****Toolbox Talk**

**Suicide Prevention**

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

¹For 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.

Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one’s own death and is often related to complex stressors and health issues. Suicide occurs across all ages, incomes, ethnicities, and social factors.

Most often, people experience suicidal thoughts when they have lost hope and feel helpless. They want their pain to end, and they may see no other way out. Suicide can also be an impulsive act that follows the use of substances. In some cases, people with psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia may hear voices that tell them to harm themselves.

**Suicide can be prevented.** The vast majority of people who have suicidal thoughts, or who have attempted suicide, do not die by suicide. Many people can recover from these experiences and live full and meaningful lives.

**Signs & Symptoms**

**“*Our local union leaders and 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-

People who are at risk for suicide may:

* show a sudden change in mood or behaviour
* show a sense of hopelessness and helplessness
* express the wish to die or end their life
* increase substance use
* withdraw from people and activities that they previously enjoyed
* experience changes in sleeping patterns
* have a decreased appetite
* give away prized possessions or make preparations for their death (for example, creating a will).

**Causes & Risk Factors**

People at a higher risk of suicide include those who:

* have a serious mental health and/or addiction problem
* have had a recent major loss (for example, the death of a loved one or a job loss)
* have a family history of suicide
* have made previous suicide attempts
* have a serious physical illness
* have an impulsive personality
* lack support from family or friends
* have access to weapons, medications or other lethal means of suicide.

The risk for suicide may be reduced when “protective factors” are present. In general, protective factors can help a person to recover or “bounce back” in the face of stress and adversity. Examples include:

* positive social supports
* a sense of responsibility for others, such as having children in the home (except when the person has postpartum depression or psychosis) or having pets
* positive coping skills
* a positive relationship with a medical or mental health provider
* self-efficacy (a person’s belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations)
* a religious belief that suicide is wrong.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How can I help someone who is at risk for suicide?**

* Listen to them and take them seriously. Don’t judge or minimize their feelings. Be positive and hopeful, and remember that suicide can be prevented.
* Ask them if they are having thoughts of suicide. Don’t be afraid that you will put the idea in their head. It may be a relief for them to talk about it.
* Ask if they have a plan. Depending on their answer you may want to limit their access to lethal means, such as medication, knives or firearms.
* Ask them to rate their suicidal feelings on a scale of one to 10. Regularly ask them to tell you where they are on the scale, so you can assess if things are getting worse.
* Let them know help is available and that the cause of their suicidal thoughts can be successfully treated.
* Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling.
* Encourage them to seek help from a doctor or mental health provider, and offer to help with this if they would like.
* Make a safety plan with them. Who will they call if their feelings get stronger? Who can stay with them to keep them safe? Make a list of phone numbers of people and services they can call if they feel unsafe. Avoid leaving the person alone if they are in crisis.
* Seek support for yourself. It is important that you don’t carry this burden alone.

**What if someone I know shows warning signs for suicide?**

* **Take them to the nearest hospital emergency department**, if you can do so safely.
* If the person will not go to the hospital or you're unsure if this is the right thing to do, **get help from a health care provider as quickly as possible**. You can call the person’s health care team or a crisis line.
* If your loved one is attempting or about to attempt suicide, and you are not at risk, **do not leave them alone and call 911**.
* Keep yourself safe.

**What should I do if someone has attempted suicide?**

Remain calm and call 911.



## Access Free, Live Counselling

**Phone:**

Call 1-866-585-0445 (Adults) or 1-888-668-6810 (Youth)

**Text (SMS):**

Text WELLNESS to 741741 (Adults) or 686868 (Youth) to connect with a trained crisis responder for support

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



**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**

References:

¹ CAMH-Overview-Suicide: <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/suicide>

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