



Supporting mental health for men a workbook and guide

“I felt like I didn’t want to live anymore, and I have had that throughout my life...

You’re under the waves sort of in this thing. And you can’t get out of it.”

Ed Sheeran

“So, people will be looking at me thinking I don’t go through nothing. So, for me to just let people know, ‘no, I do. I do go through that.’ I thought that was important for people to know that.”

Stormzy

About this booklet



This booklet aims to provide support for men's mental health. It explores some of the reasons why men find it so hard to seek help and looks at things that may help. It is believed that one in eight men in the UK live with mental illness (compared to one in five women), but it is hard to know the true extent of men's mental health issues because men have traditionally been discouraged from being vulnerable, seeking support, and expressing their emotions. What we do know is that men report lower levels of life satisfaction than women and are three times more likely to complete suicide.

It's clear that there is work to do so that men feel confident in seeking support for themselves. We hope this booklet will raise awareness of the issues men face and provide tips and activities to help them reflect on their issues and engage with relaxation and support.

An introduction

Mental illness includes a wide range of mental health conditions or disorders that affect the way a person thinks, feels, behaves, and interacts with themselves and other people. When it comes to men's mental health, the statistics (*right*) clearly indicate that men are struggling. However, perhaps even more alarming is that these figures only represent what has been reported. It is believed that many struggles go unreported and undiagnosed.

Boys and mental health

Mental health struggles can happen at any age, but it is believed that 50% of all mental illnesses are established by the age of 14, and 75% by the age of 24. The onset of anxiety and impulse control disorders is earlier than other disorders such as depression, substance abuse, and mood disorders.

At school, boys are four times more likely to be diagnosed with a behavioural, emotional, or social difficulty and 80% of children permanently excluded from school for behavioural issues are boys. Boys also perform at a lower level than girls at all stages of education from primary school through to university.

Signs that boys are struggling with their mental health

- Frequent mood swings.
- Difficulty managing emotions.
- Change in sleep patterns.
- Withdrawing from friends and family.
- Loss of interest in things that used to excite them.
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches.
- Engaging in risky behaviours.

Risky behaviours include aggressive behaviours, smoking, drinking, drug use, using the internet excessively, and risky sexual behaviours (e.g. not wearing protection, meeting strangers to hookup, sexting).

Boys are more likely than girls to struggle with their mental health because they have been brought up in a culture where mental health is taboo, and which promotes manly stoicism and dealing with issues independently. They are more likely to have experienced a time where opening up about their emotions has negatively impacted their friendships or relationships with the adults in their lives, so they want to avoid being hurt or isolated again.

Why is it so hard for boys and men to be open about their mental health struggles?

Within our society, there are stereotypes assigned to every group and collection of people. A stereotype can be defined as a widely held, unchanging and oversimplified idea of a particular type of person. For the longest time, men have been believed to be stoic, protectors, self-reliant, rational, and controlled. For many, admitting to mental health struggles can be

SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS

77% of men struggle with stress, anxiety, and low mood.

Only 10% of men will receive treatment for their depression.

40% of men seek support once they have thoughts of suicide and self-harm.

10% of men have suicidal thoughts when they are feeling worried or low.

43% of men admit to feeling regularly worried or low.

53% of depressed men have talked to someone about it.

36% of talking therapy referrals are men.

seen as showing weakness, being vulnerable and feminine. Some men have even lost friendships and relationships by being open about their struggles.

Sadly, anyone who reads the news or goes on social media will have seen a rise in content containing toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is defined as exaggerated masculine traits pressuring boys and men to conform while having a negative impact on themselves and society as a whole. The content posted by these creators perpetuates and worsens stereotypes surrounding men and mental health. They perpetuate the idea that men should not be weak or vulnerable and that caring about others and themselves is feminine and an unattractive quality. However, there is a juxtaposition within the media now with the rise of the 'new masculine'.

Examples include Harry Styles wearing non-gender conforming clothes, Paul Mescal's self-deprecating humour around his wardrobe malfunctions and David Beckham openly talking about how much he cries when watching movies. All these men promote self-expression and authenticity and confront rigid societal norms.

Reaching out should not be seen as a weakness. It takes strength to share personal struggles, and it can be one of the hardest things to do. Reaching out for support and admitting your struggles means you are taking charge of your wellbeing – you want and need things to change!

“Boys are more likely than girls to struggle with their mental health because they have been brought up in a culture where mental health is taboo.”

ACTIVITY 1:

Your role models and you

Take five minutes to think, then write your thoughts on the following questions in your journal/notebook.

What characteristics does an inspiring man have? A respectable man? A role model? Now think about the men that you look up to in your life. What do they have in common? What are their differences? Are they inspiring role models? What are your core values? What makes you manly? Is there such a thing? What do you like about yourself? What qualities do others appreciate in you?

(More information about stigma can be found on page 22)

The importance of looking after your mental health

Mental health is considered as important as physical health. It affects decision-making, building relationships, and how we fit into our world. Neglecting your mental health can put you at risk of developing physical and mental illness, negatively impacting your relationships, work, self-worth, and self-awareness.



ACTIVITY 2: What makes you feel better?

Pause and think about what makes you feel better when you are feeling low? In your journal/notebook write down what helps you feel better and keep the list. If you are feeling creative, why not paint or make a poster or map? Why not make it a habit to write when you have the time? Even five minutes can help you feel more focused, bring you a better understanding of your thinking patterns and help work through issues in your life.

Just like physical health, it is not always easy to look after your mental health and some days may be harder than others. Trauma, mental illness, mental health struggles and living with a visible or invisible disability can affect how you look after yourself.

The 'spoon theory'

In 2003, Christine Miserandino wrote about 'the spoon theory' to describe her experience of living with lupus to her friends and family. It explains that every day you have a finite number of spoons which represent your energy and motivation levels available for that day. You may start each day with a different number of spoons depending on the previous day, sleep quality and mood. The theory has been adapted for people struggling with their mental health and can include:

- **Forks:** external stressors that deplete energy.
- **Knives:** experienced traumas
- **Whisks:** sources of agitation and overwhelm.
- **Ladles:** activities which replenish your energy and save your spoons such as sleep, exercise and connecting with your support network.

The spoon theory can become an important element in your self-care. It can help you prioritise tasks, manage your energy levels, plan your days, strengthen your boundaries, and communicate with others. Using phrases such as 'sorry, I've run out of spoons (energy) to be able to do that today', 'I'm taking it easy this evening, I've only got a few spoons (energy) left' or 'I won't be able to help you, I'm struggling with my spoons (energy) at the moment, and I need to prioritise myself for a while'.

ACTIVITY 3: Your own spoons

How many spoons do you have? Take the time to think about your day, and the activities in it. Are there things that make you feel more tired than others? Are there things that seem easier than others?

With four spoons being the activities you find the hardest to complete and one spoon the easiest, less energy consuming, write down what each daily activity costs you.

1 spoon

2 spoons

3 spoons

4 spoons

Do any things replenish your spoons? If so, what are they?

What can influence your spoons?

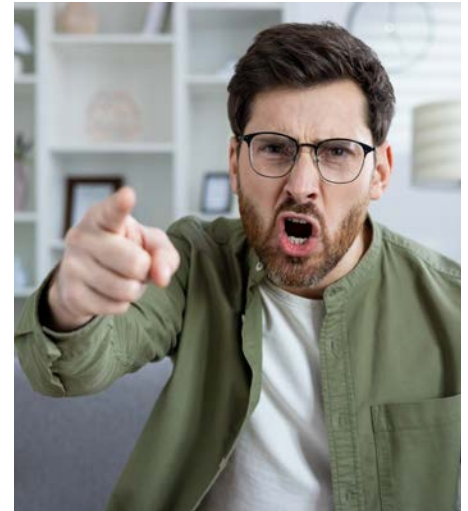
What does a typical day look like to you? (How many spoons, forks, knives, and ladles do you use?)

