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EAP Newsletter

The men's health edition

Issue 23

November 2023



Making People Better

The men's health edition

In this month's newsletter we talk about speaking to a manager about stress, how to help the men in your life open up about worries, simple but beneficial exercises to incorporate into your day and getting financial stress under control.

This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

How to speak to a manager about stress



Did you know...

914,000 workers suffer from work-related stress, depression or anxiety.

17 million working days were lost due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2021/2022.

Stress, depression or anxiety is **more prevalent in public service industries**, such as education, health and social care, public administration and defence.

The main work factors that cause work-related stress, depression or anxiety are **workload pressures, including tight deadlines, too much responsibility and a lack of managerial support.**

*HSE work-related ill-health and injury statistics for 2021/22

Our mental health experts answer your top questions on stress

Q: Is stress a mental health condition?

Stress isn't a diagnosable mental health condition but if left unmanaged, it can take a toll on our mental and physical wellbeing. Like a domino effect, it can lead to or exacerbate other conditions.

Q: Why do men sometimes find it more challenging to talk about stress?

Men often face unique challenges when it comes to managing stress within the workplace. Societal expectations and the stigma surrounding vulnerability can lead men to find it challenging to express their emotional struggles openly.

Q: How does talking help to reduce stress?

Being honest and open about your stressors is a critical step in mental wellbeing. Our mental health experts witness the transformative power of communication firsthand, every day. Navigating workplace stress, engaging in open conversations with colleagues, friends and family can help to alleviate the burden you may be carrying.

How best to approach a conversation with your manager about stress

International Stress Awareness Week runs from 30 October - 3 November with Stress Awareness Day taking place on November 1.

We know how beneficial it can be to share your stressors with someone else, but that doesn't stop it from being nerve wracking and anxiety-inducing. With that in mind, we've shared four tips on how best to approach the conversation and identify solutions.



1. Prepare

Approach the conversation with clarity and a solution-oriented mindset. Ahead of the meeting, write down a list of the points you'd like to discuss



2. Diarise

Begin by scheduling a private meeting with your manager, ensuring a conducive environment for dialogue



3. Be specific

Share your concerns articulately, focusing on specific stressors and their impact on your wellbeing and productivity



4. Collaborate

Collaboratively, identify potential solutions that could help manage your stress levels.

How to help the men in your life open up about their worries



Did you know...

The theme for **International Men's Day** on November 19 2023 is 'Zero Male Suicide'.

Although men are now almost **three times more likely to see a therapist** if they're worried, compared to 2009...

Two in five men admit to regularly feeling worried or low, an increase since 2009...

And the number of **men experiencing suicidal thoughts** has doubled since 2009.

*Mind, Get it off your chest: Men's mental health 10 years on

Understanding more about men's mental health

In the sanctity of our homes, we have a unique opportunity to cultivate emotional resilience in the men we care about. By focusing on men's health at home, you're helping to contribute to a society where men feel empowered to address their stress and emotional wellbeing proactively.

What leads men to suppress their emotions?

Many men face societal pressures to maintain a facade of stoicism, which can hinder their ability to express emotions and seek help when needed. It is these societal pressures that often encourage men to suppress their emotions and can create internal conflicts that impact their wellbeing.

How can we help more men open up?

By redefining strength to encompass emotional openness, we can actively create an environment where men feel safe to express themselves. We can encourage conversations about feelings and experiences, emphasising that vulnerability is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Who can help?

We all have a part to play in creating a safe environment. As friends, partners, fathers and brothers, we can encourage a deeper sense of self-awareness, helping men build emotional intelligence and adaptive coping mechanisms.

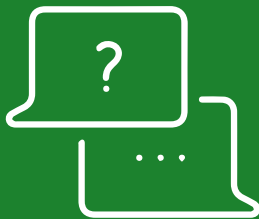


Seven tips for talking to men about mental health

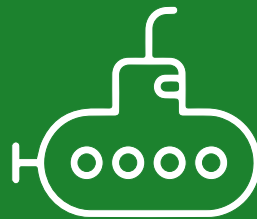
Prevention is always better than cure and taking these steps can lead to positive change:



1. Make space to have real conversations: Find time to truly talk to one another. Refrain from jumping in with solutions and avoid judgement. Engaging in heartfelt conversations that delve into feelings, experiences, and challenges can gradually break down the walls of stoicism.



2. Don't take 'fine' as your final answer: We've all done it; we say we're fine when we're not. To really find out, ask twice and don't take 'fine' as your final answer.



