



## **Toolbox Talk: Mental Health (Generic)**

**We all know that our jobs require a certain amount of attention and focus. The level of focus required to do our jobs safely is easily impacted by stressful thoughts associated with our home lives, relationships, financial issues, and other factors. All these factors influence the state of our mental health. When our mental health is poor, the likelihood of incidents at work is heightened due to a lower level of focus.**

### **What is mental health?**

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It determines how we define our potential, cope with everyday stressors, work productively, relate to others, make choices, and contribute to our community.

### **Why are we talking about mental health?**

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood to adulthood. Despite this reality, there is still stigma and discrimination attached to the topic of mental health. By having an open dialogue, we can help end the stigma and normalize talking about mental health.

### **Canadian mental health statistics:**

- Mental illness is a leading cause of disability in Canada.
- In 2020 depression became the leading cause of disability worldwide
- 1 in 5 Canadians will experience mental illness or addiction problems this year.
- About 4,000 Canadians per year die by suicide—an average of almost 11 suicides a day.

### **How can we support our own mental health, and help reduce the stigma?**

- Become aware of our own personal/health behaviors such as coping techniques, eating habits, and physical activity levels.
- Learn more about the impact of our personal/health behaviors on mental wellbeing.
- When we understand how the two are connected, we can then identify areas where changes may be needed or beneficial.
- Talk to a friend about mental health. This helps normalize the topic and let others know they are not alone while allowing yourself to gain comfort in talking about your mental health journey.
- Access mental health supports if needed.

### **What are some signs/symptoms of someone who is struggling?**

- Unhealthy or unkept appearance/ abnormal appearance
- Mood swings, emotional rollercoasters, and erratic behavior
- Easily Irritated, frustrated, or angered.
- Taking or needing a lot of time off.
- Changes in eating or sleeping behaviors.
- Moments of confusion or an inability to solve a problem.
- Unnecessary fear, worry or anxiety.
- A decrease or lack in productivity.
- Withdrawal from social situations.
- Increased use or abuse of drugs, alcohol, or other routes of self-medicating.



### **What do you do if someone you know is struggling with their mental health?**

If you are at work and are concerned about a co-worker, you can use the ALGEE acronym (see below) to navigate the situation. Depending on the nature of the issue, you may also need to speak to your supervisor or human resources department if you are not comfortable approaching someone. The most important thing is you **take action**.

## **ALGEE: THE ACTION PLAN**



**ASSESS** for risk of suicide or harm.



**LISTEN** non-judgmentally.



**GIVE** re-assurance and information.



**ENCOURAGE** appropriate professional help.



**ENCOURAGE** self-help and other support strategies.

#### References:

[www.mdsc.ca](http://www.mdsc.ca)

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm>

<https://www.fieldboss.com/post/mental-health-in-the-construction-industry>

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>