

# DAWG TRACKS SAFETY NEWSLETTER

MS Agricultural & Forestry Experiment Station  
MSU Extension Service



*A plane can be going through the worse turbulence; but if you're on the ground, it's going to look like a smooth flight to you. It's going to look like every other flight from where you're standing, but it's not to those passengers on the plane.*

This analogy reveals a lot of truth about how it is in our life when looking into other people's lives. We think we know what's going on, but looking from afar we can't see the bumps & shakes; we are not experiencing the turbulence & concerns others could be going through in life right now. Your perspective is not their reality.

While safety in the workplace is about having the right equipment, facilities, and procedures, that's not all of it. Let's not overlook the significant impact of a worker's mental health. **Your mental state, what you think about or focus on, directly controls your reactions, patience, and decisions.** If a worker is distracted or experiencing stress at home or within the workplace this will affect their productivity and safety.

Distractions are not only from the "bad" things in life, but often "good" things create stress too.

Below are examples of both that can affect a healthy mental state and focus:

- a new baby / death of a loved one
- marriage/divorce
- too much help / staff shortage
- no direction / micro-manager
- personal choice / social expectations
- health / disability
- budget excess / no budget

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## Tips for Building Resilience to Mental Stress:

- ✓ Have a community. The reality is nobody can pull yourself up by your bootstraps; it is an impossible task. People need people. Every week talk to 3 people you trust; it can be family, friends, colleges from a similar field. Just check in, laugh or vent – have a conversation. Isolation kills faster than any hazard.
- ✓ Stop trying to fix the unfixable. Let go of what you have no control over.
- ✓ Have something to do that has nothing to do with work – a hobby that's yours alone.

## Warning Signs of Mental Stress:

- Withdrawn behavior
- Sudden absenteeism; increase in sick days.
- Mood swings, anger, outburst.
- Overcompensating with jokes, silence or "I'm fine".

## How You Can Help:

- ✓ Check on people. A sincere "How are you really doing?" could make all the difference. Just be present. Listen to understand, not respond.
- ✓ Be honest. Share stories & experiences, openly acknowledge your own stress.
- ✓ Be positive and re-direct the negative.
- ✓ Don't be dismissive, show compassion. You don't have to have answers but offer to help figure it out together.

A distracted worker is not a safety liability; they are simply human. Mental health wellness is not improved with a budget, documentation, or power but it takes something much more valuable ... courage and time out of your day to genuinely care when no one else will.

## Sources:

<https://www.assp.org/publications/professional-safety> Oct 2025 .

Shawn Myles reel.

*The Blind Side of Safety* by Allen Woffard