



## Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

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**Guests:** Danielle Browne, Thomas Young

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**Katherine:** Welcome to *The Fix*, the podcast made for the trades where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry, including career paths, jobsite stories, overcoming challenges and everything in between. I'm your host, Katherine, a marketer here at Oatey with my co-host and friend Doug, one of Oatey's resident experts in all things trades. *The Fix* is more than a podcast. It's a community, a community built to support tradespeople and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation. All right. It is Ambassador first week, what an exciting time.

**Doug:** Those of you who listen to the last episode, we're calling this the Ot's.

**Katherine:** You got it.

**Doug:** All right. The Oatey's Ambassador team series so here we go.

**Katherine:** I love it. Well, today we have two of our returning ambassadors who wanted to talk about our topic and really bring awareness, which I think is totally awesome.

**Doug:** I'll be honest with you. The guest we're going to have today, I look at them being strong individuals, brave individuals, because the topics that we're going to talk about, you don't discuss them in the trades because a lot of times it makes you feel like you're weak and everybody's got to be macho in the trades. Well, we need to get rid of that stigma and have more of these conversations. I really applaud them for opening up today in the topics they're going to discuss with us.

**Katherine:** Absolutely. Well, today's topic was all going to be circled around mental health and mental health in the trades. I like to welcome Danielle Brown most people know as Twig.

**Danielle:** Hi.

**Katherine:** Hey.

**Danielle:** Thank you for having me.

**Katherine:** You got it. Thomas Young, which most people know is Ty.

**Thomas:** Thanks for having me.

**Katherine:** You got it. Thank you guys both so much. I think it is such a great initiative to talk about mental health in the trades. I want to talk about to both of you and ask how important is mental health in the context of trades industry and what are some of the unique challenges that trades people face in this regard? Twig, do you want to kick us off?

**Danielle:** Yes, absolutely. The biggest thing that I've seen, I'm almost 40 and over half my life, I've been in the trades and of course it is a male-dominated industry. Over the years I have had the opportunity to have a lot of men confide in me and find safety in me. I'm noticing more and more that in this industry there's a huge disconnect when it comes to men and not just men, but the ability to talk about their feelings alone, just even get to that point. Because of that, that's where this massive disconnect with mental health occurs. We really don't have outreach programs because guys don't know how to ask for it. It's only now that I'm seeing on social media that these guys are, saying, "I had a bad day."

I'm like, "Let's go with that." Let's talk about this because suicide is actually the highest rate of death for construction workers. It's not workplace accidents, it's suicide and we got to stop that.

**Katherine:** It's pretty alarming. I think it's a great point to highlight on is just the resources available. I think what the community is doing on social media of when someone says or comes out and is honest, like, "Man, today just sucked." Then I instantly know there were probably 5 or 10 DMs privately that went to that person going, "You got it bud, what's happening?"

**Danielle:** It's incredible. We all talk about our content and our engagement. Whenever I post anything to do with mental health, that gets the most engagement of any of my content. People are so desperate to have this conversation that even if they're not writing me, which they are, but even if they're not, they're watching the video. Because they're feeling heard, they're feeling seen. They might not know where to go with that, but in that moment they just revisit it because it speaks to them.

**Katherine:** Or they can relate to it and they didn't know that they could relate to it by someone having that conversation. Ty, back to you, same thing. What are some of the unique challenges that you see tradespeople are facing in this regard and how important is it that we address it?

**Thomas:** Yes. Just to add to what Danielle was saying, I think as tradespeople, we have this inbred in us that we have to be strong. We have to be manly or we just have to-- and then just as you come up, if your apprentice or something like that, you're going to have people above you that sometimes they're tough on you and

everything, but it's just inbred at us just to be this certain way, but it's very important to talk to someone because what does happen is people don't want to reach out, they don't want to open themselves up.

Even on social media, there's a lot of people that are just-- they're hurting and then a lot of the people that comment and there's a lot of negativity. If you're just taking it and you're not reaching out to people, you're not talking about, it can really dwell and get really bad. Then Twig and I, we both have our own different problems, scenarios and you just need-- it's really important just to reach out and people are there for you.

**Katherine:** Yes, well, and that's a great highlight that you talked about in regards to social media. There's a lot of great pluses, right? Because it creates that community and that engagement. There's also the negativity to it too, where sometimes you need that break right from it, but you also need someone to help reach out and support you when you take that break as well. That knowing what happened or why did you disappear for a little bit. Because it can be tough. There's a lot of really harsh people out there for no reason and it can start to wear on you. That's for sure.

**Thomas:** It could be that the reason they're being so harsh is there's something going on in their life too and it's almost like when you see someone being just negative for no parent reason. It's almost like reach out to them, like, are you okay? Is everything cool? Who knows what they're going through. That's why you can't judge people.

