

A Reflection on Mental Health Awareness Month



Over the past few years, I have noticed a subtle yet tangible shift under the surface of my colleagues, family and friends due to the world’s circumstances. Some are facing extreme stress and anguish over the magnitude happenings in today’s world that have touched everyone in a pronounced way, whether it be you or someone you love. Now more than ever, we need to acknowledge that mental health and wellness cannot be put on the backburner – this is an area we need to prioritize, discuss, and engrain into our lives, our careers and our families.

I have personally made it a habit to “offer grace” to those around me. For example, I recently asked a normally punctual and thorough employee who missed a deadline how they were doing and if they needed extra support. By simply asking, “How are you?” and directing the question to this individual as a person rather than simply a colleague made all the difference. By offering

grace, you could offer a lifeline to someone who needs it most. At the end of the day, I am just as much a human being in need as the next person. I have been supported by many in my times of need and paying it forward by being that support for others has become a necessity.

I recognize well-being is about more than employee benefits or perks; it's about each individual's experiences as a human being. In the course of our busy lives, prioritizing mental health and wellness has been a struggle for many of us, maybe more so in recent years. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, life has changed substantially for many. Many of us work from home. Some had to determine the best way to handle their children's education while balancing their new work schedule. We could not leave our houses without the constant nagging fear of the possibility of getting sick. Arguably, almost all of us retreated into our homes, ourselves and our minds. And now, the recent tragedies such as the mass shootings in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas push the topic of mental health to the forefront of society's mind and to the homes of many as you look to explain and provide comfort to your children and loved ones.

As May and Mental Health Awareness Month come to a close, I want to take the time to reflect and acknowledge that so many of us live with mental health struggles. According to the [National Institute of Mental Health Disorders](#), approximately 1 in 4 adults in the United States suffer from a mental health disorder. Realizing perhaps 25% of our colleagues deal with mental or behavioral health struggles can put things into perspective; it can make us feel less alone if we too are struggling, and it can shed light on the large number who may face mental health challenges in silence.

Recognizing mental health only one month per year is not enough. It takes year-round acknowledgement, discussion and relentless dedication to break the stigma and force mental health and well-being to the top of our long lists of priorities. Navistar has many useful resources to help manage mental health, and one of our greatest resources is **us**.

For many, Navistar is not simply a company for which we work; it is a support network and family. We spend 40+ hours per week with our teams, hearing about Tim's son's baseball games or Kristy's new house. We eat meals together, travel for work together, attend each other's weddings and share countless photos of our loved ones. But no one knows everything that is happening in someone else's life. It is time we take that extra step to recognize that we all go through hard times and react with the appropriate empathy.

At Navistar, we encourage all employees to talk freely about their struggles and successes, come forward when they need extra help, and support one another in times of need. Nobody deserves to face their problems alone if they do not have to or want to. We reflect that sentiment in the way we live and work through providing access to programs and offerings that meet the needs of our employees across all phases of life, especially in an ever-changing world.

As Navistar's Chief People & Culture Officer, my team and I are determined to support every employee as a whole person through creating a culture focused on health and well-being – both at work and at home. Each of us play many roles that contribute to our whole selves. For me, I am a daughter, mother, aunt, manager, employee, coworker, committee member, friend... just to name a few.

In reflecting on Mental Health Awareness Month, I realized I can work a little harder to acknowledge how I feel and open up to others who support me. It is now one of my personal goals and commitments to ensure that I am doing this throughout the year – not only for my own mental health, but also to set an example for those around me. Besides, you never know when that one conversation can shift your, or someone else's, well-being for the better.

It is my sincere hope that the spotlight we put on mental and behavioral health in May takes hold and continues to shine bright throughout the rest of this year and beyond.

<https://news.international.com/A-Reflection-on-Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>