

MENTAL HEALTH Wellness Champion



Jennifer Bawden Technical Ops Document Control

This month, the Wellness Center is thrilled to spotlight Jennifer Bawden as another Mental Health Wellness Champion!

Jennifer received many nominations for this recognition from co-workers who admire her example of prioritizing personal mental health, as well as supporting the mental health of her team members and advocating for mental health to be a department priority. We are very appreciative of Jennifer’s willingness to share about her journey to improved mental health.

When Jennifer first dove into the realm of addressing her mental health needs, it was challenging for her to admit that she needed help. However, she knew she could not continue to manage the pain she had been feeling for the previous couple of years without help. When she hit a breaking point in March 2020, she found the courage to tell her husband that she could not continue living as she had been, and needed medication. Having a solid support system of family and friends who understand mental health has been a vital part of Jennifer’s process.

Once she knew she was ready for help, Jennifer messaged her doctor through the patient portal to let him know what was going on and to quickly request an appointment. Ease of access to providers and other trained professionals also

helped Jennifer to take quick action when she was ready. Jennifer recommends finding a person you trust, whether it be a doctor or a mental health professional found through the EAP, that you can confide in to help you know where to start.

While Jennifer recently took new steps to address her mental health needs, she has been sensitive to mental health since her middle school years, when her best friend was diagnosed with depression. In this situation she first learned how to support her friend. In the years since and as she has faced her own struggles, it has become important to Jennifer to break the negative stigma associated with mental health. Jennifer says, “We have mental health, just like we have physical health, and I think if more people recognized and understood that, society would be more empathetic to people who need extra help with their mental health.”

Facing mental health needs in the midst of a worldwide pandemic has allowed Jennifer to feel more empathy towards herself. She has learned that it is okay to sit and feel her feelings, rather than push them aside and cover things with “fake happiness”. One particular mantra that has helped Jennifer comes from a local therapist, Tiffany Roe, who says to “feel, deal, heal”.

She also continually learns new coping mechanisms to manage stress and keep her strong through harder days. From listening to self-development books on Audible, to getting outside in the sun to work in the yard or lifting weights, Jennifer has figured out some go-to activities when she needs a pick-me-up. Her dogs are also a great help for knowing when she needs some extra attention and hugs. Last but not least, Jennifer has invested important energy into setting boundaries with family to give her and her husband the space they need. As others respect these boundaries, she has felt supported in her mental health.

Jennifer has a few short personal mottos to share that she thinks about when she needs a boost, which may be helpful to you too:

“You can do hard things. But remember, you can also take a break. Just breathe and feel what you are feeling.”

“Lean into the suck.”

**Thank you
for being an
advocate for
mental health,
Jennifer!**

