

TOOLBOX TALK #51

COVID 19 – MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Why is this such a stressful event?

It is human nature to like to have some control over our lives, and some sense of predictability. Right now, we may feel like we don't have either. It is okay to feel stress, anxiety, even worry and fear during a time of such unknowns.

I'm still working, so why am I still so worried?

COVID-19 is a crisis like no other most of us have ever lived through. It is true that most construction sites are still active. But with the daily changes, plus overall economic uncertainty, it's normal to have concern. Talk to your employer and ask them what they are projecting over the coming weeks and months. Equip yourself with facts, not hearsay.

Are things different and challenging at home right now?

Even though you are still working, your spouse or other family members or roommates may not be, or may be working from home. In addition, most kids are out of school and at home as well, possibly even needing help with online or home-based learning. You may even have college age children that have unexpectedly moved home. All of this can be very disruptive to routines and normal household activities. Try to be supportive of everyone whom is experiencing these changes and disruptions as well, and work to set up boundaries and new routines to help everyone cope as best as possible.

What can I do to cope/better manage my stress?

Acknowledging that you feel stressed, anxious or even depressed is an important first step and you should not think badly of yourself or that you are weak for feeling these things. To help manage these feelings and keep them from getting worse:

- Take a break from the news/social media. Set limits on how much time you spend on consuming information, and only choose to listen to credible sources.
- Get some exercise/physical activity. It will help your mood and help you stay physically well.
- Eat properly. Don't use this as an excuse to overeat or eat poorly. Fresh food is still readily available in most places.
- Maintain a good sleep schedule. Being well-rested helps both emotional and physical strength.
- Avoid using alcohol or other substances. Self-medicating can quickly lead to other issues.
- Volunteer or help someone in need. Doing good is a great mood-booster.
- Stay in touch with family, friends and other support systems. Follow "physical-distancing with social connection." Use electronic communication to stay in touch.

If your feelings of anxiety or depression are worsening, you may need to seek professional help.

You should not feel ashamed of this. There are many places to get help.

- Your employer's or union's EAP
- A counselor/behavioral health specialist through your group health benefits. These may be available via tele-health applications
- Community based mental health organizations. Visit **NAML.org** for help finding one.
- Your church may be able to provide help or refer you somewhere that can help if you are having thoughts of suicide, or if your feelings are becoming too much to handle. Please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-8255** or text the Crisis Text Line **741741**.