Men's mental health struggles

Compared to women, men are more likely to externalise their poor mental health. Some common behaviours include:

- Anger
- Irritability
- Aggressive behaviours
- Moodiness
- Changes in energy levels or appetite
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Difficulty concentrating, feeling restless or on edge.
- Increased worry or feeling stressed.
- Misuse of alcohol and/or drugs
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling flat
- Struggling to feel positive
- Engaging in high-risk activities
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Digestive problems without a clear cause
- Obsessive thinking or compulsive behaviour
- Thoughts or behaviours that interfere with work family or social life
- Unusual thinking behaviours that concern other people
- Thinking about death or thinking/attempting suicide
- Gambling
- Difficulty holding a conversation
- Spending time alone with little social interaction
- Feeling stressed
- Doom scrolling

As you can see, some of these behaviours can be seen as 'acting out' making men 50% more likely to be detained and treated compulsorily as psychiatric inpatients than women.



ACTIVITY 4: Checking in with yourself

In a journal/ notebook write down how many from the list above apply to you. How do they apply to you? Which one affects you the most? Which ones manifest when you are at your lowest?

Gaining awareness is super important because it can be used to highlight areas where you feel you need to change to feel better.

“It’s something I would never admit, because I was brought up by a Dad who, if I said: ‘Dad, I’m feeling a bit low today,’ he’d have said: ‘Boy, get on with it’. But I was [depressed]. I wasn’t eating, I wasn’t sleeping. I was living day to day thinking about what was coming next.”

David Beckham

“It’s this thing that swells up and blocks out your rational thought processes.”

Zayn Malik

Men and stress

Men are more likely to respond to questions about their mental health if those questions are about stress. The word stress is a shortening of the word 'distress' and dates back to around 1300. In the dictionary, stress is defined as meaning 'hardship, adversity, force and pressure'. Similarly, when we talk about stress in terms of mental health we are talking about the emotional and physical reaction we have to any kind of demand or pressure put on us.

While short bursts of stress can be good for you. Prolonged and high stress levels can have negative effects on your health, relationships, and body and indeed stress is often considered the single biggest cause of sickness in the UK. Chronic stress can put you at risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, those dealing with stress may seek an escape in the form of risky behaviours such as alcohol, drug/sex misuse or gambling, which ultimately make things worse.

SOME FACTS ABOUT STRESS

The most usual form of stress is work-related stress

Burnout is a syndrome defined as a state of physical and mental overwhelm caused by stress. It is characterised by exhaustion, feelings of negativity towards your job, and reduced professional efficacy.

12.7% of all sickness absence days in the UK can be attributed to mental health conditions.

ACTIVITY 5: Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation involves systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups, so you become aware of the difference between these two feelings in the body. Relaxing the body, will relax the mind and consequently, you should learn to identify the signs of tension in the body when you start to feel stressed. **This technique may not be appropriate for individuals with a history of back problems, muscle spasms or other injuries which may be worsened by muscle tensing.**

- Get comfortable. Loosen your clothing and take off your shoes.
- Take a few minutes to relax. Take slow, deep breaths in and out.
- When relaxed and ready, turn your attention to your right foot and focus on the way it feels.
- Slowly tense the muscles in your right foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of ten. (You may want to start with your left foot if you are left-handed.)
- Relax your right foot. Focus on how your foot feels as the tension flows away and it becomes limp and loose.
- Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
- When ready, focus your attention on your left foot. Follow the same sequence of muscle tension and release as before.
- Continue tensing and relaxing your muscles, starting with the feet, and moving slowly up your body (see the recommended sequence below).

Try to only to tense the muscles you are working on.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Right foot | 8. Stomach |
| 2. Left foot | 9. Chest |
| 3. Right calf | 10. Back |
| 4. Left calf | 11. Right arm and hand |
| 5. Right thigh | 12. Left arm and hand |
| 6. Left thigh | 13. Neck and shoulders |
| 7. Hips and buttocks | 14. Face] |



The three types of stress

There are three types of stress. Acute stress is short-lived stress triggered by specific situations. Chronic stress is a constant, long-term stress that comes from ongoing challenges and eustress is the name for positive stress that motivates people to achieve their goals.

ACTIVITY 6: What does your stress cup look like?

On a sheet of paper, draw a cup and fill it with all your stressors. What is keeping you up at night? What keeps getting in the way of enjoying yourself? What is annoying you? What is making you feel overwhelmed? Do not worry if it overflows, gaining awareness is half the battle! It might also be good to identify the stressors in your life that you can and cannot control. What could you change to make your stress bearable?

Some jobs are more stressful than others. For example, due to the nature of being in the military, veterans are at increased risk of developing mental and impulse-control disorders along with experiencing high rates of depression, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. These in turn can affect life outcomes and offer a life with an increase in poverty, unemployment, trauma and a decrease in support and life expectancy.

The term 'post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)' describes a range of symptoms such as fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, and irritability that people can develop in response to a traumatic event. It can sometimes take weeks, months or even years for the symptoms to appear.

TIP

For more information about post-traumatic stress disorder and stress, read our other booklets:

- [Coping after Trauma: Your guide to PTSD](#)
- [The Stress Factor](#)

The 'window of tolerance'

A theory to try and explain 'acting out' and 'outbursts' is the 'window of tolerance' by Dr Dan Siegel. This theory claims that all humans have different thresholds for trauma and stress. They have three states: fight/flight; window of tolerance; and freeze. The optimum state is the window of tolerance, which looks different for everyone.

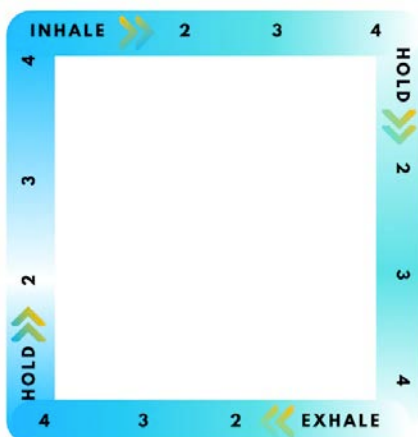
It is normal to dip between fight/flight (also known as hyperarousal) and freeze (known as hypoarousal). Hyperarousal can manifest itself as difficulty focusing, irritability, anxiety, shaking, over-eating and erratic breathing. This is because the brain shuts down the frontal lobe which is responsible for thinking and emotion control. To get out of hyperarousal mode you need to do grounding activities to help you regain control of your breathing.

Hypoarousal manifests as being numb, tired, being in auto-pilot mode, low energy, and low mood. To get back into your window of tolerance, you will need to do activities that make you move to get out of 'freeze.' These activities should be stimulating and can include creating something, walking around, playing music, eating crunchy food (yes, this does help) and cooking. Try the activities below.



