

## The Zen of Safety

### Introduction:

Workplace safety has become a high priority for many employers. A well-designed safety program is important in providing a safe work environment and reducing stress and anxiety. When employees feel safe in the work environment, they become more engaged in their job tasks and more productive. Other benefits of a safe work environment include fewer injuries and improved health and wellbeing of workers; thus, leading to increased job satisfaction.

### Discussion Points:

- A well-designed safety program reduces stress and anxiety
- Providing a safe workplace improves health and wellbeing of workers
- A safe workplace requires participation from all employees
- Worker accountability and avoiding complacency
- Safety moments, Zen, and being in the moment
- Ways to practice Zen at work

### Discussion:

Safety is part of the workplace safety culture, where it is a shared responsibility. A safe workplace requires the participation of all employees. Employees should be held accountable for their work behavior. When workers are held accountable for their actions, there is less chance of complacency. Some of the most serious injuries in the workplace involve moments of complacency or inattention. Complacency can lead to lapses in accountability and harm the culture of safety. In a past Toolbox Talk, we discussed the importance of “4 seconds to safety.” Pausing and taking four seconds or “safety moments” to think about hazards associated with the task can reduce the probability of injury by more than 90%.

Incorporating “safety moments” or “Zen,” which is defined as reflection, meditation, or “being in the moment,” into the workday, may improve worker safety and reduce injury. Zen meditation is highly acclaimed by many as “the very best technique for mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellness.” A study by Aetna revealed “roughly one-quarter of those who took in-office yoga and mindfulness classes reported a 28% reduction in their stress levels and 20% improvement in sleep quality. These workers gained an average of 62 minutes per week of productivity.” Ways to practice Zen at work: Love the work you do, plan your time, concentrate on what’s in front of you, slow down your mind, give yourself a good working environment, and practice mindfulness. According to Zen Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh, “When we know how to take care of our strong emotions and establish good relationships at work, communication improves, stress is reduced, and our work becomes much more pleasant. This is a huge benefit not only to ourselves, but also to those we work with, to our loved ones, our families, and the whole of society,” he continues.

As always, stay safe out there!

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