

A photograph of a construction worker sitting alone on a wooden floor. The worker is wearing a white hard hat, a red long-sleeved shirt, and a high-visibility yellow vest. They are sitting with their head down, leaning against a wall of vertical metal panels. The scene is lit by warm sunlight coming from the right, creating strong shadows and highlights. The background is slightly out of focus, showing an outdoor construction site.

MENTAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

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Overview

Mental health covers a wide range of issues, including mild or moderate anxiety and stress, drug and alcohol abuse and disorders such as severe depression and schizophrenia. However, workers mental health and well being also relates to their general mental and emotional health and their ability to cope with the normal stresses of life.

The cost of mental health issues in the workforce is significant in terms of days lost at work, health and safety implications, social isolation and even the risk of self harm or suicide. This is borne out in the 2018-2019 UK Health & Safety Executive's reported figures for work related cases of stress, depression or anxiety (new or longstanding) totalling 600,000. Moreover, the total number of working days lost to a mental health related issue in the UK was 12.8 million equating to an average of 21.2 days lost per case.

There is a growing awareness in society around mental health and the importance of maintaining good mental health, but recent figures show that approximately one in four people now experience a mental health problem each year.

Several studies into mental health have identified construction as one of the worst industries to work in when it comes to mental ill health, with males in construction three times more likely to commit suicide than the national average. Further research by industry bodies and charities has identified potential causes which are linked to the work and culture relative to the industry; including long working hours, low pay, increased time away from family and the 'macho' culture.

Beton Bauen is fully aware of the importance of mental well being as an issue for people working in the construction sector and recognises the need for a supportive infrastructure. Also apparent is the large proportion of men in the workforce and the traditional beliefs amongst men to avoid seeking psychological support for mental health issues.

Beton Bauen has identified five ways in which to support it's management and employees, offering a brief guide to dealing with mental health issues and wellbeing.

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Introducing The Five Ways to Mental Wellbeing

The evidence behind *The Five Ways to Mental Wellbeing* suggests that small improvements in wellbeing result in people (and businesses) flourishing, and some mental health problems reducing. They point to 5 clusters of small practical actions that anyone and everyone can be doing to increase the number of days that we experience as 'good days'.

Although not easy to define precisely, a sense of wellbeing feeds feelings of happiness, curiosity, contentment, enjoyment, engagement and satisfaction. These feelings contribute to increased resilience and self-esteem and strengthen our connection with other people and the business. It forms a virtuous circle of thriving.

- ▶ The 5 ways can overlap, so having a lunchtime walk with a colleague is both Being Active and Connecting
- ▶ Keep interest and momentum by varying activities and ringing the changes
- ▶ Doing anything is better than doing nothing!



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Connect

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

What you could do in the workplace...

- ▶ Build in times when people can eat and talk and exercise together
- ▶ Talk with your staff, ask how they are, show interest in their lives and work.



Be Active

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

What you could do in the workplace...

- ▶ Encourage staff to walk or cycle to work and have a walk or run at lunchtime
- ▶ Have walking meetings
- ▶ Role model and encourage staff to walk around the office or warehouse more



Take Notice

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

What you could do in the workplace...

- ▶ Start the day by inviting/sharing what's been good about the morning so far
- ▶ Encourage people to learn mindfulness skills
- ▶ In one-on-one's invite people to talk about how they feel as well as what they have done

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Keep Learning

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

What you could do in the workplace...

- ▶ Ask people to reflect on what they have learned as much as what they have achieved
- ▶ Encourage curiosity and experimenting
- ▶ Promote learning and training in all forms - listening to talks as well as formal courses



Give

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

What you could do in the workplace...

- ▶ Offer people a little time – listen, ask
- ▶ Have charity or fundraising days
- ▶ Encourage some community volunteering – maybe in work time or as a Team 'Away Day'

Further Reading & Support

Mates in Mind

Tel: 0300 123 3393

Web: www.matesinmind.org

Mates in Mind is a registered UK charity that is dedicated to raising awareness, addressing the stigma of poor mental health, and promoting positive mental wellbeing across workplaces. The charity offers construction and transport organisations a number of tools and resources, to help them improve the mental health of their workforce – including awareness day resource packs, posters, infographics, factsheets and more.

Construction Industry Helpline

Tel: 0345 605 1956

Web: www.constructionindustryhelpline.com

The Construction Industry Helpline is managed and funded by the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity. The charity has been delivering charitable welfare and support to the construction community since 1956. The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity is funded by the industry, for the industry.

Samaritans

Tel: 116 123

Web: www.samaritans.org

The Samaritans is a UK-registered charity that offers 24/7 listening and support to people and communities in times of need. They provide people with coping methods and the skills needed to assist others.