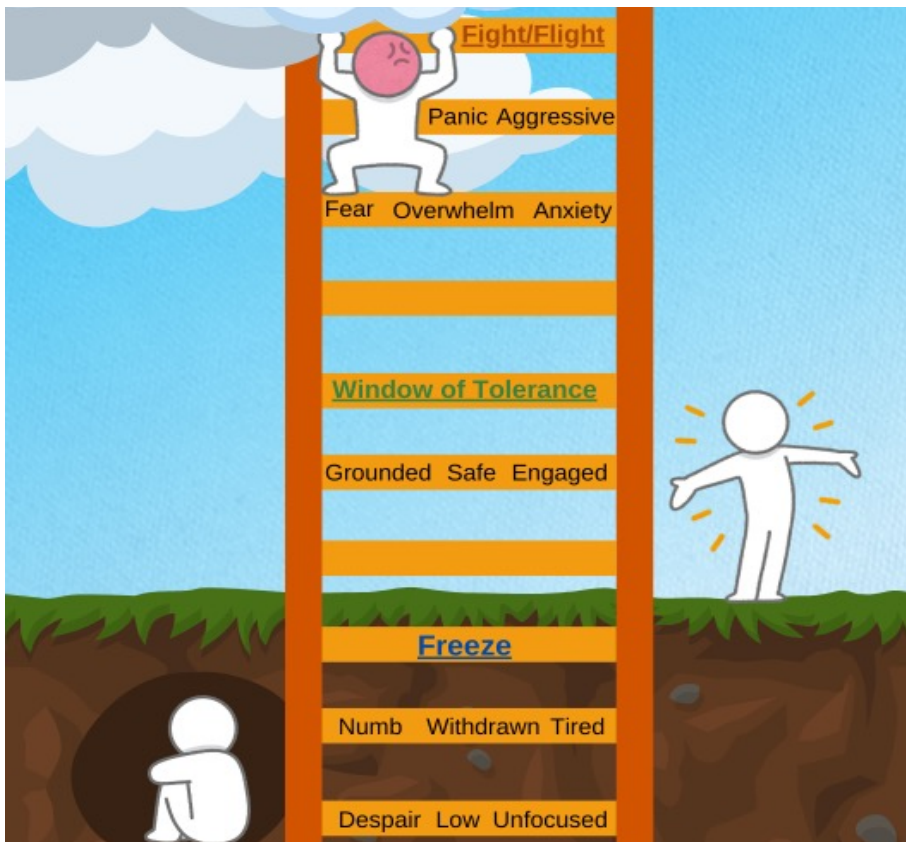
ACTIVITY 7: The Square Method

All you will need is to be comfortable, focus on a four-sided shape, and do the following twice. The shape could be a door frame, poster, window, electronic screen, or post-it notes.



ACTIVITY 8: Grounding technique 5-4-3-2-1

This can be carried out anywhere. All you will need to do is to identify five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. Take note of how you felt before, during and after. Did it help? If so, keep it in your reserve and use it whenever you need to ground yourself.



ACTIVITY 9: Your own window of tolerance

Create your window of tolerance and write down how each state manifests itself within you. Once completed, write down the activities that might help bring you down or up to the window of tolerance. You can even use your window of tolerance to see how you move through the states throughout the day/week/month.

**“When I have a panic attack,
it feels like I’m going insane.
Completely disconnected from
reality. I can’t breathe. Like I can’t
feel my breath going in.”**

Lewis Capaldi

**“I may have looked happy, but
inside I was hopelessly depressed”**

Stephen Fry

Characteristics influencing mental health

We cannot control all factors that contribute to mental health. Factors such as race, sexuality, gender and life transitions can have an impact. In addition, factors such as genetics, environment, childhood experiences, relationships, domestic abuse, experiences of poverty, socioeconomic status, knowledge, disabilities, and chronic pain can all have a bearing on stress. There are many many factors that contribute to our mental health so it's important to consider all aspects of your life.

The focus of this section will however be on race, sexuality, gender, and life transitions as these are areas that can and are usually overlooked by friends, family, healthcare professionals and colleagues.

Race and mental health

18% of the British population identifies as belonging to the Black, Asian, Mixed, or other ethnic group (BAME). BAME people are more likely to experience mental health struggles after the age of 11, and are less likely to receive support with these.

Here are some recent UK statistics for BAME groups (it's important to remember that collection of statistics can be clouded by bias and prejudice).

- Black or Black British groups are four times more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than White groups.
- 8% of Black or Black British adults have symptoms relating to PTSD compared with 4% of White British.
- Black adults have the lowest mental health treatment rate of any ethnic group, at 6% (compared to 13% in the White British group).
- Black and Minority Ethnic groups living in the UK are more likely to be diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.
- More Asian and British Asian adults screened positive for PTSD compared to their White counterparts.

Statistics relating to men

- 3.2% of Black men are more likely to experience symptoms of psychosis compared to 1.3% of Asian men and 0.3% of white men.
- African and Caribbean men in the UK are much more likely to be diagnosed with psychosis, schizophrenia, and PTSD during adulthood. This does not seem to happen in countries with a predominantly Black population*.
- Black and mixed Black men are between 20% and 83% more likely to be referred from the criminal justice system than other populations and are more likely to access treatment through the criminal justice system.
- Men in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities (BAME) are more likely to have negative experiences of health services and experience poorer outcomes after treatment.

Across the UK, men in the poorest fifth of the population are twice as likely to be at risk of developing mental health problems as those on an average income.

People from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be living in poverty than white people, and people living in poverty are more likely to develop and experience mental health issues.

1 in 3 victims of domestic abuse are men.

1 in 4 men experience violence in same-sex relationships.

1 in 7 men will be victims of domestic abuse in their lifetime.

On average, disabled adults report poorer wellbeing levels (including happiness, feeling worthwhile, life satisfaction and anxiety) than non-disabled people.

Men who have a family history of depression are more likely to develop it.

*Differences in cultural, spiritual, and societal behaviour expectations may account for this.

- Black men are more than four times more likely to be the subject of 'restrictive interventions' such as being restrained or held in isolation while in hospital.
- Asian or Asian British-Pakistani men had the lowest recovery rates for IAPT talking therapies.
- BAME members are less likely to have mental health issues identified in the criminal justice system.

Pressure and experiences of systemic racism and social expectations of masculinity in more than one culture have caused a lot of stress within BAME men. They are more likely to hide their mental health struggles. This can lead them to be more likely to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act and face disproportionate barriers to seeking help. Experiences of racism have been linked to an increased likelihood of developing depression and PTSD.



Barriers to accessing mental health support are complex and different for everyone but may include:

- Cultural differences
- Language barriers
- Professionals having a lack of knowledge about BAME background and experiences.
- White healthcare professionals not being able to fully understand what it is like to experience racism and discrimination.
- Conscious and unconscious bias
- Lack of awareness of mental health support in BAME communities.
- Stigma
- Living standards and conditions
- Wealth or lack of
- Institutionalised racism

To try and alleviate some of the above barriers, you may be able to:

- Ask for a healthcare professional who is part of the BAME community.
- Talk to a healthcare professional about your culture, background, and identity.
- Ask professionals to communicate with you in a way you understand (you can ask for interpreters to be present in sessions, but not all services will do this.)
- Understand your rights under the Equality Act.
- Take someone you trust with you to an appointment.

It is important to remember that different people have unique needs and diverse groups will also have diverse needs.

Refugees and asylum seekers are more likely to experience mental health problems than the general population, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

Sexuality, gender and mental health

Gay, bisexual and trans (GBT) men are more likely to report poor mental health, substance misuse, social isolation, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts than men who identify as heterosexual. It is estimated that GBT men are two to three times more likely to report having a longstanding mental health struggle compared to heterosexual and cis-gendered men. 46% of GBT men have experienced depression in the last year compared to 13% of heterosexual men. More than 50% of trans men wanted to take their own life last year. 75% of trans men have experienced anxiety in their life. 90% of trans men have experienced depression at some point.

These statistics are linked to a range of environmental, social, and psychological factors. GBT men are more likely to experience discrimination, stigma, negative experiences of coming out, hate crimes, a sense of not belonging and being different, bullying, misgendering, internalised homophobia and transphobia and microaggressions along with experiencing gender dysphoria and body dysmorphia.

It's important to remember that just because someone is GBT does not mean they will be more at risk of developing depression and suicidal tendencies, just as being straight does not mean you're not at risk of developing depression. There will be other factors influencing these numbers. It could be that straight men are less likely to be open about their feelings or that GBT men are more prone to discrimination.

Life transitions and mental health

Life transitions are periods in life involving significant change. They might also be a result of momentous events that make you stop and re-evaluate your life. Life transitions may run smoothly alongside your life causing few ripples. However, it is common for people to struggle to adjust to change, and many find these periods of life highly stressful and distressing. Transitions begin with an ending and end with a beginning. In between each ending and beginning is a challenging time, when things are uncertain, unpredictable, and can often feel unstable. It is this period that we find so challenging.

