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**Sample Toolbox Talks on Mental Health**

**“Today is going to be a long day…”**

Welcome back everyone. Today is going to be a long day and I want to start today’s safety briefing by acknowledging that many people struggle with anxiety, grief, being overwhelmed by stress, and other daily concerns that could interfere with your ability to feel fully functional on the job.

I want to let you know that we (as an organization) are here to support you so we can create a safer environment, both in terms of physical safety and psychological safety.

This means creating a workplace built on constructive feedback and free from unnecessary harshness, a workplace that welcomes asking questions or bringing up concerns on the job without fear of ridicule, a place that offers support so if you see someone struggling, you feel empowered to ask for or give help, and one that welcomes feedback either to our management team or in our anonymous suggestion box (highlight location).

It is ok to not be ok, yet we also have a job to do. If you are feeling overwhelmed, if you can, after making sure your task is safe to walk away from, take 90 seconds away to breathe so you can reset. High levels of stress can contribute to accidents and as always safety first. So know that in times of stress we are here to help support one another and continue to do our best to make one another feel safe and respected both here and off the clock.

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**“Times have been stressful…”**

I know times have been stressful. Many of us are struggling with different feelings and coping with them in different ways. There are mental and physical stressors faced by all of us, and I want us to start placing mental health and psychological safety as a priority, just like we do physical safety.

A psychologically safe work environment includes everyone feeling accepted without fear of negative consequences, and feeling safe to speak up about potential stressors and/or anxiety triggers. If you’re ever feeling tense, angry or overwhelmed, I encourage you to talk with your supervisor or someone you trust. If this isn’t something you can do immediately, if it’s safe take a 90-second time out – it only takes that long for your brain to reset. Then, when you have the time, have that chat.

Remember, “It’s okay to not be okay.” We don’t want you to suffer alone and in silence. You can speak up openly or anonymously through\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If you see a coworker showing signs of distress or speaking openly about their feelings, please show them compassion and respect. Disrespectful interactions and behavior can easily be experienced as bullying, harassment or intimidation and impact someone’s mental health.

If you don’t know how to help them it’s okay to ask someone else. We don’t expect you to be therapists, just caring coworkers. You can find information about mental health resources on the call board or come to me confidentially and I will help find resources.

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**“We manage stress differently…”**

We talk a lot about safety, and one part of being safe that is often neglected is our Mental Health or Psychological Safety.

I can’t possibly cover every aspect of the potential hazards, or indicators, or solutions in this toolbox talk, but I’d like to at least acknowledge that mental health is as important as physical safety and is really overlooked. By addressing mental health we can make it less awkward to talk about with each other and de-stigmatize the topic.

This show (or business/production/film, etc.) is a tough one – the hours are long and some days are really overwhelming and stressful. Half the time you don’t know what’s next on the schedule. And often it’s a challenge to get a full night’s sleep.

Some have challenges that aren’t work-related. Maybe there’s stuff going on at home that adds to your stress. Remember, we all manage stress in different ways. Most of us spend more time with each other than we do with our families while we’re on a production, so we’re in a perfect position to notice changes in a co-worker that are concerning. It may be nothing, but there’s no way to know if you don’t ask.

If you’re struggling and don’t know where to go for help, talk to one of your co-workers that you trust. There are lots of resources (through the union) like the Employee Assistance Program and Behind the Scenes has loads of info on their website at info@btshelp.org/mentalhealth. Sometimes a simple time-out can help – take a quick little walk outside, or, we all have one of these (hold up phone) and there are lots of 1 minute breathing exercises either on an app or on the web.

For some of us, it’s hard to speak up. Either to someone you’re worried about or about your own issues. If it helps, you can come to me. Lastly, If you have an idea of how we can improve the situation here, and make it more mentally healthy, let us know.

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**“We want you to feel safe…”**

We want you to feel safe working here, both physically safe and psychologically safe. Acknowledging your mental health is as important as protecting you from physical injury. I know there is a stigma around discussing mental health challenges but the best way to remove the stigma is to start a dialogue.

Today is going to be long with a lot of stress and we’ve all been working long hours and we’re tired. If you don’t feel physically or mentally up to a particular task, you may feel ashamed or embarrassed to tell your supervisor or someone you trust, but it’s important to reach out. Don’t put your life or others at risk.

If you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or angry, take a 90 second time-out if it’s safe and walk away. That’s all it takes to reset your brain’s stress levels. We have to work closely with each other. If one of us is having any kind of difficulty, the safety of everyone depends on offering and asking for support.

Remember, we all deal with things in different ways and we all have different coping strategies. Make mental health check-ins a regular part of your workday – get in the habit of asking your co-workers how they’re doing and take the time to listen. Show compassion and respect - listen, don’t judge. We don’t expect you to be therapists, just caring coworkers.

Keep conversations confidential unless you are given permission, or fear that someone may hurt themselves or others. You can find information about mental health resources on the call board or visit btshelp.org/resources.

