health or decisions.
- Your mood changes - you are more anxious, irritable, or withdrawn.
- You have trouble sleeping or constantly think about their situation in your head.
- You are skipping your own self-care to support others.
- You feel guilty when you set boundaries or take time for yourself.
- You are less focused or motivated at work or at home.

These can be signs that your own mental health is being impacted. It is important to remember that resources are there for you too.

Support Resources

You are not alone. Just like your crew member deserves support, so do you. If you need someone to talk to, reach out to any of the following.

- 988 Lifeline: Call or text 988 for free, confidential support 24/7.
- TEAM: Offers counseling, resources, and support for tradespeople and their families.
- Your Union Business Representative: A trusted point of contact who can help connect you to support and resources when you are facing challenges on or off the job site.

Keep Showing Up - But Take Care of You Too

When we take care of ourselves, we are better equipped to take care of others. Protecting your mental health doesn't mean walking away from your crew - it means making sure you can keep showing up for them long term.

Together, we can create a culture where it is ok to speak up, to ask for help, and to take care of ourselves and each other. That is what real strength looks like. Stay safe. stay strong. We have each other's backs.

988 Lifeline

TEAM 1-800-634-7710

Additional resources can be found at www.northcountrycarpenter.org/mental-health