



# SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN TOOLBOX TALK GUIDE

## *Facilitator Tasks before the Toolbox Talk (TBT)*

1. To increase your confidence and knowledge around discussing mental health topics, refer to the Supervisor Guide on Mental Health. Read through the TBT you are going to deliver, as well as the facilitator guide below.
2. Prepare any discussion questions you would like to add.
3. As you start each TBT, set the expectations with the group:
  - a. Brief the topic: This TBT will be focused on mental health. Ask that everyone is respectful since this can be a very personal and sensitive topic for a lot of people. There will be opportunities to share, but it's not required.
  - b. Remind the group of how to get help if they want to talk to someone (trusted supervisor, MAP/EAP, or the national hotline 1-800-273-8255).
  - c. Point out each takeaway sheet has a QR code that links to:
    1. a survey to be completed at the end of the TBT
    2. mental health resources
    3. the full TBT if they want to follow along or reference at a later time

*Check out example conversation starters for each Toolbox Talk on the following pages!*

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# EXAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTERS

## Mental Health Toolbox Talk

1. Mental health affects our overall wellbeing.
  - a. What some ways poor mental health can impact our lives?
2. Mental health conditions are among the most common in the United States.
  - a. What factors in construction put us at unique risk?
  - b. What can we do to support good mental health in our workforce?
  - c. How can we keep this conversation going?

**AGCMO MISSOURI CHAPTER**  
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**LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH**

### Mental Health vs Mental Illness

**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
  - » 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

**1 in 25** live with a mental illness

**17%** of health care visits are for a mental health disorder

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
- Support Others** Let them know you have to listen and find help if needed
- Talk About it** Connect with someone you trust to share your concerns
- Get Help** Reach out to your doctor for support and advice

*"I spent most of my life feeling an edge and on edge. I'd blow up at my co-workers and former over time things. It wasn't until my wife made me go to marriage counseling that I realized I had anxiety. And I realized that I 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. Take responsibility is an easy thing to pin it on, but the issues are more complex."*  
-Anonymous

## Stigma Toolbox Talk

1. There is a lot of stigma associated with mental health.
  - a. What are some ways we can reduce the stigma?
2. Mental health stigma can impact all parts of life.
  - a. How can stigma affect safety on the worksite?
  - b. What can we do to reduce stigma in our workforce?
  - c. How can we keep this conversation going?

**AGCMO MISSOURI CHAPTER**  
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**LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH**

### 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

**40%** Stigma prevents 40% of people with mental illness from seeking help

**40%** of people with mental illness or disorders are seen by their doctor

*"People in my industry told me this career-sucking people won't work with us with somebody dealing with cancer and depression. But how will they work with their employees? Everybody's dealing with a crisis in a way. My position is to encourage people to talk about their own story. There will come a time when you're confident with mental illness if nobody talks about it. If I had survived cancer I would be studying it from the rooftops. Well I have survived major depression and I'm proud to tell my 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."*

800-273-TALK  
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

## Stress Toolbox Talk

1. Stress is how your body reacts to a perceived threat or challenge.
  - a. What are some ways that you experience stress?
2. Stress can impact your physical and mental health, relationships, and work.
  - a. What are some ways that you can cope with stress and reduce its impact on your physical and mental health?
  - b. What can we do to help our workforce reduce stress?
  - c. How can we keep this conversation going?

**AGCMO MISSOURI CHAPTER**  
THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

**LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH**

### 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 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 fact that, "I'm just tired" or "I'm just busy" mentally makes you feel incompetent. We've all had that someone who says "I'm tired, did you come here to work or to whine?" that's 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."*

800-273-TALK  
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

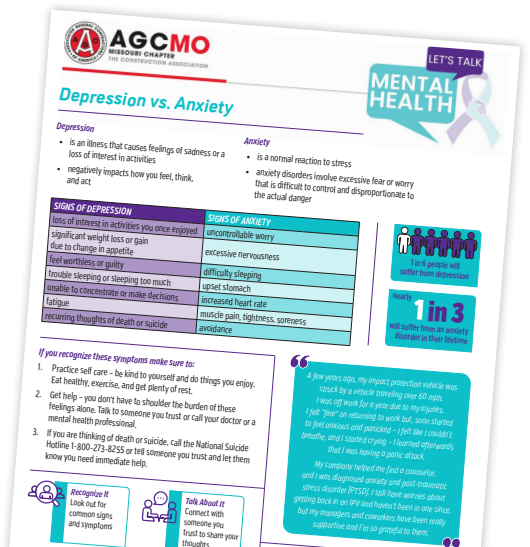
Washington University in St. Louis  
Center for the Mindset

