

# Putting Mental Health First

Over the last year, the importance of our mental health has been a hot topic, and we acknowledged that taking care of our minds is as essential as our bodies. As Mental Health Awareness Month begins, we want to remember that putting ourselves first shouldn't only come during challenging times, but we need to focus on our mental wellbeing at all times.

## Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness has become a bit of a catchphrase lately, and there's a reason for the hype. Finding little moments throughout the day to focus, breathe and ground ourselves can go a long way in reducing our overall stress. Most of us no longer have the same routines to give us comfort, so it's easy to feel a little off balance. To help support our teams, we are encouraging everyone to take 'mindful moments'. These are tips and tricks that we send out every other week in an employee newsletter to help us pause during the day. Whether they be breathing exercises, focusing on our senses or just closing our eyes to center ourselves, taking a minute to come back to the present and being aware of our surroundings can make a big difference.

## Fostering a Healthy Workplace

Last December, we organized an introductory workshop on creating a healthy work environment for all our head office and store leaders to attend. The session focused on explaining the definition of mental health, how common it is to struggle with it and factors at work that may or may not contribute to it. With many of our staff working from home, we have had to adapt to working together apart, and for many that has been a challenging adjustment. Our first training session was such a success that our leaders will be getting further, extensive training to continue gaining tools to recognize and reach out to team members who may need it.

We are also developing an internal resource center to make mental health information like government resources, helplines and articles easily accessible to all our teams. To start, we will be sharing some of these resources every week throughout this month. We are working

hard to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues, and education and discussion are the first steps. We want to make room for these conversations at work and increase sensitivity to the issue on an ongoing basis. Finding the right tools to integrate into our everyday culture is the key to building a sustainable support system that will put ourselves and our employees first, because our mental health should be a priority every day of the year.