



Construction Wellness: Fostering Brain Health within the AEC Industry for Connecticut Building Congress

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Why are we here?

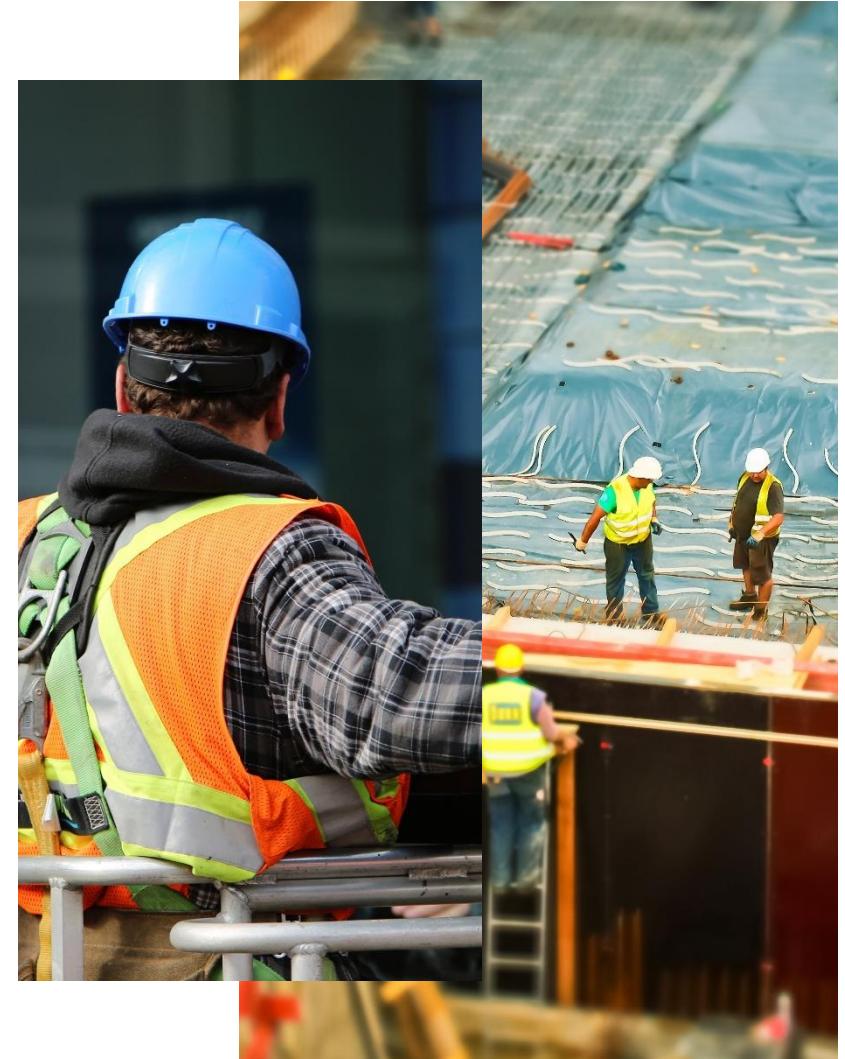
Because mental health is as much a part of our lives as is physical health.

What we want to accomplish

An understanding that stress and mental health impact us all differently and that it's important to support the **total human health** of employees, **while getting the work done.**

How to drive change

As it should, leadership is evolving.



Mental Health

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Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work **productively** and is able to make a **contribution** to his or her community. -World Health Organization (WHO)

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87% of USA workers across industries experienced at least one mental health issue;

65% said their mental health interfered with their ability to work. (Lyra State of Workplace MH Report. 2024)

83% of Construction workers have experienced some form of moderate to severe mental health issue. (Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan. 2023)

Poor mental health impacts work in ways we may not realize:

- Unscheduled absenteeism
- Increased sick days
- Presenteeism
- Interpersonal conflicts (e.g. increased rage incidents)
- Safety risks through increased accidents



Cognitive and Mental Fitness = Resilience

- **What is brain health?** Brain health is the state of brain functioning across various domains, allowing a person to realize their full potential over time. Factors that impact how our brain develops, adapts and responds to stress and adversity include physical health, our environment, degree of safety and security, life-long learning and social connections. (World Health Organization)
- **Connection to mental health:** Improving mental health protects the brain. Research is making the link between conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, dementia and brain health. Social interactions, a sense of wellbeing in one's life supports good mental health also enhances brain health.

What affects our brain?



Stressor vs. Stress

Stressor

Anything that activates the stress response in your body:

- **External:** work, money, family, cultural norms, discrimination
- **Internal:** self-criticism, body image, identity, memories

Stress

The neurological and physiological shift that happens in your body when you encounter a stressor.

- **Positive**
- **Chronic vs. Acute**
- **Burnout**

Wellness: A State of Action

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To be “well” is not to live in a state of perpetual calm, but to move fluidly from a state of adversity, back to safety and calm, and out again. Stress is not bad for you; *being stuck* is bad for you.

Wellness happens when your body is a place of safety for you, even when your body is not necessarily in a safe place. **Wellness is not a state of being, but a state of action.**



Putting into PRACTICE

Six-Second Exhale

Inhale to a count of 4; exhale to a count of 4. Repeat.

Inhale to a count of 4; exhale to a count of 5. Repeat.

Inhale to a count of 4; exhale to a count of 6. Repeat.

As your exhale elongates, your heart rate and blood pressure decrease.

Two Simple Daily Practices

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The first is to create an intention for your day, and the second is to begin to cultivate moments of mindfulness.

Both can be done in a matter of seconds, require no physical exertion, and don't cost a thing. **It takes less work to do them than to come up with the excuses to avoid them.**

Thank you.

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