**Katherine:** Nope. Got it.

**Thomas:** I don't judge anyone because we don't know what happened to them, loved one, anything. I've been through a lot in my life, and I know things can get better. You can just say, "You know what, this is tough," but you can always take a negative and make a positive out of it in anything in life. You just have to do it and you have to-- but there's plenty of people to help you do it though.

**Katherine:** Right. For sure. Twig, the other day I know you posted something that you were actually at a full-day training for mental health. Can you explain to us a little bit about what your country does in regards to making sure that there are resources and tell us maybe a little bit about that practice that happened too?

**Danielle:** Yes. Last week I did the two-day course. It's mental health first aid. It's essentially just like first aid, so if it's a scenario where if there was a mental health crisis, I'd be able to address it. I wouldn't-- just like CPR until the professionals took over. In a moment of crisis, it basically teaches you how to see a crisis before it happens because you want preventative. You want to see the signs of a mental health episode before they happen.

If you happen to have to deal with one while it's happening, it does train you how to provide that assistance and give out the information that a lot of people need and a lot of people don't know does exist. This is done by the Mental Health Association of Canada and my work basically reached out to them and said, "Can you send somebody over train our--" so it's a supervisor management role, so whoever the management or supervisor and then they let me in there too because they know that

the guys come to me. They trained us and they're going to do it every year for whoever wants that training.

**Katherine:** That's just remarkable and I think that's really cool. It's just changing the narrative too, like you said too. You think about first aid and first responder to more of a-- what you would say a traditional medical emergency that you can always see, or someone can tell you about, but a lot of times you're probably observing behavior that you don't know about, and you can address that issue. Which is pretty cool.

**Danielle:** It is really cool and it's pretty eye-opening to see that everybody around us, as we're talking in these groups, we all acknowledge that we have a separate thought on physical health and mental health, but they're the same.

**Katherine:** I know.

**Danielle:** If you don't have your mental health, you don't have your physical health. It is your brain. Of course, it is physical health because we can't see it. That's the barrier there, but this course does show you the symptoms.

**Doug:** Yes. That's awesome. I think that's absolutely fantastic. What I like about what you just said, Twig, was the fact that they're teaching you to look for certain signs, because like you said, sometimes we feel like, "Well, it'll show weakness if I say something." But if I'm showing those signs, I have no control over that. Then that person can engage and give them the support they need. I applaud you for taking the time to do those classes. One of the questions I have for you guys is, what more do you think the industry could do right now to address mental illness and let people know that, hey man, it's okay to have a crappy day, a crappy month, a life event happened to you, what more do you think the trades could do for that?

**Danielle:** I think what's happening right now is massive. I think if other large leaders in the industry, tool companies were to take the same approach that Oatey takes, where they were to have not only an in-house program like Oatey does have, but to actually on their large platforms to say like, "Hey, it's mental health awareness month." It doesn't have to be an everyday thing that they discuss, but mental health awareness month, mental health awareness week, they say, "Hey, here's a post of numbers for help in these areas for anybody who needs it. We care about you."

That would speak to how many people, how many people follow these massive companies just on social media alone? Yes, do it in-house, but also if you have a large following, imagine that shockwave that you can have when, I can do it and I have a smaller following, Ty has a larger following, but like that, those shares go waves and then all of a sudden, how many people in that day just got a number and goes, "You know what, I am going to call that number?"

**Katherine:** I also loved your point of saying, "we care about you." Sometimes that might be the first time that person's heard that in a long time. It's just making that simple statement.

**Danielle** You would be shocked at, sometimes I'll just put on my stories, and I'll just say like, "Hey, guys, I'm really proud of you," and I'm not saying it to anybody. I'm saying it to everybody. A lot of guys will write me and say, "I really needed to hear

that. I haven't heard that in so long." I'm like, "You're doing a good job and I'm proud of you and I care about you." I think we get so wrapped up in this crazy world, that we forget how to care about people, and that human connection, people are desperate for it.

**Katherine:** Yes. I would totally agree.

**Thomas:** I think another thing that happens too in today's society is, if we are having a bad moment or we're having a bad life event, we're thinking that, "God, this is an experience that only I have," but when that communication starts, that collaboration between tradespeople and stuff, they realize that we all have those similar things that occur.

**Katherine:** Totally.

**Thomas:** How do we do better to handle them? Most of the time it's by having good support. "Great job, you guys. I appreciate everything you guys do."

**Katherine:** We're going to get a little personal if you guys feel comfortable with it, but would love for, if you would be willing to share any of the personal experience you've had with any mental health challenges during your career in the trades, and how did you navigate those? I think helping people understand a little bit would also be really helpful.