3. Delve a little bit deeper: We don't always say exactly how we are feeling, so often you will need to read between the lines when speaking to men about their mental health.



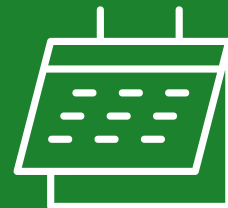
4. Avoid toxic language: Be clear that 'grow up', 'man up', 'get a grip' or 'grow a pair' are incredibly unhelpful phrases, can reinforce negative stereotypes and may be damaging for individuals. Avoid them at all costs.



5. Find the right space: Face-to-face, conversations can often feel intense and intimidating. The key is finding an environment that's slightly more relaxed for conversations to happen. Going for a walk or car journey can also be helpful.



6. Be present and patient: All that your friend or family member wants to hear is that you're there for them and your feelings towards them will not change if they open up. You don't have to try and give advice, they just need to know they are being listened to. Just being present and patient can help to validate someone's feelings and help men express emotions in a safe space where they can then explore other options and healthy coping strategies to regulate their emotions.



7. Remove the stigma all year-round: Remember, men's health is important all year long – not just during the month of November. Having open conversations, sharing your own story and supporting others throughout the year is essential to try and remove the stigma associated with men's mental health.

What is Movember?

Men's health is in crisis. Men are dying on average 4.5 years earlier than women, and for largely preventable reasons.

A growing number of men – around 10.8 million globally – are facing life with a prostate cancer diagnosis. Globally, testicular cancer is the most common cancer among young men. And across the world, one man dies by suicide every minute of every day, with males accounting for 69% of all suicides.

Movember is uniquely placed to address this crisis on a global scale. They fund groundbreaking projects all over the world, engaging men where they are to understand what works best and accelerate change.

Since 2003, Movember has funded more than 1,250 men's health projects around the world, challenging the status quo, shaking up men's health research and transforming the way health services reach and support men.

Find out more: www.uk.movember.com



Movement for positive health





Four ways movement improves mental health

Even though it might seem straightforward to say, regular exercise contributes to a leaner, healthier body. Moving your body can help you to feel better about both your mental and physical health - here's how:

1

Physical activity encourages the release of endorphins

We experience a natural high when we move because endorphins, the body's "feel wonderful" drug, help us to feel great.

2

You get time to yourself

Let's face it, life is hectic. We're often trying to balance work with home life, family and friends and it can often feel like there aren't enough hours in the day. By scheduling in an exercise activity, you'll get dedicated time to focus on you without distraction.

3

It can be fun and sociable

Team sports or group exercise are a terrific way to strengthen the interpersonal relationships that enable us to live more fulfilling lives.

4

Exercise helps the body combat and prevent chronic disease

Regular exercise can help people to live longer and more fulfilling lives. Many chronic conditions are related to a rise in mental health issues but exercise helps to combat mental health, too.

Six simple but effective exercises to incorporate into your day

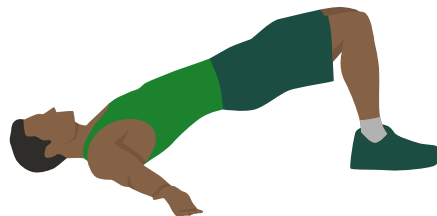
There's no such thing as an inherently bad movement. Motion is lotion - the more we move the more our joints get the natural lubricants they need. Exercise can feel daunting - you may think you need a lot of time, money and equipment to exercise 'properly'. The truth is, you need none of this. The main thing is to get moving, in whichever way works best for you.

Here are six simple ideas to get you started:



1/ Sit-to-stand from a chair

- 1.) Stand with your back to a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart.
- 2.) Raise your arms straight out in front of you and parallel with the floor.
- 3.) Brace your abs and slowly bend your knees and sit your hips back.
- 4.) When your bum touches the chair seat, don't sit; instead, press up through your heels to stand. Don't use your hands or swing your torso for momentum. Repeat.
- 5.) An easy progression for this is to stand from a chair with a single leg.



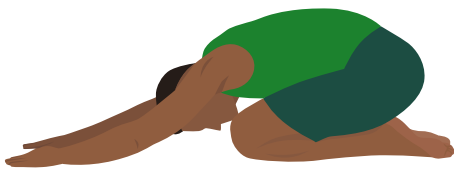
2/ Glute bridging

- 1.) Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- 2.) Rest your arms at your sides.
- 3.) Squeeze your bum muscles as you raise your hips by pushing through your heels. Stop when your hips form a straight line with your upper legs and chest.
- 4.) Pause for three seconds, engaging your core and glutes, then slowly lower to the starting position. Repeat.



