

Men Talk Mental Health

Written by Patricia Gaylord, Western Region Family System Manager and a Collective of Men around the State

We know there is a month to celebrate and raise awareness for so many things. Every May, we celebrate Mental Health Awareness and often men aren't at the focus of the conversation. So, we asked the men of FAVOR what they would like to highlight to celebrate in June - Men's Health Month. They extended the mental health conversation and we took their lead in key ways.

FAVOR's Learning and Leadership Academy hosted a community conversation on men's mental health. The conversation was honest with shared vulnerabilities and was authentic from a man's perspective. You have to ask yourself, *"Are there different mental health issues for women and men?"* Of course not. Men have the same mental health issues as women, but society's perception of what masculinity is has had such a negative impact on the male psyche. Men and their allies are starting to redefine masculinity and what it has the opportunity to be in this moment. We need to have open and honest conversations about men and mental health. Providing space and support for these conversations.

We also asked a few of the men in our lives – colleagues, partners, family and friends, three questions about mental health and self-care. Their answers were both enlightening and inspiring:

Mental Health - What does it mean to you? What's your connection to it?

"A balance between my intellect and my emotions. Every aspect of my work and my personal life is connected to my mental health and those around me. In these uncertain times it is a struggle to keep that balance."

We've been hearing a lot about self-care recently. What are your thoughts on it? Do you practice it? If so, what does that look like for you?

"Everyone needs self-care. No one will or can prioritize your wellbeing more than you. I try to practice it but often fail by prioritizing everyone else above me. To me, self-care looks like a focus that allows you to grow mentally, physically and even emotionally."

Is there any advice you would give other men about mental health, self-care or their overall wellbeing?

"Despite what society says, men are supposed to make room for wellness. You should have the same positive impact on your own life that you have on others."

Let's keep creating space for this essential conversation! We should be recognizing and celebrating Mental Health Awareness for everyone *all year long*.