Greetings Falcons,

Happy Wellness Wednesday! As we wrap up Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month, we return to the topic of talking about mental health.

The importance of talking about mental health cannot be overstressed. It is crucial to understand the benefits of such conversations and encourage each other to talk openly about our own mental health. In doing so, we:

1. **Remove the Stigma** - Talking about mental illness on a regular basis will hopefully unveil any false notions that plague this topic. When mental illness myths are debunked, it should help remove the stigma surrounding mental health – which, after all, is a huge component of our general health.

2. **Promote conversation that benefits communities** - The prevalence of mental health disorders has risen in the past few decades. One study found that the occurrences of Major Depressive Episode in children and teens has increased from 11.93% to 12.63% in one year. This may not seem like a big shift. But if these increases continue for 10 years, that would be a nearly 10% rise in childhood mental illness. That's a startling increase.

3. **Promote Treatment & Decrease Rate of Suicides** - Of the many reasons why we need to talk about mental health, this is arguably the most important. Because mental health is so taboo, too many people are not getting the treatment they need. In turn, their poor mental health could lead to suicide. One research study found that over 90% of people who commit suicide had symptoms of a mental health disorder.

Open dialogue about mental health can help everyone heal. What people don't realize is that there are numerous ways to effectively treat mental illness and you can live a normal lifestyle by learning how to properly manage your mental health disorder symptoms. The state of your mental health affects how you think, feel, and ultimately how you act. It's crucial that we express these emotions with others daily. By talking about mental health openly, more people may be encouraged to seek professional and get more specialized help when needed.

Opening up about your mental illness will allow you to express how you truly feel. It gives others a chance to help you by guiding you through the difficult times. If you are experiencing any form of depression, or if you constantly experience negative thought patterns, seeking help will be extremely beneficial for your wellbeing. Visiting a therapist once a week will aid in this process and you will start to feel the positive effects of sharing right away. Seeking support from your loved ones in times of need and confiding in someone about your struggles is also a powerful mental health move. You can talk about your problems with a trusted family member, friend, counselor, teacher or therapist. Bottling up these thoughts could potentially turn into a bigger issue.

Talking about your mental health is important, but it can be difficult to open up. If you are struggling to talk about your mental health, we have a few tips.

- Write a letter if you are uncomfortable with a face-to-face conversation.

- Talk to someone who doesn't know you, such as a therapist or psychologist if you don't feel comfortable talking to a loved one.

- Start by journaling and then transition to speaking.

- Practice speaking in the mirror before you talk to someone if you are struggling to do so.

- Remember that you will probably feel a great sense of relief after talking with someone.

- Remember that you are not alone.

As a community, we must help one another through the most difficult days. Talking about our mental health benefits us all. With suicide rates increasing, we must come together and find effective ways to involve ourselves in the mental health conversation and assist those who are struggling to get the help they need.

Today's affirmation:

I talk about my mental health because it is good for me
(and hopefully it encourages you to do the same).

Take care and be well,
Ms. McDougall