

LET'S TALK

MENTAL HEALTH



Mental Health vs Mental Illness



1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year

1 in 20

1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year

1 in 6

youth (6-17 years) experience a mental health disorder each year

Mental Health:

- Emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing
- Affects how we think, feel, and act
- Helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices
- Changes over time and is impacted by many factors:
 - » genetics
 - » life events
 - » economic stress
 - » pandemic related changes
 - » environmental stressors
 - » poor physical health
 - » change in routine

Mental Illnesses:

- Conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior, such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder.
- May be occasional or long-lasting (chronic) and affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day
- Among the most common health conditions in the United States - more than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime



I spent most of my life feeling on edge and irritated. I'd blow up at my co-workers and family over trivial things. It wasn't until my wife made me go to marriage counseling that I realized I had anxiety. And I realized that it got a whole lot worse when project deadlines approached.

I feel a lot of people in construction have mental health issues, and working in construction compounds it. Even if you realize you have these problems, there's no way to treat or deal with them, so it becomes worse and worse.

If you're working 60 hours a week, you're setting yourself up to fail. Toxic masculinity is an easy thing to pin it on, but the issues are more complex.

- Anonymous



Take action to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and a healthy lifestyle.

Our industry and region are coming together to promote good mental health in construction. Below are things you can do to support the mental health of you and your coworkers.



Recognize It

Look out for common signs someone is struggling



Talk About It

Connect with someone you trust to share your concerns



Support Others

Let them know you there to listen and find help if needed



Get Help

Reach out to your doctor for support and guidance

Call or text - 988

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Reducing Stigma

Stigma is negative attitudes and beliefs about a person due to a specific characteristic, such as mental illness. It often comes from a place of fear and misunderstanding.

Stigma can cause someone's condition to worsen due to:

- avoidance** - delaying or refusing treatment due to shame or hopelessness
- exclusion** - social rejection or strained relationships due to lack of understanding
- discrimination** - fewer opportunities at work or school

Mental illness is common, not shameful

There are many reasons why a person develops mental illness and all impact one's mental health:

- » genetics » trauma » life experience » violence

How to Reduce Stigma

- Talk openly about mental health
- Know the facts - educate yourself and others to be a part of the solution
- Think before you speak - your words matter and can have lasting effects
- Show compassion for those with mental illness
- Don't hide your experiences - you'd be surprised who else you know who has also struggled
- Don't harbor self stigma - choose courage over shame



Recognize It

Look out for the harmful effects of stigma



Talk About It

Bring conversations about mental health into the open



Support Others

Let them know you there to listen and find help if needed

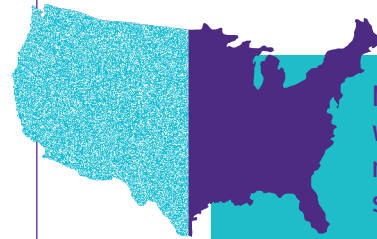


Get Help

Alert a supervisor if you experience or see mistreatment

40%

Stigma prevents 40% of people with anxiety or depression from seeking help



More than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lives.



People in my industry told me this is career suicide, people won't want to work with somebody dealing with anxiety and depression. But how will they work with their employees? Everybody's dealing with a crisis, in a way.

My passion is to encourage people to talk about their own story. How will anyone ever be comfortable with mental illness if nobody talks about it? If I had survived cancer I would be shouting it from the rooftops. Well I have survived major depression and a serious anxiety disorder. I am so proud of myself. Please tell your story. There is someone waiting for you to open up so that they can open up to you. You may even help someone you love become a survivor themselves.



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Stress!

Stress is how your body reacts to a perceived threat, demand, or challenge.

It can be positive (motivating to prepare for a happy event) or negative (experiencing a traumatic event).

You may experience stress from:

- a single event, such as getting into an argument
- multiple stressors or a single stressor over an extended period, such as an unhealthy work environment

Stress can impact your physical and mental health, your relationships, and your work.

