



Daily Toolbox Talk: Brain Matters
Wednesday May 3, 2023

In our industry, the most effective tool we have is the tool between our ears. We need to keep our brains safe and sound to accomplish everything we do. Your hard hat or helmet is a great place to start.

The advancement of head protection has come a long way since the days of leather and canvas hard hats. Metal and aluminum were also viewed as upgrades at the time but have since been retired for more modern and high-impact materials. According to NIOSH, workers in construction sustain more traumatic brain injuries than in any other workplace in the United States. Safety helmets are becoming more commonly used and offer the most protection our industry has seen to date. If you are already wearing a helmet – thanks. If you or your company have not made the switch from a hard hat to a helmet, we ask that you consider it. There are lots of options available at a wide variety of price ranges. You may find a selection that's right for you and your budget.

Protecting the outside of the head is critical, but are you using your brains to make our workplaces feel safe, secure, and supported? That's where the brain matter on the inside comes into play for us on our projects. Mental health is not approached easily in the construction industry. Your involvement and encouraging others to raise their voice can positively change the course of someone's life and includes more than being aware of how people are treated on and off our jobs. Feeling safe psychologically is all part of the thoughts and ideas in those brains of ours. Let's look at a few:

1. Is our workplace inclusive? Is it representative of the community where it exists?
2. Are people in our workplace respectful of others?
3. Do we have a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence?
4. Do we have an environment where we welcome diversity?
 - a. Are we equitable? Does everyone have opportunities based on individual needs rather than equal needs? (Everyone needs work gloves – when you give everyone gloves, that's equality. Everyone needs work gloves that fit them and are correct for their tasks – that's equity.)
5. Do we feel safe and empowered by others to speak up?
6. Are we allowing workers to speak up? Do we value their opinions and input?
7. Are we giving people fair opportunities?
8. Do we embrace Total Worker Health concepts that take into consideration social, economic, and environmental concerns on AND off the job?
9. Does our company have a positive community impact program?

We could continue with access to clean, safe toilet facilities, employee assistance programs, adequate and appropriate PPE and so many more things. Now's a good time to share what we need to do on this project to make positive improvements. You often see things that managers don't. Be conscientious about having a solution when you bring up a concern. If things aren't right – you can use these steps.

1. Be Aware
2. Pay Attention
3. Reach Out
4. Take Action
5. Learn More – What resources are there for you? Maybe it's an EAP. Maybe it's a project advocate. Maybe you need to share the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

See something – say something and remember that Strong Voices help make Safe Choices.