

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STAND DOWN

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

How To Know If Someone Is Struggling?

Since firefighters spend long shifts together – either on the lines or in the station – we have a special view of each other. It's our duty to look out for one another just as we would on the front lines. Here are some common signs and symptoms of someone who may be struggling:

- Increasing alcohol or substance use
- Changes in energy levels – restlessness, irritability, insomnia or sleeping too much
- Withdrawing or isolating from others
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Partaking in reckless behavior
- Changes in eating habits such as overeating or loss of appetite
- Inability to concentrate, memory recall issues or the inability to think clearly
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness
- Worrying about being a burden to others

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

BE DIRECT: Be proactive and approach someone when you've seen them exhibiting some of the warning signs or appear to be in crisis.

LISTEN: Practice active listening techniques and let them talk without judgement; if it appears they are in crisis, do not leave them alone.



GET THEM HELP: Don't be afraid to get your brother or sister the help they might need. If you are not a trained peer, find one that they can speak with; or if you think this may be above what a peer can offer, get them professional help.

HealingOurOwn.org/resources has clinical resources that you can contact.

BE THERE: Everyone deals with pain differently. Be there for your injured colleague, supporting their recovery just as you would if a brother or sister went down with an injury in a fire.

Remember: *If someone is in crisis or seems at risk of suicide, don't leave them alone.*



HEALING OUR OWN

STEPS TO SUPPORT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Being a firefighter is both stressful and rewarding, but it can put a strain on mental and physical health and even relationships. Prioritize these strategies to support good mental health for today, tomorrow and through your retirement:

- Get enough sleep (recommended sleeping and meditation apps on healingourown.org)
- Participate in regular physical activity
- Eat healthy
- Limit screen time
- Dedicate time to yourself
- Stay connected with family and loved ones
- Get help when you need it

CHANGING THE CULTURE IN THE FIREHOUSE

Firefighters' coping methods after a heartbreaking or difficult call can vary from brushing it off through humor, to denial and alcohol or drug abuse.

Consider the following:

- Firefighters feel most comfortable talking with their peers – individuals who share their experiences. That makes the firehouse the perfect place to engage in injury prevention.
- If someone opens up at the kitchen table about a bad call or a difficult experience, have empathy - don't shut them down. Help them out and don't be afraid to relate your own experiences and concerns.
- Knowing that they're not alone can be the best thing for a brother or sister at risk.

When you are conducting these meetings, don't forget to add personal stories. You can find personal stories at HealingOurOwn.org/stories.

RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

If someone you know is in crisis, it's important to know how they can find help. Below are available resources that can be used for first responders and their families:

- **PEER SUPPORT**
Find out your department's peer support resources and how to access them
- **PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING**
HealingOurOwn.org/resources has a list of professional counselors recommended by first responders for first responders and their families
- **NATIONAL SUICIDE LIFELINE (24/7)**
[1 \(800\) 273-8255](https://18002738255.com) (the number is also on your wallet card)
- **FIREFIGHTER/FAMILY CRISIS AND SUPPORT LINE**
[844-525-FIRE](https://844525FIRE.org) (3473)
- **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PTSD**
HealingOurOwn.org