

# MENTAL HEALTH and CONSTRUCTION

Chicagoland AGC

Stand for Safety Week

May 3 - 7, 2021



# What is *MENTAL HEALTH*?

Includes our  
*emotional,*  
*psychological,* and  
social well-being

Affects how we  
*think, feel* and *act*

Helps determine  
how we *handle*  
*stress, make choices,*  
and *relate to others*

# Why talk mental health?

1. Most think of extreme cases when they hear “mental health” – but it’s not solely severe depression, psychological breakdowns, or suicide...your mental state can:

- impact decision making abilities, reaction time, recognition of potential hazards
- lower awareness
- cause sleep loss

It’s vital to discuss day to day mental health – creates safer environment as it impacts your ability to focus on the jobsite & proactively protect yourself and others.



# Safety isn't just PHYSICAL

1 in 5 construction workers report struggles w/mental health issues

15% of adult population will experience depression at some point

Anxiety disorders are most common mental illness (18% of U.S. population)

Construction has higher rate of substance abuse

15% of construction workers suffer from substance abuse disorder

20% of construction Rx spending is on opioids

Opioid abuse increases likelihood of suicide attempts 75%

Our industry has 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate of suicide in U.S.

Suicide second leading cause of death in men 25-54

**The brain should be treated like every other part of the body -**

**"The mind drives the activity of the body."**

SOURCES OF STRESS – even happy events can cause stress. When it goes unaddressed for too long stress can trigger mental and physical health issues.

### LIFE CHANGES

Leaving home,  
getting married,  
having kids

Divorce or  
relationship  
breakdown

Health scares or  
physical illness

Accidents or  
bereavement

Legal issues, arrest,  
imprisonment

### EMOTIONAL

Peer Pressure

Conflicting cultural  
values and beliefs

Coping with  
uncertainty

### PHYSICAL

Late nights or lack of  
routine

Poor diet

Misuse of alcohol or  
drugs

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Poor housing or  
accommodation  
problems

Social isolation

Unemployment

Adjusting to new  
environments such  
as moving or travel

Financial pressures

### CHANGES AT WORK

Starting a new job

Coping w/increased  
workload or  
promotion

Poor relationships  
w/colleagues or  
managers

Redundancy, or the  
fear of it



# FACTORS AFFECTING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY MENTAL HEALTH



High pressure work environment



Some roles work in isolation - moving from jobsite to jobsite



Job security can be questionable during economic downturns



Seasonal layoffs



Physical exertion caused by nature of the work



"Push through the pain" mentality



Stress due to time constraints

# FACTORS AFFECTING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY MENTAL HEALTH (continued)



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Sleep disruption



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Time spent away from family and friends



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STIGMA -

- Misconceptions that individuals with mental health issues are "weak," "cannot work," "do not recover," "crazy," etc.
- Male-dominated industry that can be perceived as "tough, strong, rarely show emotion."
- The positive image of "self-sufficiency" that attracts people to the industry can also become a negative without awareness and open dialogue regarding mental health's role in safety.
- 97% of construction workforce is male; 59% is white: suicide rate is highest amount middle-aged white men.



MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS



STIGMA





# What Can We Do?

***Identify.***

***Understand.***

***Respond.***



# IDENTIFY – Warning Signs of Mental Health Risks

- Decrease in productivity
- Change in personality/behavior
- Increased conflict or confrontation with coworkers
- Near misses, hits, other safety-related incidents
- Isolation/withdrawal from others
- Reckless behavior
- Self-criticism
- Major life changes
- Increased tardiness
- Uncharacteristic anxiousness, anger, mood swings
- Talk of self-harm



# Evaluate **your OWN** mental health regularly and recognize the warning signs.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression can vary from person to person and may look different when at home or at work.