3/ Thread the needle

- 1.) Begin on all fours, with a relaxed, neutral spine.
- 2.) Reach your left arm underneath your body, to the right. Gently move your left shoulder and left temple toward the ground.
- 3.) Your hips will sink back a bit toward your heels.
- 4.) Allow your right hand to stay where it is, now gently reach the left arm into the air and follow with your head and eyes hold for three seconds and repeat on the other side (feel your chest stretch as your arm reaches for the sky).



4/ Child's pose

- 1.) Kneel on the floor or on a yoga mat and sit back on your heels with your arms at your sides.
- 2.) Slowly bend forward so your stomach touches your thighs. Try to keep your bum against your heels, but don't stress if that's not possible.
- 3.) Extend your hands out in front of you with your palms down and rest them on the mat or the floor.
- 4.) Relax your neck and let your forehead gently rest against the ground or mat. Allow your entire body to relax as you close your eyes and breathe. Stay in this pose for as long as you feel is necessary.
- 5.) Slowly return to the seated position.



5/ Bird dog

- 1.) Begin on all fours in the tabletop position.
- 2.) Place your knees under your hips and your hands under your shoulders.
- 3.) Maintain a neutral spine by engaging your abdominal muscles.
- 4.) Draw your shoulder blades together.
- 5.) Raise your right arm and left leg, keeping your shoulders and hips parallel to the floor.
- 6.) Lengthen the back of your neck and tuck your chin into your chest to gaze down at the floor.
- 7.) Hold this position for a few seconds, then lower back down to the starting position.
- 8.) Raise your left arm and right leg, holding this position for a few seconds.
- 9.) Return to the starting position.



6/ Wall press

- 1.) Stand arm's distance from a sturdy wall with your feet under your hips.
- 2.) Place your palms on the wall, shoulder-width apart at shoulder height. This is the starting position.
- 3.) Bend your elbows and bring your chest toward the wall. Keep your elbows pointing away from your body at a 45-degree angle, rather than out to the side.
- 4.) Press back to the starting position.



Turn your normal walk into a fitness walk and reap the benefits

Walking can help to reduce stress and promote positive beliefs. It's also a great way to discover new places and learn about the area you live in.



Turning your normal walk into a fitness stride will help you get more from your time striding out. It requires good posture and purposeful movements.

Here's how to turn your normal walk into a fitness walk:

- Your head is up. You're looking forward, not at the ground
- Your neck, shoulders and back are relaxed, not stiffly upright
- You're swinging your arms freely with a slight bend in your elbows. A little pumping with your arms is okay
- Your stomach muscles are slightly tightened and your back is straight, not arched forward or backward
- You're walking smoothly, rolling your foot from heel to toe.

How to get financial stress under control

Financial issues can look different for everyone. Some people struggle to pay bills, feed the family, or maintain a place to live. Others meet their basic needs but are dipping into their savings for extras.

Research shows that the number of people stressing about their finances is increasing. Understandably, financial issues can cause distress, anxiety and worry. But understanding and finding ways to reduce our financial stress – and its emotional impact on us – can help make this challenging time much easier.





Here's our seven-point checklist to help you ease the stress of money worries and begin to find stability again



1/ Talk to someone

When you're facing money problems, there's often a strong temptation to bottle everything up. Although this may provide short term relief, it's likely to only make financial stress worse in the long term. Talking face-to-face with a trusted friend or loved one can help to put things in perspective. The person you talk to isn't there to fix your issues, they're there to listen.



2/ Take inventory of your finances

Detail your income, debt, and spending over the course of at least one month so you have a full overview of where you stand. Write down the following in the inventory: your income, your spending (however small it might be), and your debts. There are a number of banking apps that show visual representations of your finances which can help you to see your financial situation more clearly.



3/ Make a plan—and stick to it

Make a plan - which could include a number of things such as budgeting, tactics to increase your income or seeking professional help - and stick to it. Write it down on a piece of paper or type it up on a computer, print it off and make sure it's visible.



4/ Outline a monthly budget

Setting and following a monthly budget can really help keep you on track and regain your sense of control. Remember to include everyday expenses in your budget - such as groceries, travel, bills, rent or mortgage - as well as contingency for unexpected expenses.



