

Why Mental Health Month is Important: NFF Board of Director Quotes



It is about time that we see mental health in the context of our neighbors and communities – in each other. Only when we see the interconnectedness will **we find light**.



Our mental states and the weather are much alike. Sunny or not. Hot or cold. Still or breezy. Wet or dry. We cannot change the weather, other than to **weather the weather**. The same is true of being happy or sad. Both thoughts and weather can change in an instant. Savor the moment. This is what I taught myself, as best I can. It is what every great spiritual teacher recommends. It also the essence of acceptance and commitment therapy, ACT.



It reminds us of what we most treasure about our children and what makes them - the way they think, the way they feel, the way they see the world. I love that the month focuses on **health, not illness**. We want to support the mental health of ALL children, not just our own, so that they all have a chance to thrive and succeed. I am so glad that the Federation and all the families who are part of it are dedicated to **knocking down barriers** that the world sometimes puts in the way of children and families. It makes my heart happy to be a small part of that.



In mental health we mostly focus on treatment needs, particularly high-end services designed to fix problems. We label people with diagnoses that permit us to fund invasive treatments and prescribe medications. Mental health is **more than treating problems**. It is **support for the well-being of people** before problems occur. When we create positive childhood experiences, we support mental health. When we create connection and belonging, we support mental health. When we address the social determinants of health, we support mental health. Let's commit to all of that this Mental Health Month.



According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly **one in five** US adults live with mental health challenges. While people of color have rates of mental health challenges similar to whites, they are more likely to last longer and result in more significant disability. Most mental illnesses go untreated, especially in communities of color. Sadly, our nation's historical and continuing oppression of and discrimination against communities of color has led to stigmatizing mental health attitudes and reluctance to seek care. That is a key reason why celebrating Children's Mental Health Acceptance is so important, particularly for communities of color. We have all been aware of these issues for decades; we must **move beyond awareness to acceptance**. This will help dispel the stereotypes and stigma about mental health in communities of color and reach individuals with mental health needs at an earlier age to prevent more significant disabilities and help all communities recognize the need to ensure high quality, affordable mental health care is **available to all**.



Mental health is part of our health. So, for me the acknowledgement, support and advocacy to **reduce stigma and discrimination** for those who struggle with maintaining mental health and wellness in this stressful society is a necessity. Mental Health Awareness Month gives us the opportunity to continue to **shine a light** on the struggles that we ALL have and to continue to work towards equitable ways of identifying, addressing and supporting people, including children and their families, in some of their most vulnerable moments. **It takes a village** and mental health awareness month allows all of us to **be part of that village**.



Mental health is a growing challenge to the successful matriculation of our next generation into adulthood. Youth navigating mental health crisis are much more likely to end up in juvenile correctional settings than in supportive services and appropriate systems. **Our children, families, and communities deserve better**.

May is Mental Health Month | #AcceptAdvocateAct | #SocialJusticeForFamilies

Learn more at: www.ffcmh.org/socialjustice | www.ffcmh.org/acceptancecampaign