

Mental Health During the Downturn in Industry

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Over the past two years the Albertan energy sector has been faced with a crippling downturn, one of the worst many people in the industry have ever seen. With over [60,000 energy professionals unemployed](#) and Alberta now having the highest unemployment rate in Canada at 9%, it is hard for industry professionals to remain optimistic about a turnaround in the industry. This has not only affected professionals on financial level, but on a mental and emotional level as well.

It has become increasingly hard for industry professionals to remain resilient through these difficult times. Tens of thousands of professionals who have been laid off are looking for employment and those who are still employed may be worried about job security. Now more than ever, stress levels in the industry are high, leading to sleepless nights, depression, and anxiety.

Mental health awareness has not been as openly discussed [in energy as it is in other industries](#). Largely due to the boom and bust cycle in energy prices there has always been a high sense of resiliency and the high-pace, high-pressure environment has been considered the norm. Now with heightened pressures, the stigma of mental health awareness is lessening in our industry. With the current economic climate within the industry, companies have started to become more proactive, trying to focus on improving current operating efficiencies including more focus on their employees and their mental health. Community organizations have also stepped in to start providing help to those in need.

People in the industry are now becoming more aware of mental health challenges related to overwhelming stress and pressure, and are speaking up. There are a number of companies like Shell, Devon, and Enbridge who have implemented social programs to help increase awareness of mental health issues. The University of Calgary also received \$1.9 million dollars this past year from the [Movember Foundation](#) to study how to reduce mental illness in industries like oil and gas, which are primarily male dominated and are also offering workshops that cover mental health resiliency during the economic downturn.

One of the hardest challenges is identify and measuring mental health issues in the workplace. [“Men tend to seek medical help, less than women.”](#) Louise Chenier who is the manager of workplace health and wellness research for the Conference Board states. In male-dominated industries like energy, there can be a stigma around addressing mental health issues. The fact

is that mental health issues not only affect women or men, but all of us. We have to try to remain positive in this stressful environment and remember:

- **Nothing is More Important Than Your Health:** No job is more important than our personal wellbeing. Prioritize your own health and wellbeing, and know that managing your own health will also enable you to be effective at work.
- **The Industry Will Turn Around:** What goes down, must come up, at least in this industry. Commodity prices have always gone up and down and although we have been in this downturn for two years and counting there is an end in sight.
- **There is Help Available:** There are so many resources now available for professionals feeling the stress of the industry, and mental health awareness is increasing in our industry.

Here are some resources to consider:

Alberta Health Helpline

- Alberta mental health helpline offers crisis intervention support and information on mental help. The mental health line is 1-8777-303-2642 and is a service available 24-7. Health aid is a province wide help service offered through Alberta Health Link by dialing 811 anywhere in the province.

Calgary Distress Centre

- The Distress Centre offers 24-7 crisis support, online chat, professional counselling, suicide hotline prevention, and other mental health services. For more information visit: <http://www.distresscentre.com>

University of Calgary

- The University of Calgary now offers workshops covering mental health resiliency during the economic downturn through Calgary economic development. For more information on these workshops visit:

<http://www.calgaryeconomicdevelopment.com/workforce/>

- **We are all in This Together!:** You are not alone; We are all going through this together and so many people are feeling exactly how you are. The fact is, if we all talked about it more it would help us more than hinder us. Go for a coffee with a colleague, meet up with your friends, or start the discussion with your family. You'll benefit from getting your feelings off your chest, and may find that others feel the same way as you. That can help establish a great support network for you during times of challenge.