

TOOLBOX TALK #9

Seasonal Depression



Today, we are going to discuss a type of depression that usually occurs during the colder months when daylight hours are shorter - Seasonal Depression, also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). It affects millions of Americans every year, especially those working in environments like construction, where working outside in varying weather conditions is common. For construction workers, long hours in low light, cold temperatures, and physically demanding jobs can increase the risk of developing seasonal depression.

What is Seasonal Depression

Seasonal Depression is a mood disorder that typically occurs in fall and winter and subsides in spring and summer. It's believed that reduced exposure to sunlight during the shorter winter days disrupts the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm), affects serotonin levels, and lowers vitamin D intake, all contributing to feelings of depression.

Warning Signs of Seasonal Depression

Recognizing the signs of Seasonal Depression in yourself or coworkers can help prevent feelings of depression from worsening. Common symptoms can include:

- Persistent low energy: Always feeling tired, even after a full night's rest.
- Changes in sleep patterns: Oversleeping or struggling to fall asleep.
- Difficulty concentrating: Struggling to stay focused on tasks.
- Feelings of hopelessness or sadness: Feeling down most days or losing interest in activities once enjoyed.
- Social withdrawal: Avoiding coworkers or activities, preferring to be alone.
- Irritability: Feeling more impatient or frustrated than usual.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Have you noticed changes in your mood or energy levels during the fall and winter months?
2. How do these changes affect your work and personal life and what helpful strategies have you used to manage seasonal depression?

TOOLBOX TALK #9

Seasonal Depression



How to Help a Coworker or Yourself

- Check in regularly: If you notice someone acting differently or withdrawing from the group, ask them how they are doing. A simple "How's it going?" can go a long way.
- Offer support: Let your coworkers know that you are there to talk or listen. Sometimes just knowing someone cares can make a big difference.
- Acknowledge your feelings: It's ok to feel down during the colder months. Recognizing that you are struggling is the first step toward getting better.
- Be patient: If they don't want to talk, don't push them. Let them know you are available whenever they are ready.
- Encourage seeking help: Suggest they talk to a professional, such as a counselor or healthcare provider, if symptoms persist. You can also remind them about any Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or additional resources.

Proactive Tips for Managing Seasonal Depression

- Promote an open environment: Normalize talking about mental health. Crews that feel comfortable discussing mental health challenges can help reduce the stigma and encourage workers to seek help.
- Maximize natural light exposure: Being exposed to natural sunlight can boost serotonin levels and regulate the body's internal clock, improving overall mood and energy.
- Exercise: Physical activity is a great way to improve mood. Even a short walk during a break can make a difference.
- Eat healthily: Eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help maintain energy and stabilize food.
- Stay connected: Make time to connect with coworkers, friends, or family members to reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- 988 Lifeline: Available 24/7 for anyone feeling overwhelmed, in crisis, or needing someone to talk to. You do not have to be in a major crisis to call.
- TEAM & Alliance (EAP Service): Offers free, confidential support for financial counseling, stress management, mental health, debt concerns, and more. They can help you create a plan and connect you with trained professionals.
- Your Union Representative: A trusted point of contact who can help guide you through available resources, benefits, or next steps if finances are affecting your ability to work or your emotional well-being.
- Additional national and state-by-state resources can be found by scanning the QR code or visiting www.nmcarpenters.com/programs/mental-health

