

# Men's Mental Health



Talking openly and honestly can be very difficult given the stigma and shame that often surrounds the topic. This stigma is often reinforced by societal expectations of gender and how they should handle difficult emotion and life events. In Canada, the suicide rate for men is 3 times higher than that of women.<sup>1</sup> Men are also 3 times more likely than women to experience addiction and substance abuse.<sup>2</sup>

Stigma and other cultural expectations can delay and even completely prevent men from seeking diagnosis and treatment for mental health concerns like depression and anxiety. Beyond the stigma, men are also disproportionately affected by risk factors such as employment issues, unemployment and loneliness.

The stigma associated with mental health in our society is common and well known. Men face the added stigma of societal expectations regarding masculinity. Phrases such as “tough it out”, “real men don’t cry” and “suck it up” are used from a very young age, conditioning boys and men to the point where they feel weak or less than for experiencing their emotions.

As an outcome of this learned stoicism, many men tend to ignore their stress and emotions entirely. Others choose to deal with it by engaging in self-destructive actions such as drug and alcohol use/misuse as well as other risk-taking behaviours.<sup>3</sup> Social isolation from support systems and more significant mental health challenges may also result.

## We can all help to break down this stigma.

The first step is awareness. Understanding the challenges men may be facing when it comes to mental health is the first step in supporting them.<sup>4</sup> Learn the warning signs that may indicate a man is struggling, which can include: personality change, such as increased irritability or more extreme mood swings; losing interest in activities they were usually involved in; noticeable change in their sleep and eating patterns and/or increased use of drugs or alcohol which might begin to affect their work/personal life<sup>5</sup>.

Start by having open, non-judgemental conversations. Encourage everyone to share and express their emotions. We can model for children and adults, that emotions are not gendered, that they are okay, and even necessary, to show and express emotion and ask for help when it’s needed.<sup>6</sup>

The most important thing you can do is be there to listen and refrain from blaming or judging. It takes a great deal of courage to talk about mental health. Simply listening can be the most significant way you can help. If you are concerned about someone in your life, ask if they would be open to receiving resources and guide them to appropriate supports such as the Employee and Family Assistance Program, a local support group or their family doctor.



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## Contact Information:

### Staff and faculty:

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)  
[www.homeweb.ca](http://www.homeweb.ca)

ph: 780.428.7587

### Graduate Students:

Graduate Student Assistance Program (GSAP)

ph: 780.428.7587

### Students:

Counseling & Clinical Services

ph: 780.492.5205