Some common life events that people struggle with are:

- reaching a significant age, e.g. 16-24, 30, 40, etc
- getting married
- becoming a parent
- leaving university
- changing/losing a job
- becoming ill
- developing a disability
- being bereaved
- retiring
- changing working patterns/styles, i.e. going part-time
- starting to work from home, or transitioning from homeworking to workplace working.

“Transitions begin with an ending and end with a beginning.”

TIP

Check our booklet '[Managing life transitions](#)' for more information.



Studies show that as many as one in ten dads struggle with postnatal depression and anxiety. This can manifest as difficulty bonding with their child, hormonal changes, irritability, panic attacks, new compulsive behaviours and withdrawal from their family unit. It is believed that 25% of new fathers experience mild depressive episodes and between 10-12% are diagnosed with depression in the first year of fatherhood. Men can also develop PTSD from a partner's difficult or traumatic birth.

Male pattern baldness is another significant transition in a man's life. The onset of hair loss is usually between the ages of 20–25 years. The prevalence and severity increases with age. In general, 30% of white men are affected by age 30, 50% by age 50, and 80% by age 70. White men are four times as likely to experience baldness compared to Black men and South Asian men, with Chinese men reporting lower rates of baldness. Male pattern baldness can impair self-esteem and increase feelings of isolation.

ACTIVITY 10: Take five

This is a lot to take in and can be overwhelming especially if there are some aspects you had not considered affecting you before. Why not stretch or have a cuppa? Grab your notebook and write. What are your initial thoughts and feelings? Does this change your perspective? Are things starting to make sense for you? Is there anything else you can think of to add to this list? Anything you would like to learn more about? What stood out for you?

The importance of emotional literacy

Have you ever been in a situation where you were telling a story, but you could not find the right words to describe it and you became increasingly frustrated with yourself? Well, not having the right words to express your emotions may have the same effect. How can you tell someone how you feel if you do not know? Knowing how to express how you feel is important in maintaining healthy relationships and creating open dialogues – creating a sense of empowerment, empathy, and reflection.

There are 3,000 words in the English language to describe emotions. Sometimes we may even feel the need to use words from other languages such as the Arabic 'Inshallah' which conveys the feeling of hope during uncertain times or 'dépaysment' in French about the positive feeling of disorientation that comes from traveling to a new country and learning new perspectives or even the German 'lebensmüde' translating to 'life tiredness'. There is even an Aboriginal tribe called Guugu Ymithirr who use cardinal directions to express themselves in everyday situations. Are there any other words you've come across that you love to use to express yourself that aren't part of the English language? Write them here:

Emotions versus feelings

Emotions are characterised as sensations in the body, for example, wanting to cry. Feelings are our thoughts about these emotions, examples include wanting to cry because you are sad.

The main seven emotions are:

- Bad
- Fearful
- Angry
- Disgusted
- Happy
- Surprised
- Sad

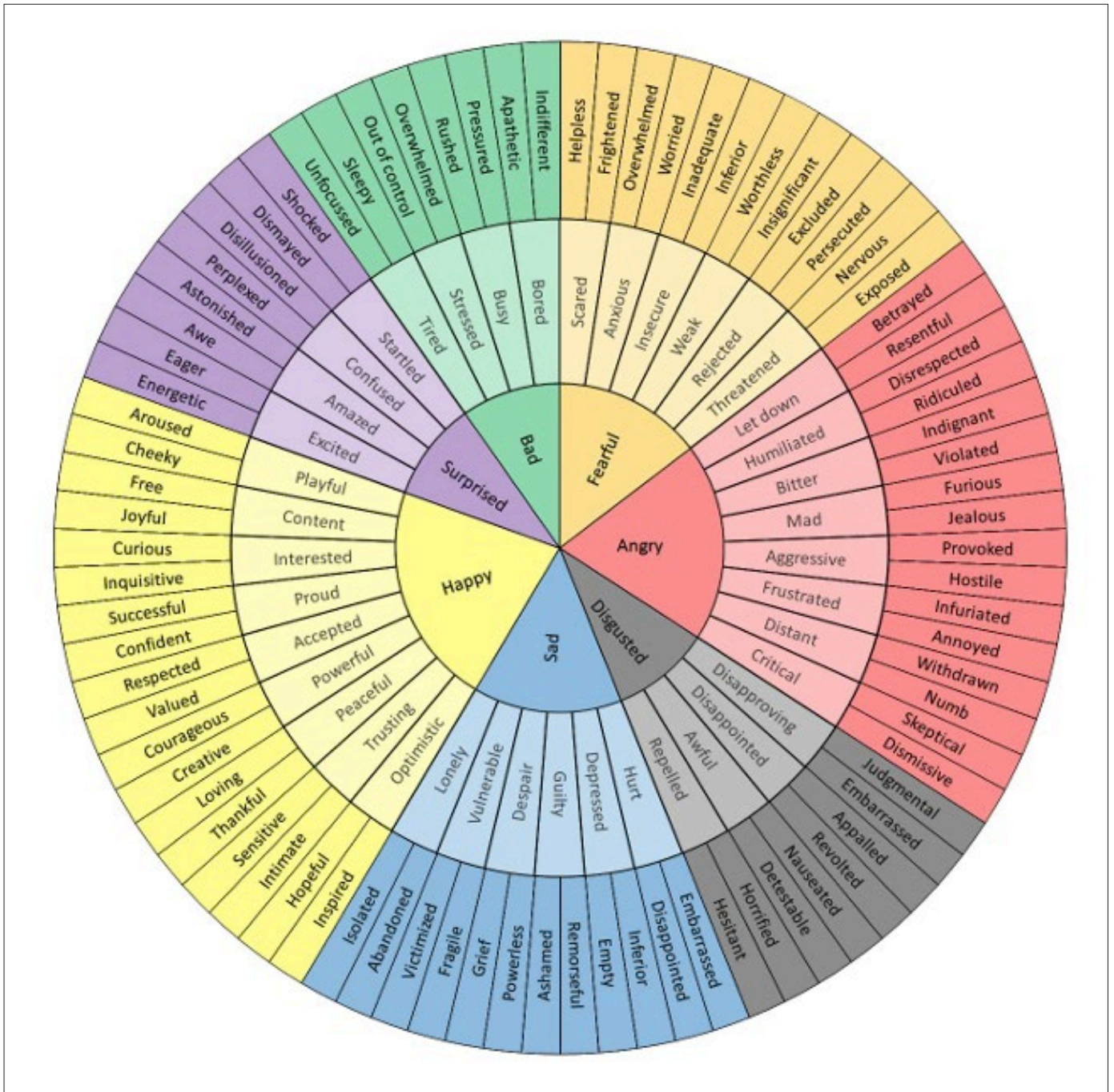
Feelings and emotions can be overwhelming, but the feelings wheel (see *page 18*) created by Dr Gloria Wilcox was created to help navigate and understand how we feel. It is divided into three categories:

1. Primary emotions – these are the emotions in the centre of the circle and represent the sense of how we are feeling.

2. Secondary emotions – these stem from the primary emotions and show a more nuanced approach to emotions, blending various emotions together.

3. Tertiary emotions - is the outermost level which offers more specific emotions capturing subtle differences.

The feelings wheel by Dr Gloria Wilcox



ACTIVITY 11: Your feelings

Take a minute to take in the feeling wheel. Are there any words that stand out to you? Is this the first time seeing some of these words? Why not check out their meaning? What emotions do you identify with the most? Are there some you would like to explore feeling?

Masking

Masking is when someone suppresses or hides how they truly feel and presents a different emotional state to the outside world. This can lead to emotional exhaustion, a sense of disconnection from authentic self, increased stress, anxiety, and depression.

Write below each facial expression what it means to you. Create some of your own in the spaces provided.



