Belonging and Excellence for All (BE4ALL) is a joint effort by SMART, SMACNA, and the ITI to create an industry-wide culture where everyone is welcome and belongs, including those from historically underrepresented groups, and where we all strive for the highest standards of performance and professionalism, resulting in a thriving unionized sheet metal industry that affirms the dignity and worth of us all. These Toolbox Talks are in support of this mission.

BE4ALL Toolbox Talk
Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace

There has been a reported rise in the number of individuals experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders in the United States. It is becoming increasingly important to help support mental health and alleviate stressors for workers. **Here are some ways to be a compassionate leader and establish a supportive tone:**

- **Raise awareness about job-specific stressors and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health conditions** and substance use by facilitating conversations about mental health. Make it known that it is natural to feel stressed at times and offer assurance that people can come to you if they need to talk.
- **Check in with others periodically to ask them how they are doing** and whether there is anything that you can do to support them. Hold group meetings to promote connectedness and provide a forum for workers to voice concerns, ask questions, and receive information about ways to cope with stress, build resiliency, and seek outside support if necessary.
- **Build connections and encourage people to be supportive of one another** by checking in on each other, and/or create a "buddy system". Helping others benefits both parties, because helping can improve an individual's sense of control, belonging, and self-esteem.
- **Be a good role model** by showing a more personal side and acknowledging that you also feel the stress. As well as being more open, it's important to take care of your own mental health by practicing self-care (e.g., getting enough sleep, exercising, taking breaks) and establishing work-life boundaries.
- **Look for opportunities to alleviate stress** by sharing the workload when possible and allowing for more time to complete tasks. Be realistic and fair about expectations. Allow people more flexibility in choosing their work hours and encourage them to set a time by which they will be offline for the day.

How to spot the signs and symptoms of distress:
Stress can look different in different people, here are some examples:

1. Irritation, anger, or denial
2. Feeling nervous or anxious
3. Lacking motivation
4. Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
5. Feeling sad or depressed
6. Having trouble sleeping or focusing
7. Getting into conflicts at work
8. Having trouble completing tasks or meeting deadlines
9. Submitting poor-quality work

SMACNA

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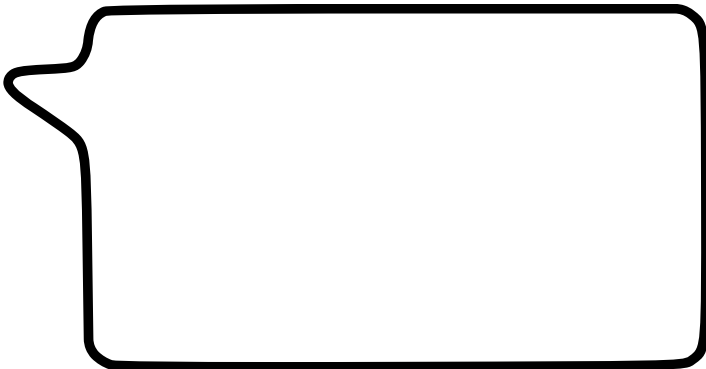## Reducing workplace stress benefits *everyone*. What can *you* do to help?

The most important thing is to show compassion and offer additional support to workers who appear to be struggling. If you or someone you know needs to speak with someone, we encourage you to use the **SMOHIT Helpline**, which is available 24/7 to SMART members and their families, at **877-884-6227**. It is free, confidential, and voluntary.
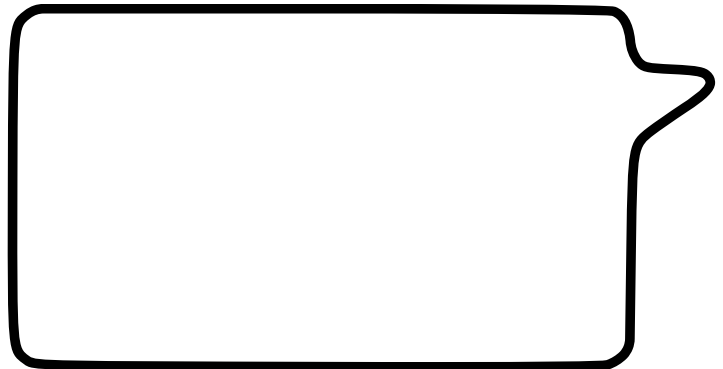
Scan this QR code to add the SMOHIT Helpline as a contact to your phone.

Staff Conversation & Notes:

What could you do to support a coworker going through a difficult time?

What are some steps you can take to reduce your own stress levels?

Reflect on a time when someone showed you support during a stressful time in your life.

Use the link below or scan the QR code to access the survey:

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Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace:

https://fs19.formsite.com/smacna/psm8czyygu/index

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