5/ Set up automatic payments

Where possible try to set up automatic payments to help ensure bills are paid on time and you avoid late payments or interest rate hikes.



6/ Enlist support from others

Make sure others in your household are on board with the plan. Enlist support from your spouse, partner, or kids and make sure everyone in your household is pulling in the same direction and understands the financial goals you're working towards.



7/ Get professional help

Whether it's managing debt, creating and sticking to a budget, finding employment, communicating with creditors or claiming benefits there are plenty of experts on hand to help. Remember, reaching out is not a sign of weakness and it doesn't mean that you've failed as a provider, parent, or spouse. In fact, it shows you're wise enough to recognise your financial situation needs addressing.



Non-profit debt and finance counselling agencies

The Money Charity

www.themoneycharity.org.uk

For over 25 years, The Money Charity has been helping people of all ages to manage their money well and increase their Financial Wellbeing.

StepChange debt charity

www.stepchange.org

Contact the UK's leading debt charity to get expert debt advice and fee-free debt management to help you tackle your debts.

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

You can talk about your debt issue with a trained adviser online. We'll try to help you solve your problem or make good progress towards it. In some cases, we might need to send you to your local Citizens Advice or a specialist organisation.

National Debtline

www.nationaldebtline.org

All our advisers are experts in debt advice and our service is always free. We'll give you all the help and support you need to deal with your debts yourself.



Our tip of the month

The one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else...

Challenge yourself to make at least one meal a week from scratch

When you make a meal from scratch you have full control over what goes into your food, which means less sugar and salt and more good fats and nutrients. It can also be a fun and mindful activity, not only helping to improve physical health but mental health, too.

If you're not confident in the kitchen, it can feel daunting at first. The great thing is that many online recipes now include a video so you can follow the chef step-by-step in your own home.

To develop your confidence and skills in the kitchen you could start out by making something simple like a salad (which requires no or little oven time) or a spicy vegetable soup (a fuss-free way to pack a lot of vegetables into your day).

Take a look at the following websites for inspiration:

www.bbcgoodfood.com

www.deliciousmagazine.co.uk

www.jamieoliver.com

SilverCloud Programmes on the Wellbeing Hub

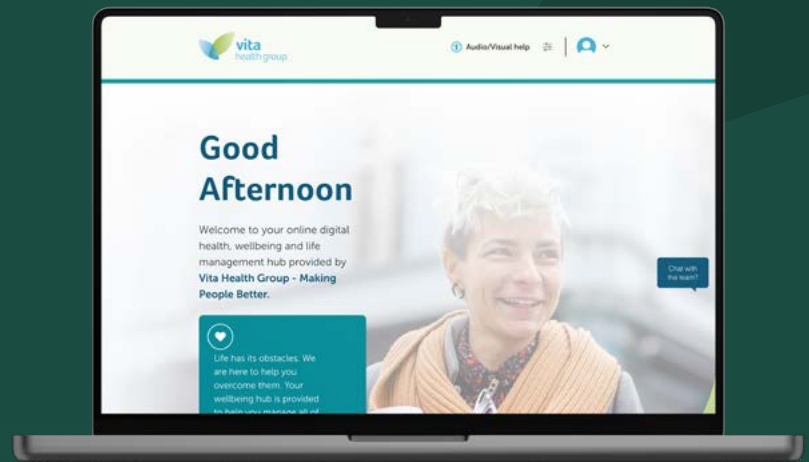


Visit our Wellbeing Hub by scanning the QR code above:

A new way to a healthier mind

1 in 4 of us struggle with mental health challenges, like feeling low or anxious.

SilverCloud programmes provide the tools and skills to feel better and stay better, helping you to improve and maintain your wellbeing by addressing underlying issues that can have a negative impact on how you would like to live your life.



What programmes are available?

Wellbeing

Programmes that give you the skills to deal with everyday issues that affect your emotional health.

Mental Health

Programmes to help alleviate the symptoms of common mental health conditions.

Chronic Health

Programmes that focus on the mental health aspects of living with a long term condition.

New programmes

- Space from Anxiety
- Bipolar toolkit

Based on years of clinical research, the programmes are interactive and delivered via a user-friendly platform. Programme modules are easy to use. Work through the activities, videos and content anytime on your computer, tablet, or phone.

Visit your Wellbeing Hub

Digital Wellbeing Programmes, free and in confidence, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Use your organisational code to access the site.

www.my-eap.com/access

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