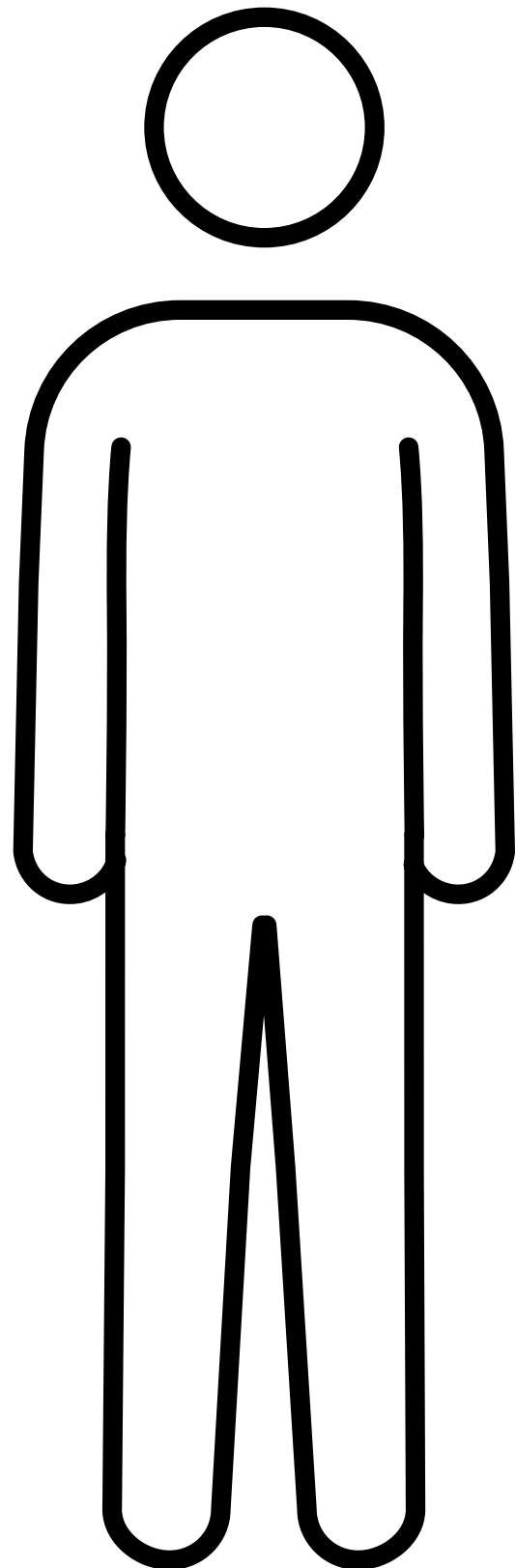


ACTIVITY 12: Your feelings and your body

Imagine this man is you. You are more than welcome to make him look like you if you want!

When you are struggling with your mental health how do you feel and where do you feel it in your body? Do you get butterflies in your stomach when you feel anxious, headaches when overwhelmed, or a tightness in your throat when disappointed? What else can you add to the male outline below?

Being aware of these somatic symptoms can help identify triggers and emotional patterns – listening to your body's clues about how you are feeling can be so important especially when you don't know where to begin!



“Mental health problems do not define who you are. They are something you experience. You walk in the rain, and you feel the rain, but you are not the rain.”

Matt Haig

“Im not sure where I'd be today if I didn't get help when I hit rock bottom. In fact, I don't know if I'd be here at all.”

Romesh Ranganathan

The impact of stigma on men's mental health

Stigma is defined as a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something. When it comes to the subject of men's mental health, the belief is that men are unemotional, protectors, and logical problem solvers. Two forms of stigma can arise.

External stigma

The most talked about is external stigma which refers to the negative attitudes and prejudiced stereotypes within societies, cultures, and ethnicities creating an attitude of rejection and discrimination when men speak out about their struggles.

Internal stigma

The lesser known stigma is internal stigma. This is where feelings of shame, guilt, and worthlessness surrounding mental health struggles contribute to feelings of low self-esteem, social withdrawal and a worsening of mental health struggles and illness. Other words for internalised stigma are internalised misandry which is when an individual accepts the prejudiced beliefs of their maleness, causing conflicts within the individual as these beliefs do not necessarily line up with their core values or lived experiences. On average, men report greater general stigma relating to mental health, illness and seeking treatment. GBT and BAME men have reported having had negative experiences in health services when going in for physical and mental health checkups.

When these different stigmas are considered, it is understandable that men are found to be less likely to engage in self-disclosure, help-seeking, and identifying emotional problems. Many men fear there will be repercussions if they disclose their mental health struggles and damage their employment status, future job opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. Sadly, this leads to men becoming emotionally numb, especially after traumatic events and living with chronic mental health struggles. Sometimes, this emotional numbing and tendency to rely on oneself can become a trait-like behaviour, manifesting as being detached and unemotional. Unfortunately, this makes men even less likely to seek help or be helped by the people around them, leaving them to struggle in silence.

The importance of language

Language helps us categorise our lives. The words we use can affect and change people, communities, and societies deeply. Language is always evolving to mirror changes in society. In the past decade there has been an increase in inclusive terminology and a shift in the perception of mental health. Since 2010, media discussions around mental health have shifted from using clinical terms such as disorder, illness, patients, treatment and psychotic and have been replaced with struggles, wellbeing support, clients, erratic and interventions. This shows that the stigma around mental health is shifting but we still regularly hear phrases like: 'man up', 'be a man', 'push through it', 'suck it up', 'boys don't cry', 'boys will be boys', 'act

“79% of men agree it is more socially acceptable to discuss mental health than five years ago.”

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are subtle comments and actions that can be offensive and hurtful reflecting underlying stereotypes.

tough', 'sissy', 'real men', 'grow a pair', 'men are trash', 'rub some dirt in it', 'toughen up', 'man the fort', 'put on your big boys pants' 'take it like a man', 'man-sized problems', 'macho', 'mummy's boy', 'don't be a wimp', 'show your backbone', 'man flu'; 'this generation's gone soft'.

How many of these phrases sound familiar to you? Can you think of any more?

These are all examples of sexism and overgeneralisations. They perpetuate stereotypes that are no longer applicable to the society we live in. These phrases can be used to control, isolate, and worsen individuals' behaviours. Many boys will have been pressured to be 'masculine' at home, school, work and with friends but that definition of 'masculine' has changed. **What would you like masculinity it to look like?**

ACTIVITY 13: Your feelings
Take 5 minutes. Unclench your jaw. Do you need to stretch? What do you wish people had told you? Take note of your body, how does it feel? Let's do a body scan.

The body scan

The body scan is like progressive muscle relaxation but involves focusing on sensations in different parts of the body rather than tensing and relaxing muscles.

- Lie down on your back, legs straight out and your arms by your sides. Close your eyes if you wish. Focus on your breathing, allowing your stomach to rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale. Breathe deeply for about two minutes or until you feel comfortable and relaxed.
- Focus on the toes of your right foot and notice any sensations you feel while continuing to focus on your breathing. Imagine each deep breath flowing to your toes. Remain focused on this area for one to two minutes.
- Move your focus to the sole of your right foot. Tune in to any sensations you feel in that part of your body and imagine each breath flowing from the sole of your foot. After one or two minutes, move your focus to your

right ankle and repeat. Move to your calf, knee, thigh, hip, and then repeat the sequence for your left leg. From there, move up the torso, through the lower back and abdomen, the upper back and chest, and the shoulders. Pay close attention to any area of the body that causes you pain or discomfort.

- Move your focus to the fingers on your right hand and then move up to the wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, and shoulder. Repeat for your left arm. Then move through the neck and throat, and finally all the regions of your face, the back of the head, and the top of the head. Pay close attention to your jaw, chin, lips, tongue, nose, cheeks, eyes, forehead, temples, and scalp. When you reach the very top of your head, let your breath reach out beyond your body and imagine yourself hovering above yourself.

After completing the body scan, relax for a while in silence and stillness, noting how your body feels. Then open your eyes slowly and take a moment to stretch.

The downsides to bottling up emotions

Men have been taught from an early age to suppress their emotions and encouraged to be independent and resilient, discouraging them from seeking help for their mental health struggles. Keeping all the negative and detrimental emotions, feelings, and stress bottled up can lead men to find comfort in unhealthy coping mechanisms and escapist behaviour.