Scan for savvy strategies to manage mental health resources

# EXAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTERS

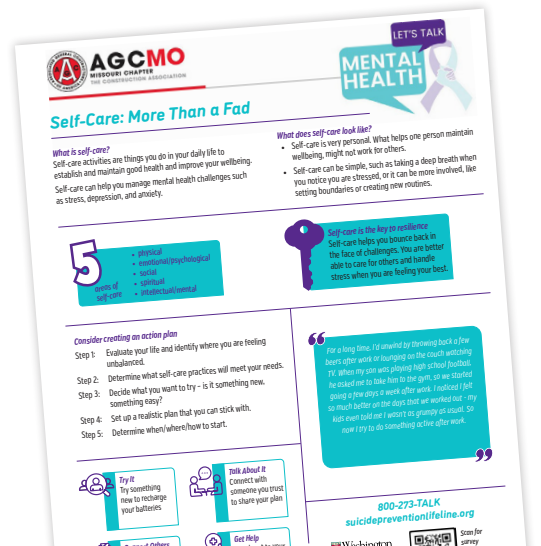
## Depression Vs. Anxiety Toolbox Talk

- 1 in 6 people will suffer from depression and 1 in 3 will suffer from an anxiety disorder in their lifetime.
  - What are ways to cope with the symptoms of depression or anxiety?
- People often show they are struggling in subtle ways.
  - What are some examples of something you might hear from a coworker that could be a sign they are struggling with depression or anxiety?
  - What can we do to help our workforce battle depression and anxiety?
  - How can we keep this conversation going?



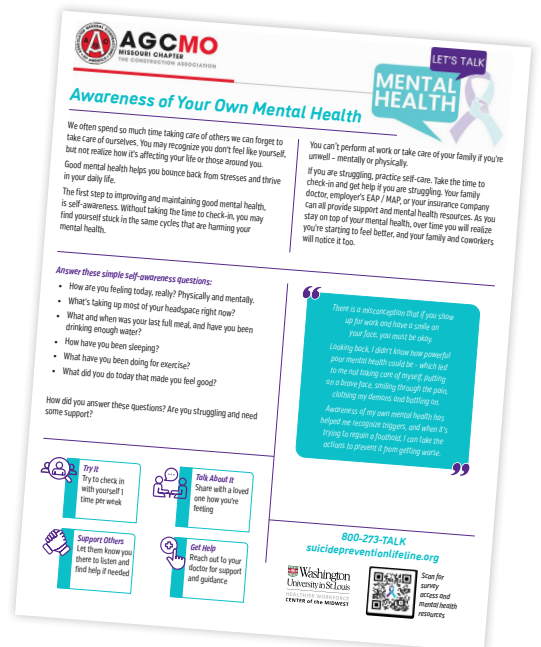
## Self-Care Toolbox Talk

- Self-care can help you manage mental health challenges, such as stress, depression, and anxiety.
  - What are things that you do to take a break and recharge?
- Resilience is your ability to bounce back in the face of adversity.
  - Can you think of a time when you were struggling with stress? What did you do to manage your stress and keep going?
  - What can we do to help our workforce be more resilient?
  - How can we keep this conversation going?



## Awareness of Your own Mental Health Toolbox Talk

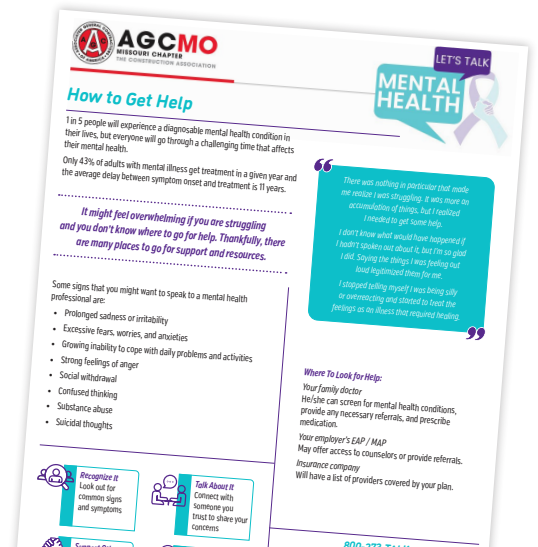
- Most of our time is spent taking care of other people - family, friends, coworkers.
  - What can you do to take care of yourself today?
- If you aren't aware of your own mental health, you can't take the appropriate action to keep yourself healthy and well.
  - What are ways that you can check in with your mental health?
  - What can we do to help our workforce be better aware of their own mental health?
  - How can we keep this conversation going?



# EXAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTERS

## How to Get Help Toolbox Talk

- Everyone will go through a challenging time in their life that affects their mental health
  - What are some signs that you or a loved one may want to seek help?
- There are different places that you can go for help and support – family doctor, EAP/MAP, insurance company are just the start.
  - Where are other places you may be able to go for guidance with mental health issues?
  - What can we do to help our workforce get the help they need?
  - How can we keep this conversation going?



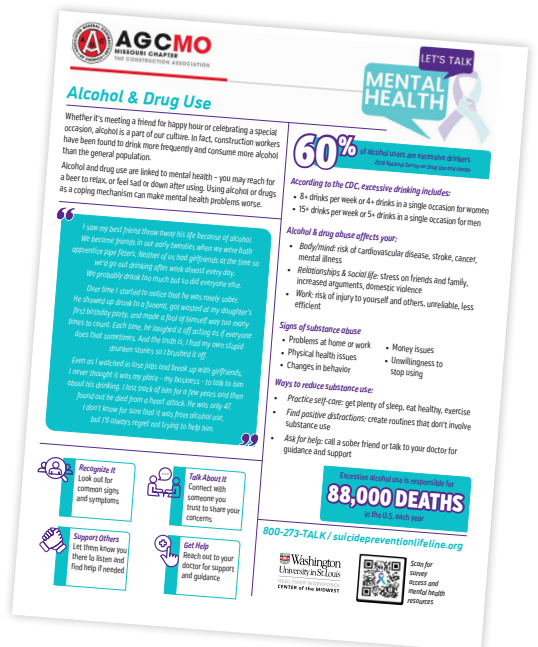
## Suicide Awareness Toolbox Talk

- Suicide rates are increasing.
  - What do you think are some reasons for this?
- Suicide rates are specifically high in the construction industry.
  - Is that surprising to you?
  - What can we do about it in our workforce?
  - How can we keep this conversation going?



## Alcohol & Drug Use Toolbox Talk

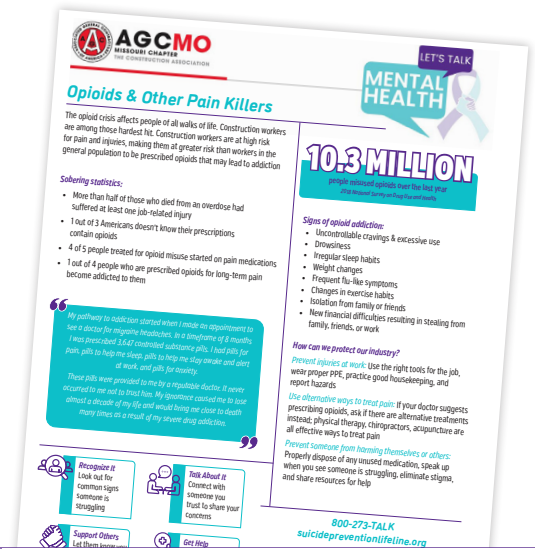
- Alcohol is used throughout our culture -to celebrate special occasions, to help forget in sad times, and relax with friends.
  - What are ways that using alcohol or drugs as coping mechanisms can harm your mental health?
- The construction industry has been found to drink more frequently and consume more alcohol than the general population.
  - What are ways someone can reduce their substance use?
  - What can we do to help reduce substance use in our workforce?
  - How can we keep this conversation going?



# EXAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTERS

## Opioids & Other Pain Killers Toolbox Talk

1. 4 out of 5 people treated for opioid abuse started on pain medications.
  - a. What are ways you can prevent injuries on the jobsite to reduce the risk of being prescribed pain medication?
2. Due to the nature of the work, construction workers are at high risk for being prescribed opioids at some time in their career.
  - a. What are alternative ways you can treat pain?
  - b. What can we do to help reduce the use of opioids in our workforce?
  - c. How can we keep this conversation going?



## Feeling Fatigued Toolbox Talk

1. Construction work can be mentally and physically draining.
  - a. What is unique about construction that contributes to fatigue and burnout?
2. 97% of fatigued workers have reduced performance.
  - a. What are some ways to cope with fatigue?
  - b. What can we do to reduce fatigue in our workforce?
  - c. How can we keep this conversation going?



## Bullying Toolbox Talk

1. Bullying no longer just happens on the playground - you see it occur everywhere from Fortune 500 companies, to politics, to the worksite.
  - a. What are examples of bullying that you have seen on the worksite?
2. Victims of bullying can experience many distressing symptoms as a result of their abuse and often stay silent out of fear.
  - a. If you see someone being bullied, what can you do to be part of the solution?
  - b. What can we do about to reduce bullying in our workforce?
  - c. How can we keep this conversation going?

