

Toolbox Talk – Mental Health Matters

- It is important for all of us to recognize the signs that a co-worker is struggling.
- The most common mental health issues in the workplace are anxiety, depression, and stress.
- There are ten primary behaviors we should be on the lookout for:
 1. **Uncharacteristic behavior.** You might notice that a team member doesn't seem like their usual selves. For example, they might start turning up late, acting aggressively or being unusually quiet.
 2. **Lower levels of engagement.** Lower levels of engagement, a new lack of motivation and having difficulty concentrating can be performance management problems but they can also be side effects of mental health issues.
 3. **Decreases in productivity.** People who are experiencing poor mental health may appear disinterested, distracted or lethargic. They may also struggle to complete tasks and show an inability to make decisions.
 4. **Changes in sleeping or eating behaviors.** Insomnia and difficulty sleeping are often potential indicators of a mental health issue. You should also look out for employees who begin regularly missing lunch or start refusing to eat with co-workers.
 5. **Disinterest in work or day-to-day activities.** A lack of interest in activities, particularly those that they used to enjoy, could be a sign of somebody experiencing low mood.
 6. **Increased absence.** Beginning to take regular, short-term absences may be reflective of an underlying mental health issue.
 7. **Changes in working patterns.** New changes in working patterns, like frequently being absent, arriving late or leaving early, could all be indicators of an underlying mental health issue.
 8. **Irrational fears, paranoia or anxiety.** Irrational fears and anxieties are typical of some mental illnesses. Examples include paranoia about co-workers and anxieties around job security.
 9. **Withdrawal from social situations.** Employees may start to withdraw into themselves and isolate themselves from colleagues. Many people with mental health concerns suffer from isolation, loneliness and self-loathing.
 10. **Substance use/misuse.** To self-medicate, employees may turn to alcohol, drugs or other addictions. This is typically an urgent sign that your coworker needs help.
- Now that we know what to look for, here is how you can help:
 - Learn about anxiety, depression, and stress.
 - Check in on the person who you suspect may be struggling.

- Make statements such as “I’ve noticed you haven’t been yourself lately – is everything OK?” or “I wanted you to know that I’m here to help or listen if you ever need it.”
- Listen and pay attention without distractions if they do decide to share.
- Encourage the individual to seek professional help or seek out support from Human Resources.
- Continue to be a listening ear and support for the individual.
- If you believe someone may be a risk of harm to themselves or others, make sure to alert a manager or Human Resources immediately.
- If an emergency, call the local authorities.