**“We want you to feel safe…” *(continued)***

There are different ways to support psychological safety. You can contribute positively by treating others with respect and by being supportive to coworkers who are struggling. It feels good when someone praises your work, so take the time to acknowledge when someone has done well.

If you have any suggestions on what we can do to positively impact the worksite and reduce stress or the potential for stress injury please let us know – it is every bit important as telling us about a physical safety hazard.

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**“Safety is a feeling…”**

Safety briefings are simply a part of how we work. But how can we say we are safe if we don’t feel that the space is “safe” for us to be our authentic selves in? Safety isn’t just a defined set of operations, it is a feeling, a level of comfort, knowing that those around you will look out for you…and that you will do the same for them.

Health and Safety must begin from the inside out to be effective, and this is why our mental wellness must be something that we become comfortable speaking out about. Feeling safe, is just as important as having a well-stocked First Aid kit!

Set the example by opening the door to conversations on Mental Wellness, share your own experiences and the things that make you anxious. Sharing vulnerability and speaking from a place of authenticity will allow others to feel safe to do the same!

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**“It’s Ok to Not be Ok…”**

A few other comments before we wrap up and start the day – and perhaps the most important information:

As a team, we’re here to support and look out for each other. We all have a lot going on – whether it’s here at work or at home and mental health is as important as our physical health.

I want you all to know it’s ok to not be ok. If you see a colleague in distress, ask them if they’re ok and let them know they’re not alone. If you are the person needing support,

I’m certainly here or let someone else know you’re feeling off.  We’re always talking safety, and this extends to our personal sense of mental wellness –we can’t put ourselves or each other in danger.

It just takes 90 seconds to reset our brains so take some breaths, focus on your surroundings or walk away if it’s safe to do so. Your thoughts and feelings are important and while we have busy and stressful days, start taking the time to notice how you’re feeling. This is a space where we need to acknowledge that we have to figure out ways to take care of ourselves in order to continue doing this work.

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**“Safety is important here…”**

Mental awareness is important in the workplace. We want you to feel safe working here, and to do that you need to be both physically safe and psychologically safe. Talking about mental health challenges isn’t easy, but we have to start somewhere.

Psychological safety means that you feel respected and valued, and if you say “I don’t know” how to do something or “I don’t understand” something, you won’t be ridiculed or punished.

**“Safety is important here…” *(continued)***

Lots of us find it hard to talk about what’s bothering us. Try to 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. Respect confidentiality – unless it involves someone’s safety.

It might not be your thing – but don’t dismiss a co-worker who wants to talk about their mental health. We don’t expect you to be therapists, just caring coworkers, and I’m always here if you need a resource or help with a tough situation.

If you are unsure if a comment, joke or behavior is ok, chances are you have already answered your own question. We want an environment where people feel comfortable, but any type of bullying, harassment or intimidation can affect all of us and our mental health. We will not tolerate inappropriate behavior and will deal with it seriously. If you have seen or been the target of inappropriate behavior please make sure you report this to leadership.

There are different ways we can make this a positive work environment. Treat others with respect and be supportive to coworkers who are struggling. Acknowledge when someone’s doing a good job – it can really make their day.

I want to hear from you – your feedback is important - let’s work to make this a healthy work environment.

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**“If you are struggling…”**

Before we get started today, I want to share with you some new concepts we are incorporating in our daily safety talks. We know talking about mental health issues isn't easy, but in order to do our part to de-stigmatize it, we want to remind you to look out for each other every day. Good mental health is just as important as physical safety, so let us know if you would like us to add anything to our daily talk.

Our goal is to create a positive working environment for all of us here. This work is stressful, so we ask that everyone pay extra attention to what you need. 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.

If you see someone struggling, or having a tough day, offer support. There are different ways we can make this a positive work environment. Treat others with respect and be supportive to coworkers who are struggling. If you don't feel comfortable, find one of us, or management, and we will check in with the person. We all have bad days.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, angry, or things are really tense, take a 90 second time-out if it’s safe and walk away. It just takes 90 seconds to reset your brain’s stress levels.

And finally, and this is something we will keep talking about, let's all look out for any bullying and harassment. If you feel like you are being bullied or see someone doing it, let us know. This isn't about anyone getting into trouble, it is about creating an environment where we all feel comfortable.

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**“See something, say something…”**

Another important topic before we wrap up and start the day –

As a team, we’re here to support and look out for each other. I want everyone to know we take mental health seriously. It’s okay not to be okay. If you’re needing support – I’m here or find someone on the team and let them know you’re feeling off. If you see a colleague in distress – ask them if they’re ok  - let them know they’re not alone. It makes a big difference when we show support to each other.

Safety talks also extend to our personal sense of safety and mental wellness – we can’t put ourselves or each other in danger. If you need a break, it just takes 90 seconds to reset the brains so take some breaths, focus on your surroundings or walk away if it’s safe to do so. Let’s also  keep an eye out for bullying, harassment and intimidation  –  there’s no place for it here.

It’s important to take notice of how you’re feeling and what you’re seeing around you. We have great resources in the break room and I’m always here to provide information.