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**Toolbox Talks**  
*Toolbox Talks provides tips to facilitate dialogue with your teams.*

It is vital we acknowledge the unique stressors entertainment workers experience. The following bullet points and practice scripts offer language and examples to raise awareness and encourage conversations about the co-existence of workplace mental health and physical safety.

In this document, we discuss **why it’s important to talk about mental health and psychological safety** (page 2) and what your Toolbox Talk can look like (starting on page 3). We suggest topics and sample language you can tailor to fit your focus and needs in each of these areas:

* **Talk about Mental Health – page 3**
* **Acknowledge stress – page 4**
* **“It's OK Not to Be OK” – page 5**
* **Take action and be supportive – page 6**
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*This information is meant to be incorporated into your current safety or toolbox talks and is not meant to replace other safety briefings.*

**Why it’s important to talk about Mental Health and Psychological Safety**

* **Improve PRODUCTIVITY**Workers who are experiencing distress either from issues in the workplace or at home can be distracted to the point of creating a hazard. Having resources to deal with these stressors can help maintain a safer workplace and improve productivity.
* **DE-STIGMATIZE**Lead by example. If you talk about mental health without shame or fear of reprisal, they can too. By incorporating language about mental health into your toolbox talk, you are making clear that workers’ mental health and psychological safety are equal priorities. This conversation encourages workers to feel safe discussing mental health concerns in the workplace - a key part of a safe job site.
* **Communicate COMMITMENT**

Communicating the organization’s commitment to creating a positive mental health work environment provides a sense of safety and encourages people to take their own mental health seriously, as well as to support their co-workers.

* **Foster SECURITY**

No matter how supportive an organization is, people might still feel self-conscious about sharing personal issues or struggles in the workplace. Protecting confidentiality encourages people to speak up.

* **Improve AWARENESS**

Provide verbal, electronic and written mechanisms for both anonymous or signed feedback and suggestions.

**Sample Text for Toolbox Talks**

Examples of language on each of the topics are shown in the next pages.   
Select the topics and statements that are appropriate for your workplace.

Use the statements as written or put them into your own words.

**Talk about Mental Health**

* **Explain why mental health awareness is important in the workplace**

*Examples:*

* We want you to feel safe working here, and to do that you need to be both physically safe and psychologically safe.
* Working to protect your mental health is as important as protecting you from physical injury.
* Stress can contribute to accidents
* Talking about mental health challenges isn’t easy, but we have to start somewhere.
* **Describe Psychological Safety**

*Examples:*

* Psychological safety means being able to:
  + - Make mistakes and receive constructive feedback, not be ridiculed or punished
    - Say “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand”
    - Have a voice regardless of your position
    - Feel respected and valued
* Psychologically safe teams accept and respect all their members.

**Acknowledge stress**

* **Talking openly about potential stressors and anxiety triggers can lessen their impact**

*Examples:*

* Today is going to be long with a lot of stress and we’ve all been working long hours and we’re tired. This can negatively affect your mental and physical health.
* If you don’t feel physically or psychologically up to a particular task, tell your supervisor or someone you trust. It’s better to say something than to hurt yourself or someone else.
* **Excessive and/or sustained pressure can result in stress that is harmful**

*Examples:*

* We all feel stress on the job and some days are worse than others. Everyday stress can be helpful in motivating us on the job, but when it’s unmanageable it can be dangerous for ourselves and others around us.
* This work can be really stressful, if you start feeling overwhelmed let somebody know.
* **Take a 90 second “time out”** *Examples:*
* It just takes 90 seconds to reset your brain’s stress levels. If you are feeling overwhelmed, angry, or things are really tense, take a 90 second time-out if it’s safe and walk away.
* When you can, take a 90 second break to help reduce your stress level.
* **Offer tools and tips**

*Examples:*

Here are a few things to do to help you if you are struggling:

* Take a few deep breaths – and make your exhale longer than your inhale.
* Use a calming exercise, such as observe and name 5 objects around you.
* Think of a place that brings a sense of calm and go there for a moment.
* Close your eyes, start breathing deeply, and mentally walk the path to your nearest emergency exit.

**It's OK Not to Be OK**

* **We are here to support one another**

*Examples:*

* Know that it’s ok to not be ok. If you need a moment to step away to regroup – and it’s safe – you don’t need to explain why.
* We have to work closely with each other. If one of us is having any kind of difficulty, the safety of everyone depends on both offering and asking for support.
* **Acknowledge it can be difficult to talk about**

*Examples:*

* Lots of us find it hard to talk about what’s bothering us.
* We may not be used to sharing our thoughts and feelings but it’s important for our safety and the safety of others.
* **Try not to suffer in silence**

*Examples:*

* It takes a lot to speak up. You don’t have to bare your soul but getting something off your chest can go a long way for you and those around you.
* Suffering in silence takes a greater toll on your mental and physical health. You are not alone.

**Take action and be supportive**

* **Be alert to signs of distress in yourself and others**

*Examples:*

* + Remember we all experience and deal with stress and anxiety differently. You can’t tell by looking at someone how they’re feeling.
  + Be aware of how you’re feeling on a daily basis and check-in with your co-workers – take time to ask how they’re doing and LISTEN to what they say. You don’t have to have solutions – listening is the key.
* **Be discreet and respect confidentiality**

*Examples:*

* + Discretion is critical when someone shares their feelings.
  + Respect confidentiality – unless someone is at risk of hurting themselves or others.
* **Show compassion and respect**

*Examples:*

* Show compassion and respect for your co-workers - listen, don’t judge
* Even if you don’t talk about your mental health don’t dismiss a co-worker who wants to talk about their mental health.
* **If you don’t know how to help it’s ok to ask someone else**

*Examples:*

* We don’t expect you to be therapists, just caring coworkers. If you don’t know what to do in a situation, identify a trusted person for support.
* You can find information about mental health resources on the [call board/call sheet/etc].
* There’s a great org called Behind the Scenes - specifically for folks like us in the industry - that has resources.

**Guidelines for teams**

* **Encourage respectful interactions and behavior**

*Examples:*

* If you are unsure if a comment, joke or behavior is ok, chances are you have already answered your own question.
* Have fun - enjoy yourself at work, just not at someone else’s expense.
* **Identify bullying, harassment and intimidation and its impact**

*Examples:*

* Let’s watch our interactions and behavior - we want an environment where people feel comfortable - any type of bullying, harassment or intimidation can affect all of us and our mental health.
* Incidents of bullying and harassment can be subtle but can have a real impact on those experiencing and witnessing it.

\*If you need more information, examples of, or a sample policy on bullying, harassment and intimidation visit btshelp.org/stopbullying

* **Define the consequences of inappropriate behavior**

*Examples:*

* We take bullying, harassment, intimidation and inappropriate behavior very seriously and **all** incidents will be dealt with accordingly.
* We will not tolerate inappropriate behavior and will deal with it seriously.

**Foster a healthy space**

* **Talk about what positively impacts mental health and contributes to psychological safety at work** *Examples:*
* There are different ways we can make this a positive work environment. Treat others with respect and be supportive to coworkers who are struggling.
* Don’t underestimate the affect you have on others - your outlook and approach does have an impact on your co-workers.
* **Acknowledge a job well done or moments of fun and joy** *Examples:*
* Acknowledge when someone’s doing a good job – it can really make their day.
* Celebrate small accomplishments and find the fun in the work.
* **Encourage feedback and participation**

*Examples:*

* I want to hear from you – your feedback is important - let’s work to make this a healthy work environment.
* If you have any suggestions on how we can make this a better work environment let us hear from you.