These behaviours can manifest as substance use (alcohol, tobacco, and legal and illegal drugs), thrill-seeking risky behaviours (reckless driving, unprotected sex), gambling, excessive behaviours (gaming, physical exercise, doom-scrolling), aggressive behaviours (fighting, shouting, carrying a weapon) and suicidal tendencies.

They can translate into the following statistics:

- 66% of drug-related deaths occur in men.
- 73% of people who 'go missing' from home are men.
- 75% of people who abuse substances are men.
- 86% of violent crimes are committed by men.
- 87% of rough sleepers are men.
- 90% of men in prison have one mental health problem.
- Men are twice as likely to be victims of violent crime than women.

Not only can keeping emotions bottled up be harmful physically, but also mentally and socially. It can be hard to look after yourself when you are struggling with your mental health. Wanting things to change and get better can seem like such an unachievable goal that it can lead to suicidal tendencies, career setbacks, relationship troubles, and deteriorating physical health. Research has found that individuals who struggle chronically with their mental health are at greater risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and reduced life quality and expectancy.

TIP

Check out our booklet called ['When Habits Become Out of Control – A Guide to Managing Unhelpful Habits'](#) for more information.



It is hard to change your routine, even if you are not happy with it. The brain is wired to perceive change as a threat because you have survived until this point, why not continue being unhappy as long as you are alive? But that does not mean change is impossible. Sometimes, you need to trick your brain and other times you need to be consistent in your habit changes until it becomes your new normal.

The Gleicher formula may help

Dissatisfaction x Vision x First Concrete Steps > Resistance

For example, dissatisfaction with your current mental health multiplied by the positive vision of finding a community to belong to that brings you purpose, multiplied by the first concrete step of finding out where the next man shed meet up, is greater than our resistance to change.

“The brain is wired to perceive change as a threat...”

Loneliness

Loneliness has been coined the 'silent epidemic' in men's mental health. It can be a leading symptom of depression, anxiety, and suicide. It is described as the feeling we have when our need for social contact and relationships is not met. This may manifest as being around friends, colleagues, and family and feeling alone. It can be caused by feeling like these people do not understand or care for you or your experiences.

ACTIVITY 14: What does loneliness mean to you?

Take a few minutes, in your head or in a notebook to collect your thoughts. What does loneliness mean to you? What does it look like? Is it the same as being alone? Would you say you feel lonely? If so, how frequently do you feel lonely? Do you find it easy to spot people who look lonely? How do these questions make you feel? What is coming up for you when you think about these questions?

There are three types of loneliness:

- **Emotional** – a lack of emotional attachment to someone.
- **Social** – a lack of friends and people to share activities, hobbies, and interests.
- **Existential** – feeling alone in a room full of people.

Feeling lonely can negatively impact your mental health AND struggling with your mental health can make you feel lonely. Feeling lonely and struggling with your mental health can become a vicious cycle. When you feel either or both you may:

- Avoid social activities that you usually enjoy.
- Find it hard to try new things.
- Worry about engaging with others.
- Feel like a burden to others.
- Be overwhelmed in public places.
- Not speak out fearful of others not understanding you.
- Have low self-esteem.

Loneliness does not discriminate, and it can happen throughout someone's life at any moment no matter the gender, age, profession, ethnicity, race, culture, sexuality, or socioeconomic status. It also has many causes, such as:

- Changing jobs.
- Becoming a parent.
- Moving to a new place without your support network.
- Being diagnosed or treated for an illness.
- Bereavement.
- Breaking up with a partner.
- Retiring.
- Starting an educational course.
- Experiencing mental health struggles.

“Loneliness and being alone are not the same thing. Loneliness is more psychological, you feel lonely around other people.”

MEN AND LONELINESS

1 in 10 men said they would never admit to being lonely.

1 in 10 cannot remember when they last interacted with friends.

1 in 5 men have said they have no close friends.

1 in 4 men are in contact with their friends once a month.

50% of men find that they lack friends who they can discuss serious topics with.

32% of men say they do not have a best friend.

It is estimated that 8 million men in the UK feel lonely at least once a week and 3 million feel lonely every day.

However, you may also be vulnerable to feeling lonely if you have:

- Dependents
- Experienced abuse and trauma
- No friends or family
- Lived in areas where few people have a similar background to you
- Been excluded due to mobility issues
- Experienced discrimination and stigma
- Been struggling with money and stability

Overcoming loneliness

- Use technology to your advantage to find friends and information about groups that you could join.
- Prioritise self-care.
- Do things you enjoy.
- Practise daily mindfulness.
- Share your feelings.
- Connect with others.
- Check-in with people.
 - Aim to find common ground and ways of connecting that work for you.
 - Invite someone along to activities near you.
 - Make friends with like-minded people.
 - Find purpose.
 - Join a local fitness or community group.
 - Join a men's group.
 - Stay connected with people.
 - Volunteer.
 - Start/continue with a hobby
- Get professional help.

“Studies have found that men are more motivated by purposeful activities and places where they feel needed.”

ACTIVITY 15: Check in with yourself

This is a lot of information to take in and may have affected you more than you realised. Check yourself. Do you need to move, stretch, or hydrate? In your notebook/journal write down your thoughts as they come to you. They do not need to be full sentences – you just need to be able to understand them. Does anything stand out to you? How would you summarise your thoughts? Think back to the feeling wheel, what feelings would you associate with how you are feeling? Are there any action points you can think of?

ACTIVITY 16: Your core values

It can be daunting to look for purposeful activity, especially if it has been a long time since you have had one. A great place to start is by sitting down and writing down your core values. What makes you, you? Once, you are happy with the list, write down activities that come to mind when you see those words written down, or see what you can find online. If this feels overwhelming, why not try asking ChatGPT for some ideas!



Good friendships can make us healthier. However, weak social connections can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Social connection

The brain is hardwired to connect with people, it craves social connection. Our brains have evolved to process the complicated interactions between people, recognise gestures, process speech, generate emotions and remember information about these people. Loneliness can make us more sensitive to mental and physical pains, negatively affect our immune systems, disrupt sleep, and weaken the brain. The longest study in the world that focused on happiness found that good relationships led to health and happiness. Good friendships can lower blood pressure and stress; release happy hormones and neurotransmitters; protect from cancer, heart disease and depression; and help you feel more optimistic and resilient. Like physical and mental health, social health takes work to be maintained and requires self-reflection. Even small investments today in our relationships with others can create long-term ripples of wellbeing.

ACTIVITY 17: Take note of friendships

Take the time to reflect. Who is in your life? How many are important to you? What do they add to your life? What do they take away? Is there something missing? Do you miss any of them? What type of friendships would you like? What can you do to achieve that? Can you break those actions down to make them more manageable?

Looking after yourself

Mental wellbeing is about creating a healthy and empowering lifestyle that works for you. It should help you live a happier, more balanced, and relaxed life. So what can you do to look after your mental wellbeing?

Nutrition

Eating can be a source of enjoyment, connection, and an opportunity for an intentional pause in the day. It does not just have to fuel your body, however good nutrition is vital if you want to feel good. This does not mean you have to completely change your diet. You can start making small changes and see how you feel!

These small changes may include:

- Eating regularly
- Staying hydrated
- Eating good fats (rapeseed oil, avocados, eggs)
- Avoiding processed and pre-packaged foods
- Including more fibre in your diet (fruits, vegetables, whole grains)
- Looking after your gut health by eating more fruit, vegetables, beans, and fermented foods (sourdough, sauerkraut, kimchi)

However, if you start to feel like food has become a negative coping mechanism for you, such as overeating or undereating, to deal with emotional pain and gain control, you may be developing unhealthy eating habits that could potentially lead to a diagnosis of eating disorder and you should find help.

Binge Eating Disorder is the most common eating disorder diagnosis in men. This followed by Bulimia Nervosa and Anorexia Nervosa.

