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**Mental Health Wellness**

***Iron Workers International Workplace Safety Series***

For many years talking about mental health wellness at work was generally considered off-limits. Today, the stigma of discussing mental health, suicide prevention and addictions is changing and the Iron Workers International is working to be a leader in this area of safety and health.

It is important to treat mental health like we do physical health. We do not fault individuals when they become ill, therefore we should be accepting of individuals who may be struggling with mental health issues.

¹People affected by mental illness are certainly not alone. In fact, 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness this year.

Two mental health conditions that are most frequently observed in the workplace are anxiety and depression. Coworkers affected by these conditions may exhibit lack of focus, slower reaction times, and impaired decision-making. Out of concern for their safety and the safety of the entire team, connecting crew members with help they need not only benefits the affected person but the entire crew, and the company.

People with unaddressed mental health issues can be at-risk for suicide. These individuals are not weak and should not feel shame – they are in a place of hopelessness. Together we can show them care and emphasize that they are important.

{insert your company/organization name} leadership supports us in taking the time to care for one another.

Checking in with your crewmates to let them know you care demonstrates respect and concern for their well-being. Taking time to listen or being patient can go a long way to making people feel respected and valued.

****Mental health is a personal issue, a family issue, a community issue, and a society issue. Together, we are starting a program to address this distressing situation. Together, we will support each other from all levels of management, supervision, and craft. Care and attention must be paid to this growing problem and only we can make the changes necessary to start the conversation. Mental health plays an important role in the Iron Workers union and supporting company culture.

**“*Our local union leaders and contractors must work together to have an active conversation around mental health –***

***impressing to our workforce that it is okay to speak about the stresses they struggle with and to seek the help they need.*”**

-Kevin Bryenton, Executive Director of Canadian Affairs, Iron Workers International-

***Signs of Anxiety***

²Everyone experiences symptoms of anxiety, but they are generally occasional and short-lived, and do not cause problems. But when the cognitive, physical and behavioural symptoms of anxiety are persistent and severe, and anxiety causes distress in a person’s life to the point that it negatively affects his or her ability to work, socialize and manage daily tasks, it may be beyond the normal range.

Each of these anxiety disorders is distinct in some ways, but they all share the same hallmark features:

* irrational and excessive fear
* apprehensive and tense feelings
* difficulty managing daily tasks and/or distress related to these tasks.

Cognitive, behavioural, and physical symptoms include:

* anxious thoughts
* anxious predictions
* anxious beliefs
* avoidance of feared situations
* avoidance of activities that elicit sensations similar to those experienced when anxious
* subtle avoidances
* safety behaviours
* excessive physical reactions relative to the context

The physical symptoms of anxiety may be mistaken for symptoms of a physical illness, such as a heart attack.

***Signs of Depression***

²Depression consumes day-to-day life and interferes with the ability to work, eat, sleep, and have fun.

**Change in Sleep:** You find yourself sleeping too little or too much.

**Feeling tired and have no energy:** You feel low on energy, even when you haven’t exerted yourself.

This fatigue isn’t alleviated by rest or sleep.

**Decreased interest or pleasure:** You lose interest in doing things you used to enjoy.

**Take more risks than normal:** You might find yourself engaging in escaping or risky behaviour.

**If you know someone who needs help, lend your support, listen, and show you care.**

**Contact your Iron Workers Local Union for**

***Employee and Family Assistance Program* information**



## Access Free, Live Counselling

**Phone:**

Call [1-866-585-0445](tel:+1-866-585-0445) (Adults) or [1-888-668-6810](tel:+1-888-668-6810) (Youth)

**Text (SMS):**

Text WELLNESS to [741741](sms://+741741?body=WELLNESS) (Adults) or [686868](sms://+686868?body=WELLNESS) (Youth) to connect with a trained crisis responder for support

Website: <https://wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>



**Thank you to Cal Beyer, Workforce Risk & Worker Wellbeing at:** <https://www.csdz.com/>

References:

¹Canadian Mental Health Association, Fast Facts about Mental Illness, Who is affected?

<https://cmha.ca/fast-facts-about-mental-illness#:~:text=In%20any%20given%20year%2C%201,some%20time%20in%20their%20lives>.

² CAMH, Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/anxiety-disorders>

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