Some signs of stress are:

- easily agitated, frustrated, and moody
- having difficulty relaxing
- feeling lonely, worthless, and depressed
- racing thoughts, unable to focus
- rapid heart beat
- constant worrying
- insomnia
- low energy
- headaches
- upset stomach

Healthy ways to cope with stress:

1. **Eliminate stressors** - remove yourself from the stressful situation if possible
2. **Take care of your body** - eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of rest
3. **Take a break** - do things for yourself, participate in activities you enjoy
4. **Talk to others** - share how you are feeling with a trusted family member, friend, or coworker
5. **Recognize when you need help** - if your stress starts to impact your day-to-day life, reach out to your doctor for guidance and support



It's incredible the stress placed on everyone to complete a project in a certain time frame and budget. We take pride in our work and the buildings we create. And the stoic, "pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps" mentality makes you feel incompetent.

We've all had that foreman who says things like, "Did you come here to work or to whine?" That's just not right. If you're stressed, you are a threat to our safety and to our timeline. Pushing people to the max shouldn't be the norm.



Recognize It
Look out for common signs and symptoms



Try It
Find coping strategies that work for you - share with others



Support Others
Everyone has stress. Be someone to lean on when things get tough



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Depression vs. Anxiety

Depression

- is an illness that causes feelings of sadness or a loss of interest in activities
- negatively impacts how you feel, think, and act

Anxiety

- is a normal reaction to stress
- anxiety disorders involve excessive fear or worry that is difficult to control and disproportionate to the actual danger

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION	SIGNS OF ANXIETY
loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed	uncontrollable worry
significant weight loss or gain due to change in appetite	excessive nervousness
feel worthless or guilty	difficulty sleeping
trouble sleeping or sleeping too much	upset stomach
unable to concentrate or make decisions	increased heart rate
fatigue	muscle pain, tightness, soreness
recurring thoughts of death or suicide	avoidance

1 in 6 people will suffer from depression

nearly **1 in 3** will suffer from an anxiety disorder in their lifetime

If you recognize these symptoms make sure to:

1. Practice self care - be kind to yourself and do things you enjoy. Eat healthy, exercise, and get plenty of rest.
2. Get help - you don't have to shoulder the burden of these feelings alone. Talk to someone you trust or call your doctor or a mental health professional.
3. If you are thinking of death or suicide, call the National Suicide Hotline 1-800-273-8255 or tell someone you trust and let them know you need immediate help.

“
A few years ago, my impact protection vehicle was struck by a vehicle traveling over 60 mph. I was off work for a year due to my injuries. I felt “fine” on returning to work but, soon started to feel anxious and panicked - I felt like I couldn't breathe, and I started crying - I learned afterwards that I was having a panic attack.
My company helped me find a counselor, and I was diagnosed anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I still have worries about getting back in an IPV and haven't been in one since, but my managers and coworkers have been really supportive and I'm so grateful to them.
 ”

Recognize It
Look out for common signs and symptoms

Talk About It
Connect with someone you trust to share your thoughts

Support Others
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Self-Care: More Than a Fad

What is self-care?

Self-care activities are things you do in your daily life to establish and maintain good health and improve your wellbeing.

Self-care can help you manage mental health challenges such as stress, depression, and anxiety.

What does self-care look like?

- Self-care is very personal. What helps one person maintain wellbeing, might not work for others.
- Self-care can be simple, such as taking a deep breath when you notice you are stressed, or it can be more involved, like setting boundaries or creating new routines.

5

areas of
self-care

- physical
- emotional/psychological
- social
- spiritual
- intellectual/mental



Self-care is the key to resilience

Self-care helps you bounce back in the face of challenges. You are better able to care for others and handle stress when you are feeling your best.

Consider creating an action plan

- Step 1: Evaluate your life and identify where you are feeling unbalanced.
- Step 2: Determine what self-care practices will meet your needs.
- Step 3: Decide what you want to try - is it something new, something easy?
- Step 4: Set up a realistic plan that you can stick with.
- Step 5: Determine when/where/how to start.