Vitamins

A lack of certain vitamins is linked to mental health struggles and illnesses. For example, low levels of vitamin B can negatively affect memory, mood, paranoia, hallucinations, anxiety, irritability, fatigue, and insomnia and low levels of vitamin D can put you at risk of depression and seasonal affective disorder.

TIP

Check out our booklet '[Eating disorders and body image issues](#)' for more information.

ACTIVITY 18: What's on your plate?

Take a minute to digest this information. How diverse and plentiful is your plate? Is there anything you could add? Are there any easy swaps you could make in your diet?

Physical exercise

Mental and physical wellbeing are closely linked. Physical exercise can increase self-esteem, encourage goal setting, release endorphins (known as happy hormones), improve sleep, relieve stress, increase energy, decrease anxiety, and enhance mood. Walking three times a week for half an hour is enough to see these health benefits. Moderate and vigorous exercise are both helpful as are muscle strengthening exercises. It's also advisable to reduce the amount of time you sit down each day.

Moderate exercise increases your heart rate and body temperature. Some examples include: brisk walking, riding a bike, and pushing a lawn mower.

Vigorous exercise increases your heart rate further and causes faster and harder breathing where you will struggle to talk during the exercise. Examples include: running, swimming, walking upstairs, rugby, and some martial arts.

Muscle strengthening exercises can include carrying heavy shopping bags, tai chi, yoga, lifting weights, wheeling a wheelchair, and carrying children.

Note: Sometimes people develop an obsession with muscle definition and this can lead to unhealthy eating and behavioural patterns which in turn can lead to an eating disorder.

Sleep

On average, men need about eight hours' sleep a night, but the majority of men living in the UK are surviving on fewer. A lack of sleep is linked to mental health struggles, weight gain, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and almost every category of mental health issue.

Sleep is needed to regenerate parts of the brain so it can function normally during the day. This helps form memories, gain clarity in thinking, remove what the brain has deemed 'useless' information, and quicken reflexes.

- To get a good night's sleep, you should try:
- Getting out into the natural light.
- Having a fixed bedtime and wake-up time.
- Avoiding caffeine in the afternoon.
- Reducing alcohol consumption.
- Avoiding blue light from screens close to bedtime.
- Exercising a few times a week.
- Using earplugs to block out noise.
- Using blackout curtains or an eye mask to reduce light exposure.

TIP

Check out our booklet ['Supporting Mental Wellbeing in Sports'](#) for some insights into the mental health and wellbeing of athletes.

Phone usage

Phones greatly benefit our lives – from sending a message to a loved one abroad, checking your bank account or adding to your shopping list. The possibilities are becoming endless. However, if it sounds too good to be true it usually is. Over the past decade, there has been a big push in the development of smartphones and social media platforms making them better and faster for consumers to use. With clever technologies and algorithms, they have found a way to get a big portion of the population ‘hooked’ on these devices. There has never been a time when our brains are receiving this much information per hour.

It is not uncommon to see people walking outside while scrolling intensely, playing loud music at the beach covering up the sound of the waves, and meeting up in groups to aimlessly scroll through social media instead of talking. This lack of physical connection to humans and nature is contributing to poorer mental health experiences.

37% of men have said that social media has negatively impacted their feelings. Social media creates a culture of comparison and exposes men to an array of stereotypes and toxic masculinity. Not only can this lead to increasing insecurities about yourself and life but also pressure to meet societal norms of success, physical appearance, and resilience. It can also negatively affect your sleep, self-esteem, and mood, and put you at risk of developing compulsive behaviour patterns and addictive behaviours which are all isolating.

The ways to limit phone and social media usage all seem like common sense but because it is now a big part of our daily routine, it’s not always as simple as it seems.

To reduce your phone and scrolling time it is recommended to:

- Set time limits through time-limiting apps and setting timers.
- Seek out positive stories.
- Engage in an offline hobby.
- Take a social media break.
- Practise mindfulness and self-awareness.
- Delete apps that are not adding a positive effect to your wellbeing.

Doom scrolling

Doom scrolling is the act of spending a lot of time reading enormous quantities of news online. It can send your mind racing and leave you with feelings of uncertainty leading to burnout. It feels addictive because the human brain craves safety, knowledge, control, and instant gratification.

TIP

Check out our booklet '[Healthy social media use](#)'.

ACTIVITY 19: How does your phone impact your life?

How has your phone use affected you? What are the positives it brings to your life? What are the negatives? How much time do you think you spend on your phone? Do you think you want to change your phone usage? Is there anything you could do to help with that? How would you feel about limiting certain apps?

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about living in the present. By becoming more mindful you will increase your awareness of your thoughts and feelings. You will also notice that your mind is never still. Becoming aware of your thoughts and feelings allows you to accept and not give excessive importance to them*. Negative feelings result from negative thoughts. Focusing on negative moments in your life can make you feel angry, sad, guilty, anxious, and regretful. These thoughts should be free of judgment and accepted for what they are.

The benefits of mindfulness include:

- Improved sleep
- Reduced chronic pain
- Reduced stress
- Becoming more compassionate (with self and others)
- Improved relationships
- Better controlled emotions
- Improved performance
- Increased focus
- Increased emotional intelligence

Mindfulness and meditation can be empowering tools in your mental wellbeing journey. It allows you the time and space to take a step back and relax, even if it is just for five minutes.

Looking after your space

Some people neglect their home environments when they feel overwhelmed, tired, or have too much going on and they put cleanliness at the bottom of their priority list. Research has found that living in a messy and cluttered environment can increase stress levels and affect your ability to concentrate. To the brain, clutter may represent unfinished business creating a sense of heightened stress and anxiety, potentially worsening your mental health.

The act of cleaning and decluttering can help you feel in control over your environment and engage your body in repetitive movements which have a calming effect. It can also boost your mood, help you move your body, and improve focus.

ACTIVITY 20: Look after your space

Is there anything you can do in the next few minutes to make your space feel cleaner and a little less cluttered?

ACTIVITY 21: What makes you feel better?

Have a break. Do you need to move, drink, or eat? Reflect on what you have just read. What helps you feel mentally better? Why not meet up with a group of friends and discuss your favourite activities? Are there things you would like to try together?

TIP

Check out our booklets:

- [‘Your guide to mindfulness’](#)
- [‘Learning how to be self-compassionate’](#)
- [‘Ecotherapy & mental wellbeing’](#)

for some ways to be more mindful.

TIP

Consistency is key to wellbeing. Make sure to keep your mental wellbeing routine simple and achievable!

Remember if you live a healthy lifestyle and still struggle with your mental health, that is completely fine and you might just need a little more support!

*Those with PTSD should be aware that mindfulness can worsen symptoms as it can trigger flashbacks, intense emotions, and dissociation. Only continue if you see benefits.

“One day, we’ll look back and wonder how on earth we used to believe that depression was a lifestyle choice, only to be debated and taken seriously when an A list film star took his life, and the world filled with people saying how shocked and saddened they were.”

Alistair Campbell

“I think it’s very helpful to be able to speak with someone and just vent and not feel guilty about venting.”

Ed Sheeran

Some therapy options

Everyone's needs are different and like with most things, there is no one size fits all! Research has shown that men respond better to: a personal approach, good leadership, activity-based options, coaching, stress-management and mindfulness. The following therapies can be particularly helpful for men.

Cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT)

CBT focuses on our thinking patterns and how these create and maintain the presenting problem/s by linking with our emotions and behaviours. CBT uses a range of techniques, all of which expect clients to start making changes in what they do. CBT places an emphasis on the client to learn techniques and skills, which they can then apply by themselves. For this reason, this type of therapy often requires fewer sessions than other therapies.

TIP

Check out our booklet '[The CBT Connection](#)'.

Mindfulness-based behavioural therapy (MBCT)

MBCT combines elements of cognitive therapy with meditation practice. MBCT is a NICE-recommended treatment for depression in people who have experienced repeated episodes.

