



MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNICATION SKILLS



We all know communication keeps a jobsite running—whether it's calling out a hazard, coordinating a lift, or clearing up confusion on a plan. But communication is also what holds a team together when things get tough.

Mental health challenges don't always look obvious, and they don't always get talked about. But they're here—on every crew, in every trade. When someone's struggling, how we speak to them can either make them feel supported or make them shut down. That's why mental health communication skills aren't just “nice to have”—they're essential. Being able to listen, speak with respect, and check in without judgment can literally change someone's day—or their life.

WHY IT MATTERS

Good communication is more than getting instructions right or passing on updates—it's about creating a jobsite where people feel respected, heard, and supported. When it comes to mental health, communication can be the bridge that connects someone to help—or the wall that keeps them silent. In construction, many of us were taught to “tough it out.” But we now know that silence around stress, anxiety, depression, or burnout doesn't make the problem go away—it makes it worse. Strong teams talk. And the way we communicate sets the tone for whether people feel safe asking for help.

- **You don't need the perfect words.** You just need to show you care. A simple “You doing okay?” can go a long way.
- **Listen more than you speak.** You don't need to fix it. Just be present. Let them talk without interrupting or jumping to solutions.
- **Watch your tone.** Sarcasm, shouting, or harsh jokes can shut people down. Clear, calm, and respectful is always best—especially under stress.
- **Be open and real.** If you've had tough times, share that (when appropriate). It makes others feel less alone.

PRACTICAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Ask open-ended questions: Instead of “You good?” try: “What's been going on lately?” “How's your stress level been?”
- Use empathy, not judgment: Say: “That sounds like a lot.” Avoid: “That's not a big deal, just deal with it.”
- Normalize the conversation: “A lot of us go through this—it doesn't make you weak.” “It's okay to talk about this stuff. You're not alone.”
- Know what to say if you're worried about someone: “I've noticed you've seemed off. I'm here if you want to talk.” “Have you thought about talking to someone, like a counselor or a peer support line?”

Strong communication also helps prevent accidents, misunderstandings, and team conflict. It's not just a mental health skill—it's a productivity and safety one too.

Mental health communication is about connection - not perfection.

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