For a long time, I'd unwind by throwing back a few beers after work or lounging on the couch watching TV. When my son was playing high school football, he asked me to take him to the gym, so we started going a few days a week after work. I noticed I felt so much better on the days that we worked out - my kids even told me I wasn't as grumpy as usual. So now I try to do something active after work.



Try It

Try something new to recharge your batteries



Talk About It

Connect with someone you trust to share your plan



Support Others

Check in with others and encourage their self-care



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Awareness of Your Own Mental Health

We often spend so much time taking care of others we can forget to take care of ourselves. You may recognize you don't feel like yourself, but not realize how it's affecting your life or those around you.

Good mental health helps you bounce back from stresses and thrive in your daily life.

The first step to improving and maintaining good mental health, is self-awareness. Without taking the time to check-in, you may find yourself stuck in the same cycles that are harming your mental health.

You can't perform at work or take care of your family if you're unwell - mentally or physically.

If you are struggling, practice self-care. Take the time to check-in and get help if you are struggling. Your family doctor, employer's EAP / MAP, or your insurance company can all provide support and mental health resources. As you stay on top of your mental health, over time you will realize you're starting to feel better, and your family and coworkers will notice it too.

Answer these simple self-awareness questions:

- How are you feeling today, really? Physically and mentally.
- What's taking up most of your headspace right now?
- What and when was your last full meal, and have you been drinking enough water?
- How have you been sleeping?
- What have you been doing for exercise?
- What did you do today that made you feel good?

How did you answer these questions? Are you struggling and need some support?



There is a misconception that if you show up for work and have a smile on your face, you must be okay.

Looking back, I didn't know how powerful poor mental health could be - which led to me not taking care of myself, putting on a brave face, smiling through the pain, clothing my demons and battling on.

Awareness of my own mental health has helped me recognize triggers, and when it's trying to regain a foothold, I can take the actions to prevent it from getting worse.



Try It

Try to check in with yourself 1 time per week



Talk About It

Share with a loved one how you're feeling



Support Others

Let them know you there to listen and find help if needed



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How to Get Help

1 in 5 people will experience a diagnosable mental health condition in their lives, but everyone will go through a challenging time that affects their mental health.

Only 43% of adults with mental illness get treatment in a given year and the average delay between symptom onset and treatment is 11 years.

It might feel overwhelming if you are struggling and you don't know where to go for help. Thankfully, there are many places to go for support and resources.

Some signs that you might want to speak to a mental health professional are:

- Prolonged sadness or irritability
- Excessive fears, worries, and anxieties
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Strong feelings of anger
- Social withdrawal
- Confused thinking
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal thoughts



Recognize It
Look out for common signs and symptoms



Talk About It
Connect with someone you trust to share your concerns



Support Others
Let them know you there to listen and find help if needed



Get Help
Reach out to your doctor for support and guidance



There was nothing in particular that made me realize I was struggling. It was more an accumulation of things, but I realized I needed to get some help.

I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't spoken out about it, but I'm so glad I did. Saying the things I was feeling out loud legitimized them for me.

I stopped telling myself I was being silly or overreacting and started to treat the feelings as an illness that required healing.



Where To Look for Help:

Your family doctor

He/she can screen for mental health conditions, provide any necessary referrals, and prescribe medication.

Your employer's EAP / MAP

May offer access to counselors or provide referrals.

Insurance company

Will have a list of providers covered by your plan.

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Suicide Awareness

CONSTRUCTION HAS 2ND HIGHEST RATE
of suicides among all occupations,
THREE TIMES the general population!

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US

In 2020, men died by suicide 3.6x more often than women

There were nearly 48,344 suicides in the US in 2020 and 1.4 million suicide attempts*

**more deaths than motor vehicle crashes*

Why the construction industry?

- Male dominated industry with a macho culture
- High job stress - demanding schedules, seasonal work, layoffs, long hours, frequent travel
- Injuries and chronic pain; sometimes treated with opioids
- High rates of alcohol and drug use

So what do we do?