Person-centred therapy

Person-centred therapy, also known as client-centred counselling and psychotherapy, originated from the ideas of psychologist Carl Rogers. The person-centred counsellor encourages the client to direct their therapy sessions, providing their interpretations of situations. The practitioner creates a comfortable and non-judgemental environment in which to do so. The role of the person-centred practitioner is to facilitate this discussion by asking questions to clarify what the client thinks and feels. This helps clients find the solutions to the problems they are experiencing. Person-centred counselling benefits clients who like the freedom to talk about their problems in a supportive and facilitative environment and are motivated to resolve their issues.

Psychodynamic counselling

Psychodynamic counselling focuses on the unconscious and the importance of early experiences in our current situation/problems. The psychodynamic approach to counselling stems from the work of Sigmund Freud. The psychodynamic practitioner will help clients explore past difficulties and unconscious conflicts or issues as these experiences are believed to be at the root of current problems.

Psychodynamic counselling can be used to explore unresolved issues and conflicts from the past that are believed to impact the present. Common issues it can treat include anxiety, depression, anger, relationship problems, trauma, phobias, grief, and loss.

Art Therapy

Art Therapy uses art mediums to help you explore thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, and behaviours. The aim is to help reduce distress and improve social, emotional, and mental health by promoting insight, agency, and self-compassion. Talking is not necessary for sessions to unfold but can help. Art therapists are all different, but each will offer a range of art materials such as clay, watercolour paint, acrylic paint, and yarn. There are also types of art therapy that use music and drama.

Coaching

Coaching is a process that focuses on setting goals and working towards these while overcoming any difficulties or problems along the way. There are different types of coaching.

- Life coaching focuses on identifying and working towards specific goals linked to improving quality of life and personal fulfilment.
- Careers coaching focuses on personality/work fit and help you explore what types of career may be most rewarding to you.
- Executive coaching is commonly employed by those in highly successful roles wishing further enhancement and development.

“For men, therapy can be a liberating place to address the pressures connected with preconceptions and challenges of manhood without being seen as weak. It can offer a lens to refine perspectives and transform the way we think about what it means to be a man while helping tear down barriers to accessing support.”

*Andrew Kidd,
Senior Psychological Therapist*

Resources

Men may find the following resources helpful in dealing with mental health issues.

Apps

- Balance
- Headspace
- Calm
- The Noisy Brain
- The Tapping Solution
- Antistress
- Smiling Mind: Meditation App

Podcasts

- Stompcast by Dr Alex George
- Bottoming (LGBTQ+)
- The Happiness Lab with Dr Laurie Santos
- Inside Mental Health
- The Mental Illness Happy Hour
- Not Quite Zen; Young Blood – Men's Mental Health
- Gent's Talk | Podcast on Spotify
- On Purpose with Jay Shetty | Podcast on Spotify
- On Purpose with Jay Shetty | Podcast on Spotify
- The Anxious Truth - A Panic, Anxiety, and Mental Health Podcast | Podcast on Spotify
- Black Mental Health Podcast | Podcast on Spotify
- Gay Men Going Deeper | Podcast on Spotify (LGBTQ+)
- Men's Health UK | Podcast on Spotify
- The Man Hug | Podcast on Spotify
- All in the Mind | Podcast on Spotify
- Under the surface
- The Homecoming Podcast with Dr Thema

Hotlines

CALM - UK, helplines available from 5pm to midnight, 365 days a year
0800 58 58 58 (nationwide)

Samaritans UK - (<https://www.samaritans.org>), helpline UK: 116 123

Mind - (<https://www.mind.org.uk>), helpline UK: 0300 123 3393

Papyrus Phone: 0800 068 4141, Text: 88247, Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org
Offers BSL support: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/hopeline247-british-sign-language-support/>

Age UK – for friendship and support, phone: 0800 4 70 80 90

Community-based charities

- Man Shed
- Andy's Man Club
- Talk Club
- Park Run
- The Lions Barber Collective
- Men who Talk

Help for specific groups

- The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network has a directory of therapists of Black, African, Asian, or Caribbean heritage.
- Black Minds Matter connects Black individuals and families to free mental health support provided by Black therapists
- Sikh Your Mind offer culturally sensitive and psychological support for Sikh and Punjabi communities.
- Taraki collaborates with Punjabi communities to create spaces where people can access mental health support and education. You can join their virtual forums for men, women and LGBTQIA+ people.
- Help for Heroes
- AgeUK
- Young Minds
- Albert Kennedy Trust – supports young LGBTIQ+ people aged 16 to 25.
- Gendered Intelligence – a trans-led charity that works to increase the quality of trans people's lives, especially those under the age of 25.
- Imaan – supports LGBTIQ+ Muslims and provides an online forum where people can share experiences and ask for help.
- LGBT Consortium– search their database of LGBTIQ+ groups, projects, and organisations to find services near you, including mental health services.
- Stonewall – offers help and advice for LGBTIQ+ people and their allies.
- Switchboard LGBT helpline – offers information and support. All their volunteers are LGBTIQ+.
- Male Victims of Domestic Abuse helpline open Monday – Friday 10am to 4pm, Phone: 0808 800 1170 (this number will not show on your bills), Phone: HELPLINE 01823 334 244 (for those with inclusive minutes)

Resources for veterans

- **Samaritans:** freephone their Veterans Support Hub for the military community on 0808 175 3075 (24/7) or email jo@samaritans.org – to access confidential emotional support for feelings of distress, despair, or suicidal thoughts.
- **Shout:** a crisis text support service for people in the military community who are struggling and need immediate support to get through a crisis. Text CONTACT to 85258. #TextCONTACT85258
- **Combat stress:** for urgent psychological support, please call 0800 1381619.
- **Shelter:** urgent housing support, please call 0808 800 4444.

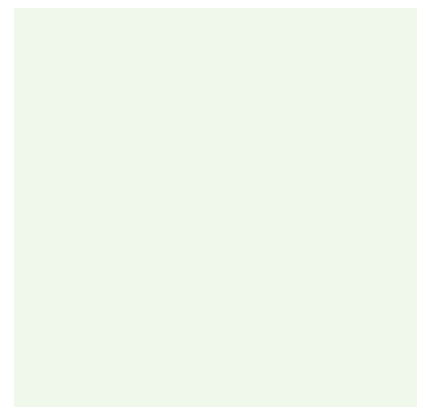
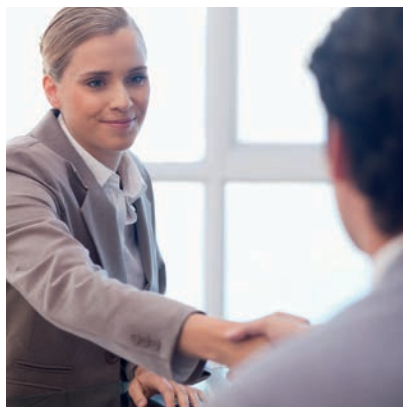
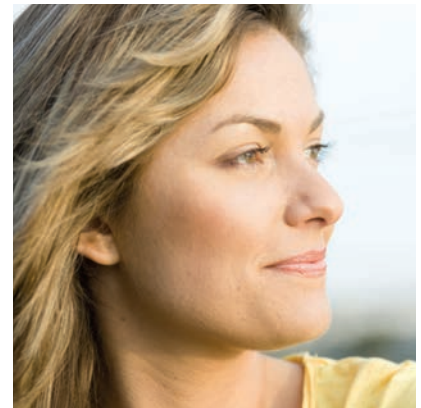


Our highly qualified and experienced team at First Psychology offers a variety of therapy services and works with people with a wide range of issues and problems.

We provide:

- Therapy and coaching services for individuals, couples, children, young people and families.
- Employee counselling, CBT & psychological therapies; wellbeing and personal performance coaching for employers; webinars, workshops, employee events and consultation.

All First Psychology practitioners have excellent qualifications and experience, so you can come to us knowing that you will see an experienced professional.



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