

STRESS MANAGEMENT ON THE JOB SITE



Joe is the lead carpenter on a major renovation project. He's proud of his crew and always pushes himself to lead by example. But lately, the deadlines have been brutal, change orders keep coming in, and the crew is down two people. Joe has been skipping breaks, staying late, and waking up in the middle of the night thinking about work. His shoulders ache constantly, and he's more irritable than usual, snapping at coworkers over minor mistakes. When a small measurement error nearly caused a major delay, Joe realizes that stress affecting his usual competence and possibly clouding his judgment. He needed to step back and find better ways to manage it; for his sake, the success of the project, and the safety of the jobsite.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Stress can be part of working in construction—but if it's not managed, it can lead to serious mental and physical consequences. Long hours, tight deadlines, and physical strain can all pile up. When stress goes unchecked, it can affect our focus, relationships, sleep, and even safety. However, there are effective ways to manage stress before it gets worse.

- **Recognize the early signs of unhealthy stress:** If you're feeling constantly tense, irritable, exhausted, or having trouble sleeping, those may be signs that stress is affecting you.
- **Speak up:** Speak up when work stress is piling on top of other life challenges. Whether you're a supervisor or crew member, speaking up when the "load" of work and personal stressors are becoming overwhelming can open the door for solutions.
- **Take breaks and support others doing the same:** For supervisors, that means setting the tone and encouraging short pauses to rest. For everyone on the crew, use your breaks to breathe, stretch, hydrate, and step away from the pressure.
- **Practice healthy coping habits:** Movement, sleep, and connection are key. Stay active when off the job, prioritize getting enough rest, eat nutritious meals, drink plenty of water, talk to people you trust, and avoid leaning on substances like alcohol to unwind. These changes to daily routines help build mental resilience, which is the ability for people to get through the tough times.

JOBSITE DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How do you know when stress is getting to be too much? What are some of the ways we might experience stress?
2. What's one thing you do—or could do—during the workday to recharge, even briefly?
3. How can we support each other in managing stress without feeling weak or lazy for slowing down?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Stress doesn't just come from the job—it builds up if we don't take care of ourselves. The early signs—trouble sleeping, tension, mood changes—are signals that something needs attention. Managing stress isn't about avoiding hard work; it's about building healthy habits that let you do your job safely and sustainably. That means taking breaks, speaking up when your workload piles on top of other issues, and supporting one another. On this site, we treat stress management as a shared responsibility and a key part of staying safe.

Don't forget to mention your company's mental health resources or local service options.