- Talk about it! Make it part of the safety conversation
- Learn to recognize the warning signs in yourself and others
- Seek help from national and local resources



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Two months into a new project, I realized I had underbid by \$100,000. The pressure mounted, though I didn't talk about it with my wife or the subcontractors on the job. I thought about my life insurance policy and thought to myself, 'this money issue gets solved if you're not around'. It was like an itch that kept talking to me and talking to me. I thought of how my two-year-old son would probably never remember me.

I called a suicide hotline three times. One person on the other end of the line told me that if I took my own life, my wife and son had a 50% greater chance of trying the same thing. That put me back in my chair. I couldn't put that kind of burden on them. I didn't want them to think it's an okay thing.



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Alcohol & Drug Use

Whether it's meeting a friend for happy hour or celebrating a special occasion, alcohol is a part of our culture. In fact, construction workers have been found to drink more frequently and consume more alcohol than the general population.

Alcohol and drug use are linked to mental health – you may reach for a beer to relax, or feel sad or down after using. Using alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism can make mental health problems worse.



I saw my best friend throw away his life because of alcohol. We became friends in our early twenties when we were both apprentice pipe fitters. Neither of us had girlfriends at the time so we'd go out drinking after work almost every day. We probably drank too much but so did everyone else.

Over time I started to notice that he was rarely sober. He showed up drunk to a funeral, got wasted at my daughter's first birthday party, and made a fool of himself way too many times to count. Each time, he laughed it off acting as if everyone does that sometimes. And the truth is, I had my own stupid drunken stories so I brushed it off.

Even as I watched in lose jobs and break up with girlfriends, I never thought it was my place - my business - to talk to him about his drinking. I lost track of him for a few years and then found out he died from a heart attack. He was only 47. I don't know for sure that it was from alcohol use, but I'll always regret not trying to help him.



60% of alcohol users are excessive drinkers
2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

According to the CDC, excessive drinking includes:

- 8+ drinks per week or 4+ drinks in a single occasion for women
- 15+ drinks per week or 5+ drinks in a single occasion for men

Alcohol & drug abuse affects your:

- **Body/mind:** risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, mental illness
- **Relationships & social life:** stress on friends and family, increased arguments, domestic violence
- **Work:** risk of injury to yourself and others, unreliable, less efficient

Signs of substance abuse

- Problems at home or work
- Physical health issues
- Changes in behavior
- Money issues
- Unwillingness to stop using

Ways to reduce substance use:

- **Practice self-care:** get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, exercise
- **Find positive distractions:** create routines that don't involve substance use
- **Ask for help:** call a sober friend or talk to your doctor for guidance and support

Excessive alcohol use is responsible for

95,000 DEATHS
in the U.S. each year



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Opioids & Other Pain Killers

The opioid crisis affects people of all walks of life. Construction workers are among those hardest hit. Construction workers are at high risk for pain and injuries, making them at greater risk than workers in the general population to be prescribed opioids that may lead to addiction

Sobering statistics:

- More than half of those who died from an overdose had suffered at least one job-related injury
- 1 out of 3 Americans doesn't know their prescriptions contain opioids
- 4 of 5 people treated for opioid misuse started on pain medications
- 1 out of 4 people who are prescribed opioids for long-term pain become addicted to them



My pathway to addiction started when I made an appointment to see a doctor for migraine headaches. In a timeframe of 8 months I was prescribed 3,647 controlled substance pills. I had pills for pain, pills to help me sleep, pills to help me stay awake and alert at work, and pills for anxiety.

These pills were provided to me by a reputable doctor. It never occurred to me not to trust him. My ignorance caused me to lose almost a decade of my life and would bring me close to death many times as a result of my severe drug addiction.



10.3 MILLION

people misused opioids in 2019

2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Signs of opioid addiction:

- Uncontrollable cravings & excessive use
- Drowsiness
- Irregular sleep habits
- Weight changes
- Frequent flu-like symptoms
- Changes in exercise habits
- Isolation from family or friends
- New financial difficulties resulting in stealing from family, friends, or work

How can we protect our industry?