## 1. Online **screening tools** are available:

1. Mental Health America - [screening.mhanational.org](https://screening.mhanational.org)
2. [Mantherapy.org](https://www.mantherapy.org)
3. *T2 Mood Tracker mobile app*



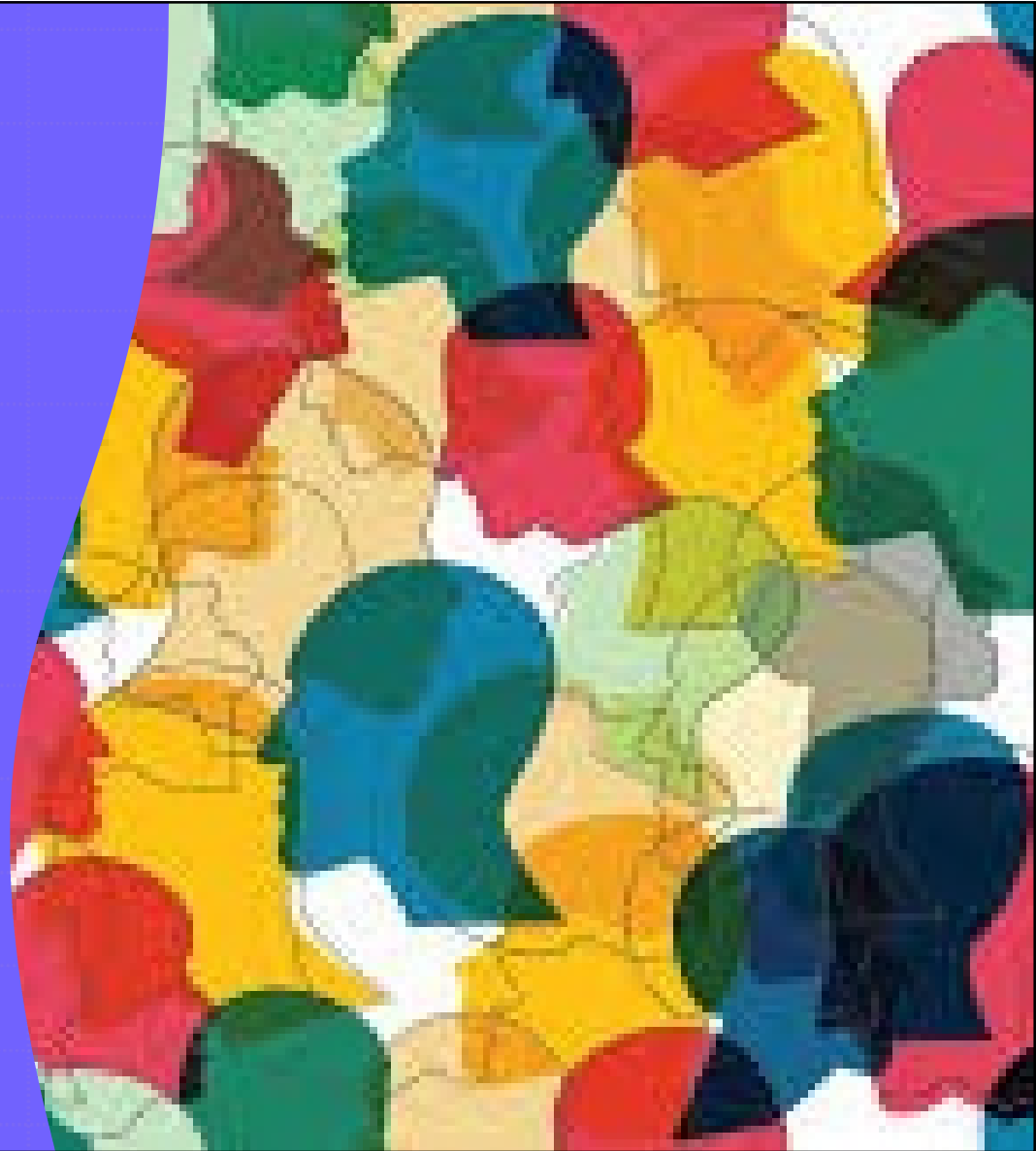
# UNDERSTAND – How to Help

- Don't ignore it
- Show your concern, indicate you've noticed changes
- Listen nonjudgmentally, actively, and acknowledge the information shared with you



# Respond – Be Prepared for the Answer

- Offer support  
and resources



# Know What NOT to Say...

It's all in  
your mind.

