

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

WORKSHOP GUIDE



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

How often have you seen men openly discuss their mental health at work? Probably, not very often. But does that mean they're coping with it better? No.

The population with the highest frequency of deaths by suicide is middle-aged men. If we want to stop men from dying by suicide – and we must – we need to look at what factors affect men's mental health and how we can help more men to find help and support. When they do, they must be able to get any benefit from mental health services that meet their needs. Too often, that isn't the case. We know that men are less likely to ask for help.

At the end of the session the group should understand that

You may not be a Mental Health Professional and this course is only intended to provide a framework to introduce the subject and provoke discussion. If you or any of the team need assistance, please use your organisation's management structure, Employee Assistance Programme, or mental health first aider, who will be able to direct employees who are struggling with mental health issues towards agencies able to provide counselling or advice.

LOOK – watch the video and reflect on the content and message.

THINK – activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace.

REMEMBER – a summary of the key learning points.

GROUP EXERCISE – At the end of the series of videos there is a chance to bring the learnings together. Delegates should be encouraged to record any personal development actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

FEATURED VIDEO

- Men's Mental Health

FILM – MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

“If there was something up, I’d be the first to know about it.”

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Share with the group that men are often careful about revealing too much about their mental health woes for various reasons, including:

- Wondering if anyone is going to listen and give them the time of day.
- Discomfort with burdening another person with personal issues.
- Fear of stigma, judgment, rejection, and ridicule

So how can we create the environment for open discussion, encourage men to open up and legitimize and redefine seeking help. Ask the group to think and open up the discussion, covering these points.

- Conversations about mental health can be challenging for all of us. It may be easier to have an open conversation when the environment is less intense. It may help to have a third factor in the conversation, for example, engaging in an activity together or a walk and talk. Also hold in mind that building trust takes time and creating the conditions for open discussions won’t happen overnight. Consider creating a “shoulder to shoulder” space rather than a “face to face” space.
- There are many factors that will influence how comfortable a man feels talking about his mental health and some of these may be barriers to having open conversations. However, sometimes, it is just because there hasn’t been an opportunity to have a different kind of conversation. Often, we match our own levels of vulnerability to other people’s. If we’re vulnerable, they may feel more able to be vulnerable too (always hold in mind though your own boundaries and what feels appropriate to share).
- Legitimise and redefine seeking help.
When you speak, talk about how seeking support is a good thing as it reflects how one is committed to helping themselves be a better leader to their followers and contribute at the level of their true potential.
- Language
When men identify with a perceived ideal of masculine identity, any conversation or use of words that threatens their sense of belongingness to that identity can result in anxiety. As a colleague or manager, you can be socially intelligent and tweak your language to avoid identity threatening terms, like “depression” and “sadness” especially when you’re around men.

Try asking ‘How are you? Out of 10?’ then explaining why. It helps to build resilience, and on average, the charity Talk Club suggest this raises a man’s mental fitness by 10%.

REMEMBER

Ask, then ask again. It's easy for us to fall into conversation habits that don't even require us thinking – How are you? I'm fine. But if we break this pattern by asking a second time, sometimes the answer is different. Another way to try this is by asking someone how they are 'out of ten'. Again, this requires more reflection and potential to have an honest, authentic conversation.

GROUP EXERCISE

Ask the group to write their name, what they learned, and any lingering questions on a blank card.

Before they leave, direct them to deposit their cards in a folder labeled either:

"Got It"

"More Information, Please," or

"I Need Some Help!"

whichever best represents their understanding of the sessions content.