Prevent injuries at work: Use the right tools for the job, wear proper PPE, practice good housekeeping, and report hazards

Use alternative ways to treat pain: If your doctor suggests prescribing opioids, ask if there are alternative treatments instead; physical therapy, chiropractors, acupuncture are all effective ways to treat pain

Prevent someone from harming themselves or others: Properly dispose of any unused medication, speak up when you see someone is struggling, eliminate stigma, and share resources for help



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Feeling Fatigued

Fatigue is feeling constantly mentally or physically exhausted.

Some causes of fatigue are:

Work-related - working long hours, poor work-life balance, or a high pressure job

Personal - financial stress, living with chronic illness, lack of social support, and strained relationships

Fatigue often goes hand-in-hand with burnout - a state of chronic stress - that leads to:

- physical and emotional exhaustion
- cynicism and detachment
- feelings of ineffectiveness and/or lack of accomplishment

69% of workers feel fatigued at work

Signs you may be experiencing burnout:

- forgetfulness, inability to concentrate
- anxiety or depression
- increased irritability, lack of patience
- lack of productivity or poor performance
- headaches, body aches
- upset stomach
- insomnia
- increased illness

How to cope with fatigue:

- **Remove the stressor** - ask for help if you're overwhelmed and set personal boundaries
- **Take a break** - take time to pause and recharge
- Exercise - help your body protect itself from stress
- **Practice relaxation techniques** - mindfulness, yoga, or deep breathing exercises
- **Get more sleep** - create a bedtime routine & stick to it
- **Contact your doctor** - if fatigues interferes with your daily activities they may be able to help.

97% of fatigued workers have reduced cognitive performance

They tend to make more errors, become less productive, and are unable to make reasonable judgments.

“*It is a construction worker's Catch-22: While they are free to take a day off anytime they wish, most feel the money is just too good to pass up in their on-again, off-again industry where year-long layoffs are commonplace.*

“I have no social life, none at all. Like today, I mowed the lawn and then fell right into bed, dead tired. Every so often, you have to take a couple of days off. It's not only for your body, but for your mind. And for your family too.”

”

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Try It
Find coping strategies that work for you and share with others



Support Others
Everyone experiences fatigue. Help each other when things get tough



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Bullying - Beyond the Schoolyard

Workplace bullying is when someone repeatedly and intentionally acts in an aggressive, hostile, and disrespectful manner to another person. It can happen between a supervisor and worker or between co-workers.

Examples of workplace bullying are:

- offensive language
- insults
- belittling nicknames
- giving deliberately impossible tasks
- spreading rumors
- willfully excluding a worker
- withholding information necessary to perform work

79.3

million people in
the US are affected by
workplace bullying

... and research shows it is
becoming more common

Workplace bullying can be a significant source of stress and can cause:

- insomnia
- high blood pressure
- headaches
- anxiety
- symptoms of PTSD
- depression
- pain

Victims of bullying often stay silent for fear of losing their job, missing out on a promotion, or receiving a bad performance review.



Recognize It

Look out for common signs of bullying



Talk About It

Connect with someone you trust to share your concerns



Try It

Be part of the solution by being aware of your own words and actions



Get Help

If needed, seek help from survivors



I've had people make racist and homosexual jokes towards me, and I've heard it towards other minorities too – almost always in lighthearted ways. More often than not, what I find more offensive is someone staring at you, making eye contact but not greeting you or saying anything, which happens quite a bit. Otherwise it's just the normal apprentice/new guy stuff most people have probably heard. My ironworker friend has told me he was whipped with rebar during his apprenticeship.



How to be a part of the solution, not the problem:

- Call them out – if you see someone behaving inappropriately, bring attention to it and stand up for the co-worker being mistreated; let your foreman know what is going on
- Don't participate in any worksite hazing, aggressive or belittling behavior, or spread hurtful rumors
- Don't exclude workers from work-related events – let everyone participate
- Don't set unreasonable work expectations – be realistic about what can be accomplished

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