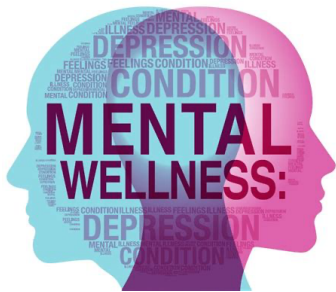




HELPING HANDS



Mental Health Awareness Month: A Reminder That It Affects Us All



May marks Mental Health Awareness Month. A time set aside to shine a spotlight on something that touches every single one of us: our mental well-being. It's easy to assume that mental health struggles are something that happen to "other people." The truth is mental health is universal. It's not just about diagnoses or moments of crisis. It's about how we experience life, every single day.

Mental health affects how we think, feel, how we connect, and handle stress. It influences our all areas of our life. When we think about mental health, we often focus on the most visible struggles — anxiety, depression, trauma. These are real and important to address.

Mental health is about cultivating resilience, connection, and hope. It's about learning how to navigate challenges, how to ask for help when we need it, and how to be there for others when they need us too.

One of the biggest myths about mental health is that it only becomes important when something goes wrong. Mental health is fluid. Like physical health, it requires ongoing care and attention. Some days we may feel strong and energized. Other days, we may feel overwhelmed or drained. Honoring our mental health means recognizing this ebb and flow without judgment. Mental Health Awareness Month is more than just posting about self-care or sharing hotline numbers (though those are valuable too). It challenges us to take a closer look at the environments we create — in our workplaces, schools, families, and communities. We need to ask ourselves:

- Are we making space for people to speak openly about their struggles?
- Are we encouraging rest, setting healthy boundaries, and promoting kindness?
- Are we building a culture where people are valued not just for what they produce, but for who they are?

It's also a time to recognize that mental health challenges don't discriminate. They affect people of every age, race, gender, and background. You can have a loving family, a great job, a strong support system and still struggle. You can seem like you have it all together on the outside while carrying invisible burdens inside. That's why empathy is so important. We never fully know what someone else is going through.



Just as mental health affects everyone, so does mental health stigma. Fear of being judged, misunderstood, or dismissed can prevent people from seeking help when they need it most. Breaking this stigma starts with us. We can help by listening without judgment, speaking openly about our own experiences, and reminding each other that asking for help is a sign of strength. Mental health is a shared human experience. It's in the way we help ourselves and show up for each other.

Mental Health Awareness is about fostering compassion, deepening understanding, and encouraging action. It's a reminder that mental health is all our responsibility. Taking care of our minds is just as important as taking care of our bodies. It's necessary. It's brave. When we make mental health a priority, we create a world where everyone has the chance to thrive.

Top 5 Mental Health Practices to Boost Your Well-Being

1. Prioritize Sleep

Quality sleep is essential for mental clarity, emotional stability, and overall health. Aim for 7–9 hours per night and create a calming nighttime routine to help your body wind down naturally.

2. Stay Connected

Strong relationships are key to mental health. Make time to connect with friends, family, or support groups. A quick text, a coffee catch-up, or even a call can help you feel grounded and supported.

3. Move Your Body

Exercise isn't just about fitness — it's a proven mood booster. Regular movement (even a 10-minute walk) releases endorphins, reduces stress, and sharpens your focus. Find an activity you enjoy and make it part of your routine.

4. Practice Mindfulness

Taking even a few minutes a day to slow down and breathe can make a huge difference. Mindfulness practices like meditation, deep breathing, or journaling help you stay present, lower anxiety, and build emotional resilience.

5. Set Boundaries

Protecting your energy is crucial. Learn to say no without guilt, carve out time for yourself, and limit exposure to negativity when you can. Healthy boundaries create space for rest, creativity, and genuine connection.



IAM Peer Employee Assistance Program

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations; they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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To access mental health resources through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), start by calling the dedicated EAP phone number provided here or visiting the EAP website. Services are confidential and often include free counseling sessions, referrals, and support tools. You can also ask the IAM EAP representative for help if you're unsure how to get started. The EAP is there to support your well-being, offering quick, easy access to mental health professionals when you need it most.