**Thomas:** Yes. Here in the trades, obviously, you're going to put in your hours. There can be negativity. You're doing something wrong, something like that, but we still have life situations that are happening. I went through a really bad health crisis. I lost pretty much a year of my life, went through some major depression. I was thinking about-- never fully went there. I was like, "Man, maybe it'd be better if I just wasn't around." I started feeling like-- I was with health and then I went through a divorce, which was a huge thing too, because it's like, I have an amazing little boy.

**Doug:** Sorry, man. You got it.

**Thomas:** No one ever gets into something. I feel like a failure, but it is what it is. I love my son, but it was really hard on me to go through cancer, and then ultimately losing something I thought-- it just was really hard. It's okay, I've had people message me, followers and stuff, and they're like, "Man, you can talk to me whenever," and then vice versa. I've always put it out there. I'm like, listen, I can tell when someone's having a bad day and I'll message them and I'll look at their story or something and I'll be like, "Hey dude, are you cool? Is everything all right?" I've even gone overboard because it's really hard to-- you'll see someone's story and it's like, "What's that mean?" I'm like, "Is everything good with you?" They're like, "Yes, why?" I'm like, "Oh, because your story, I didn't know. Maybe it had behind it. I was just reaching out to make sure you're cool and hope everything's good and appreciate it."

But no, being on a job, working, you know what I mean? You still have all that stuff in life and life can be really hard sometimes, but anything you go through, I'm happy. I'm not happy with some of the situations that sure happened in my life, but I'm happy and I have an amazing life and I'm super blessed and you don't have to have

everything. Doug was saying, you could be jacked, but if you don't have right mental health, you're not going to be able to perform, so you got to get your head right.

**Katherine:** Thanks for sharing.

**Thomas:** Thank you.

**Danielle:** Ty, I love you to death.

**Thomas:** Sorry about that.

**Katherine:** No, don't apologize.

**Katherine:** Listen, your openness and vulnerability is what will make other people feel willing to tell and talk their story. We appreciate that.

**Danielle:** It's how myself and Ty instantly connected. As soon as we met each other last year actually, at Oatey Ambassador Fest, we basically got right into our stories and he told me about this cancer diagnosis and the divorce and then we just opened right up to each other and I was like, "Oh, okay, this is our connection. This is what we're good at," but I love that guy to death. My story is a bit different. Very grateful to have my health and always have my health and seven years ago I actually lost my best friend. She suicided. She's a carpenter, a brilliant carpenter. Her name is Crystal.

I miss her every day and it was my first experience with depression and mental health, and it hit me like a Mack truck. I didn't think I was going to come out of it. I was very fortunate to have a really good crew around me. I did because of my depression in that time, I did go straight to drinking, drank way too much and I got pulled out of that as well. Very fortunate for my doctor who helped me out in that scenario, my family and it took me on a path to say, "Now I miss her so much, how can I honor her?" Through the darkness of losing my best friend in that fashion, I decided to shed some light on a situation that I felt really dark in.

It is showing me that even in the darkest time, there is something to take gratitude from and it's a really weird thing to say. You can see a bright spot of losing your best friend. Losing her is putting me in a position in life to want to help others and that's a way that I can honor her. I didn't know she was sick. I had no idea she was sick, and I live my life hoping that nobody else has to feel like they don't have to tell the people that they love because she thought she was doing us a favor.

I'll tell you now, mental health lies to you. If it's telling you that people don't want you around, that you're a burden, it's lying to you. We love you. We want you around. We want you to tell us, we want you to talk to us. If you're listening to this right now, write me. The **[unintelligible 00:19:26]** plumber hit me up in my DMs please.

**Katherine:** She is super proud of you, and you should know that. You're doing great things.

**Danielle:** Thank you.

**Katherine:** Just like I'm proud of you too. This has been such an amazing conversation and I really appreciate, again, like I said, your vulnerability, your ability to really connect with us. What I would hope that we do from this conversation is take and put some action behind it. This is not the end of us having this conversation. We're going to figure out how maybe we can take some of the learnings of what they're doing up in Canada to be that first responder. Maybe there is material that we can put out. Maybe there's ways that we all have connections with these brands in the industries that we do just exactly what you said. Let's go make an impact and make a wave on it, because there is no reason that anyone should be suffering from this. A lot of people work on the job by themselves or have their own small business and don't have resources, so as tough as this community sometimes can be, that's one of the best things about this community is the fact that-- especially the two of you leading and helping and reaching out when you think someone needs it, is really pretty cool. Really proud of both of you. Thank you so much for not only representing Oatey, but representing your industry and being such brave and vulnerable guests today.

**Danielle:** Thank you for giving us a voice on this one.

**Katherine:** You got it. It's not the end.

**Thomas:** Appreciate it.

**Katherine:** Thank you.

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