

FOCUS ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



The Thanksgiving holiday here in the United States is one of my favorites. A chance to slow down a little bit and take some well-earned perspective of all that we are fortunate enough to have and enjoy. A list that may include family, friends, our homes, our jobs, our health, having enough to eat, our peace-of-mind.

Peace-of-mind. The absence of mental stress or anxiety.

I think it is fair to say that the last two years has been especially stressful for our world; and our industry. Certainly not the absence of mental stress and anxiety. Dealing with a pandemic which has taken away much of the certainty and control in our lives and our jobs, around which most in our industry would argue is the foundation for their own peace-of-mind.

During these last two years, some have lost friends and loved ones; some have lost jobs; some have reached the financial brink of losing their businesses; and some have simply thrown in the towel and chosen an early retirement, when that option has seemed feasible. In the midst of our endless Zoom calls, while looking for new guidance and 'best practices' to emulate, we listen to our peers, painting wonderful pictures of success amidst chaos and somehow feel even more out-of-control. What happened to the 'normal' that we had built and honed and nourished and understood for so long? What happened to our 'comfort zone'?

Now, I am not trying to paint a very non-Thanksgiving picture here, but one that I believe may be more of a reality than we know, and one that deserves a very real focus. I received a call from a respected industry friend recently, who, based upon their own experience and realities, asked how the IFEA might help draw attention to the mental health of those in our industry. A topic that rarely gets addressed (if ever), but is so very important, especially now.

Gymnast Simone Biles brought global attention to mental health within the sports world this year, when, during the Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan, she suddenly withdrew from competition, bravely sharing with all of us the pressures that we never see or understand, especially among these elite athletes.

I believe that those in our industry are no less elite, nor any less susceptible to the chronic pressures around them, especially when amplified by the exponential unknowns that have been thrown our way by the Covid-19 pandemic.

If you find yourself feeling mentally stressed and anxious, I assure you that you are not alone. I would also encourage you to seek some professional help and support. A resource to help you manage the challenges. As the current television campaign emphasizes, Mental Health is Health (www.MentalHealthisHealth.us), and yours is important to protect and care for.

Talking about our emotional struggles almost always helps us start feeling better. Speaking up is a sign of strength, and our friends and family members are usually more understanding and supportive than we thought they'd be. Start by sharing your feelings with someone you trust or reaching out to a professional counselor or therapist.

The real power of the IFEA has always been the many global friends that we are connected to, who provide a remarkable resource and a wealth of creativity and experience, but who can also serve as a great outlet of support for all of us, at a time when we couldn't need it more. So, talk to someone; listen to your friends and peers a little closer; be there for one another. Let's all focus on each other a little bit more, and see if we can't help everyone achieve a little more peace-of-mind for the holidays and the year ahead.

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