

# TOOLBOX TALK #05

## Members Supporting Members



In the skilled trades, teamwork is not just about lifting heavy materials or hitting deadlines, it is about looking out for each other's well-being. Members supporting other members is not just a "nice thing to do" it is a practical way to help someone stay safe, healthy, and resilient on and off the job. This Toolbox Talk focuses on how noticing stress, offering support, and knowing where to point someone for help can make a real difference; and how taking part in this culture can also protect your own mental health.

### Why Supporting Each Other Matters

We all have tough days. Maybe a member is struggling with money, stress, family issues, or mental health challenges. Sometimes, they're quietly holding it together until it becomes overwhelming.

Supporting a coworker doesn't mean you have to solve their problems. It is about noticing, checking in, and helping connect them to tools and resources. When someone feels seen and supported, it reduces isolation, improves focus, and prevents burnout, which benefits both the individual and the team.

### Common Signs a Member May Need Support

Paying attention does not mean being a professional counselor, it just means noticing changes in behavior. Some signs include:

- Increased irritability or frustration on the job
- Withdrawal from conversations or jobsite interactions
- Decline in performance or focus
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, worry, or stress
- Talking about feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or burned out

Even small changes can be a cue that someone may benefit from a check-in or supportive conversation. Supporting fellow members is not just about helping someone in need — it's about building a stronger, safer, and more compassionate work environment for everyone. A quick check-in, a listening ear, or pointing someone to professional resources can prevent bigger struggles and strengthen relationships on and off the job.

### GROUP DISCUSSION:

What are simple, realistic ways we can check in on a coworker without feeling like we're overstepping?

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### How to Support a Fellow Member

Supporting each other is one of the greatest strengths of our brotherhood and sisterhood. You do not need special training to make a real difference, just awareness, compassion, and a willingness to step in when someone is struggling. Here are expanded, practical ways members can support one another on and off the jobsite:

- 1. Notice the Small Changes.** Sometimes the first signs that someone needs help are subtle. Pay attention if a coworker seems unusually quiet, withdrawn, or distracted; Appears more irritated, emotional, or short-tempered than usual; Is missing work or showing up late more often; or looks physically run-down or exhausted. Recognizing these early signals can help you step in before things escalate.
- 2. Start a Genuine Conversation.** You don't have to solve their problems, just open the door. Pull them aside privately and ask, "Hey, you haven't seemed like yourself. You doing alright?" Use simple, non-judgmental language. Let them share at their own pace; silence is okay. Often, being heard is the support someone needs most.
- 3. Listen Without Trying to Fix Everything.** People do not expect you to have all the answers. Give your full attention; no phones, no distractions. Avoid jumping to solutions unless they ask. Show empathy: "That sounds really tough," or "Thanks for telling me." Listening builds trust and helps reduce isolation.
- 4. Encourage Healthy Next Steps.** If a member opens up to you, gently encourage them to take the next step: Talk with a supervisor or steward if work stress is overwhelming; Reach out to a counselor, doctor, or trusted professional; Connect with peer support resources; Take a break if they're mentally or physically overloaded; You're not replacing professional help—just helping connect them to it.
- 5. Check In Again Later.** Support does not end after one conversation. Send a quick text or pull them aside the next day. Ask how they are doing or if they need anything. Let them know the door is still open. Consistent support can make someone feel less alone, especially during tough times.
- 6. Step In If Safety Is at Risk.** If someone seems impaired, overly distraught, or unsafe to work, make sure they step away from hazardous tasks. Alert a supervisor or safety lead and stay with them until help arrives, if needed. Safety always comes first; for them and everyone on site.
- 7. Lead by Example.** The best way to build a culture of support is through everyday behavior. Treat everyone with respect, even on stressful days. Share your own experiences when appropriate; it helps normalize struggles. Create an environment where it is okay to speak up. A strong crew looks out for each other, not just on big days but every day.

### 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](http://www.nmcarpenters.com/programs/mental-health)