Stop  
feeling  
sorry for  
yourself.

Things could  
be so much  
worse.

You're  
crazy.

Just try  
harder.

Just snap  
out of it.

No one  
ever said  
life was fair.

You need  
to get out  
more.

Stop  
complaining.

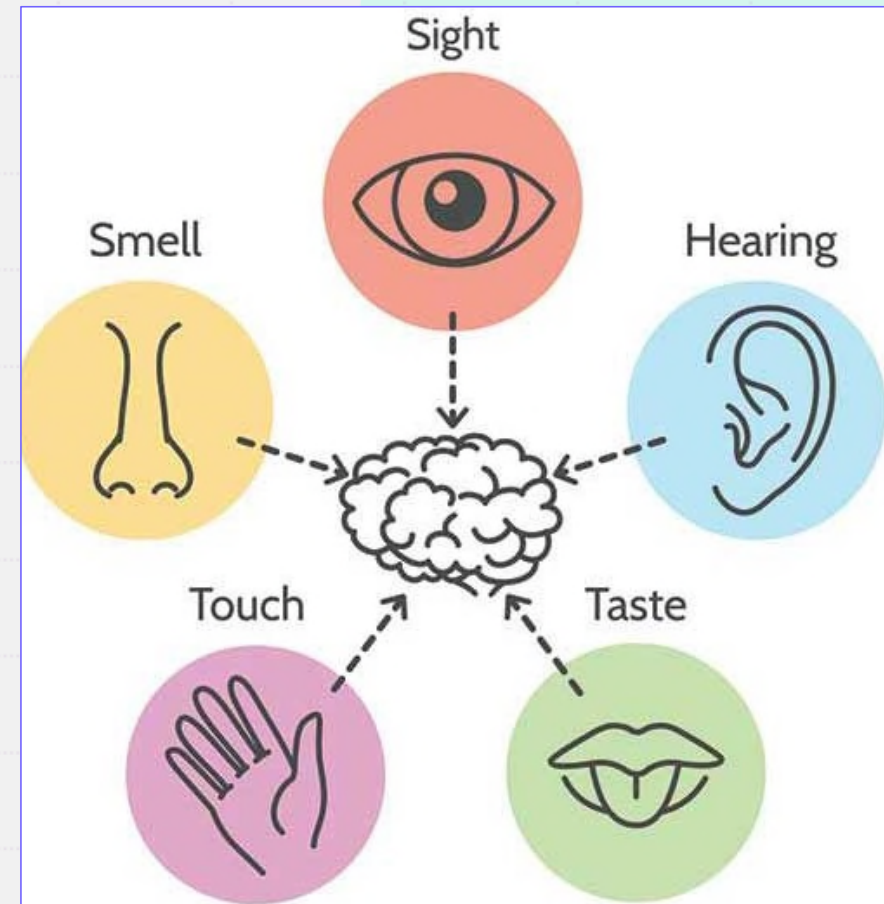
You don't look  
anxious or  
depressed.



# Mental Health and Safety on the Jobsite

Being safe means paying attention to mind AND body...it's more than wearing hardhats and safety glasses.

Situational awareness is being aware of where you are, where you are supposed to be, who else is there, what your five senses are telling you about yourself and those around you.



# Foster Your Positive Mental Health



Find proper time and life balance between family, work, hobbies, and rest.



Understand impact of healthy diet on your mental health (as well as negative effects of poor nutrition).



Regular exercise routine (Stretch-n-Flex program) to release endorphins.



If injured, talk to doctor about non-addictive meds or physical therapy.



Don't overdo it on sugar, alcohol, caffeine (quick fixes that can increase stress over time).



Check out natural mental health improvement techniques (deep breathing, meditation, yoga).



Talk to someone, do online screenings, seek assistance. Don't bottle it up!

At the end of the day,  
it's about looking out for one another.

*Would you like to talk?*

*Is something bothering you?*

*Can we talk about what's going on?*





# Stand for Safety Hard Hat Decals Stand for Safety Mental Health Crisis Cards

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