



Safety talk

Let's start talking about mental health at work

The trades have been seeing a rise in suicide rates, substance abuse problems, and overdoses. As employers or workers, we all need to do our part to ensure our actions and behaviours at work do not negatively impact the mental health of our co-workers. Everyone's mental health is at risk if we don't look out for and help each other, or if we allow teasing and bullying of those who may be struggling with mental health issues.

Explain dangers

Did you know?

- 1 in 3 of us will have a mental illness or addiction in our lifetime.
- By age 40, over half of us will have had a mental health problem.
- Workers in construction have the second highest suicide rate of all working groups.
- White, working-age men are the most likely to die by suicide.
- During the pandemic in 2020, more than half of Canadians were dealing with some sort of mental health illness.
- Calls made to Canada Suicide Prevention Service were up 200 per cent in 2020 (over 2019).
- As a way to cope with stress, loneliness, or boredom, Canadians were drinking more, smoking more, and doing more drugs during the pandemic.

The following job-related risk factors not only make it hard on workers mentally, but it also places them at an increased risk of experiencing mental health problems and thoughts of suicide.

- Work is often high pressure and high risk, which increases stress.
- Many workers have a "tough guy" attitude and don't seek help when they most need it.
- We might see or experience physical accidents that can cause us emotional harm.
- Many of us have chronic pain from years of hard, physical labour, repetitive tasks, or long-haul driving.

- Trades have the highest incidence of prescription opioid drug use to manage pain, which places workers at high risk of developing an opioid addiction.
- Separation from family and friends on job projects or long hauling.
- Sleep troubles due to work schedules and rotating shifts.
- Our attitudes about mental illness can prevent us from seeking help or from being supportive to others who may be struggling.

Identify controls

- Let's challenge our current understanding around suicide, mental health, and substance abuse problems like opioid use through further educating ourselves on the issues.
- Let's tackle our "tough guy" attitude that says it's not okay to seek help or to offer help.
- Let's challenge behaviours that are mentally harmful, such as bullying, harassment, racist comments, name calling, etc.
- Let's all learn the signs of someone who might be struggling with mental health problems.
- Let's encourage each other to seek help, but let's make sure we are doing this in a positive way.
- Let's all check in with our own mental health and seek help when we need it.
- Remember, we are humans—not machines. It's okay to be human and to have feelings.
- Let's keep learning together, and most importantly of all, let's keep talking!

Demonstrate

Leaders, supervisors, and managers can greatly influence the culture of their workforce by publicly supporting their employees' actions to take care of their mental health and support each other. While there is no harm in taking the lead, there is great risk in holding back.