

“Man Up” is Not the Answer

Anxiety and Depression for Men
Western Front Division Meeting
Mentor Discover Inspire
April 19, 2021

Dealing with Anxiety and Depression in a COVID world

Research shows epidemics and disasters are almost always accompanied by increases in:

- Depression
- PTSD
- Substance use disorder
- Anxiety
- Domestic violence and child abuse

Learnings from SARS research:

- Mental health effects last far beyond the active infectious disease period
- Longer duration of isolation is associated with increased mental health symptoms

COVID-19 and mental health research:

- Early research shows more symptoms of depression, anxiety, insomnia and distress

What does Anxiety and Depression look like?

- Is anxiety just worrying too much?
- Is depression just not being able to get out of bed?
- Can someone be both anxious and depressed?
- Do men react differently than women?

ANXIETY MIGHT LOOK LIKE...

@POSITIVELYPRESENT



Does one size fit all?

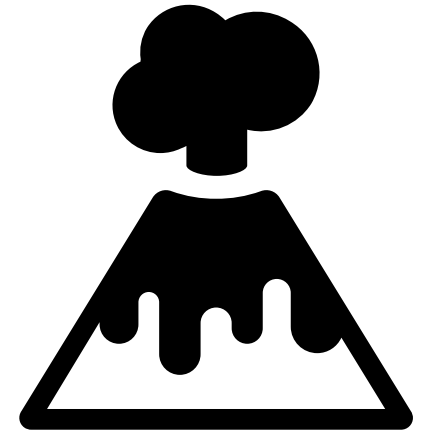
- When you think of depression or anxiety, you may assume that everyone experiences it the same way.
- However, the symptoms of depression or anxiety in men are often different than in women.
- If you fail to recognize symptoms of depression in men, it may go untreated.
- Unique struggles of men have severe consequences.
- According to the American Psychological Association, men are **4x more likely to commit suicide than women.**

11 Common Signs of Depression in Men

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1. Anger and Aggressiveness

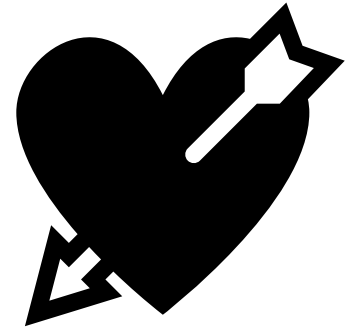
- Depression in men often manifests in hostility.
- When men feel that something is wrong with their emotions, they may become angry to feel capable or strong.
- A lot of men think that depression means they are vulnerable or weak. Therefore, they may get mad or have outbursts of aggression in order to compensate.



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2. Problems with Sex

- Men who are depressed may experience various issues regarding sexual desire and performance:
 - Lower sex drive
 - Erectile dysfunction (ED)
- Catch-22: Medications, including Antidepressants, may affect sexual functioning. Medications can cause ED, lower testosterone, and delayed ejaculation.
- Performance issues and an unhealthy sex life [may make men feel even worse](#) about themselves and exacerbate depression issues.



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3. Reckless Behavior

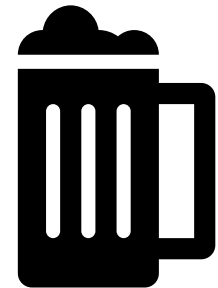
- When men don't know how to deal with symptoms of depression, they may [act out in risky ways](#).
- Men may engage in high-risk activities such as:
 - Driving fast
 - Getting into fights
 - Drinking and driving
 - Gambling
 - Pulling dangerous pranks
- Men may partake in activities that endanger themselves and others to deal with their emotions.



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4. Substance Abuse

- When men don't understand their depression or feel comfortable getting help, they may [turn to alcohol or drugs](#).
- These addictive substances may provide a temporary feeling of pleasure, but they only make things worse in the long run.
- Alcohol and drug addictions may worsen depression and cause a variety of other health issues.



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5. Isolation

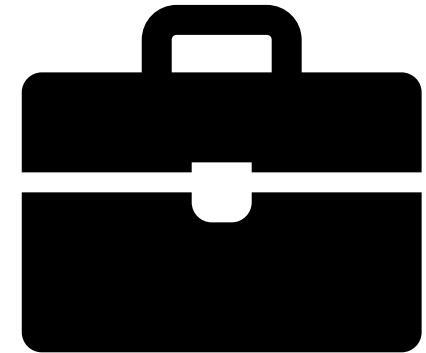
- Depressed men view everything negatively.
- This can take a toll on their relationships with family and friends.
- Can cause men to lose interest in pleasurable activities, such as hanging out with friends or visiting family members.
- Men often withdraw themselves because they are unable to feel true happiness and may feel embarrassed about what they're experiencing.
- Instead of accepting help and getting support, depressed men may [push their loved ones away](#).



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6. Problems at Work

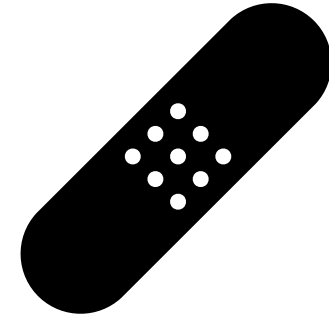
- Depression may affect every area of a man's life, including his professional aspirations.
- A depressed male may experience the following:
 - Loss of interest in his job
 - Difficulty focusing on tasks
 - Anxiety about going to work or losing his job
 - Missing deadlines
- A man who has depression may [struggle to meet daily responsibilities](#) and accomplish goals, which may make the depression even worse.



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7. Physical Health Issues

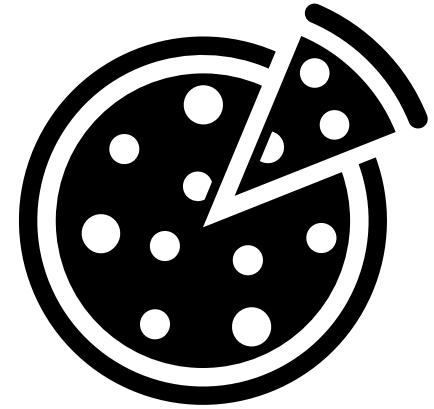
- Depression can show itself in [physical ways](#) too.
- Some physical symptoms of depression in men include:
 - Back pain
 - Headaches
 - Constipation
 - Diarrhea
 - Cramps
 - Racing heart rate
- What some men may brush off as other medical issues may actually be signs of a mental disorder.



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8. Changes in Eating Habits

- When men go through depression, their appetite and eating habits may change drastically.
- Depressed men may overeat or have no desire to eat whatsoever.



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9. Sleeping Problems

- Depression can affect a man's ability to sleep properly.
- Some men with depression may oversleep while others may have a hard time falling asleep at all.



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10. Stress

- Men may experience a heightened sense of stress when they're depressed.
- Even if they don't have more stress, some men may complain about stress because they think it's more socially acceptable than discussing depression.
- Prolonged stress may also contribute to depression.
- [Debt and other financial issues can be a source of stress](#) for many men. Men often feel that the burden of providing financial security for their family falls squarely on their shoulders. A financial counsellor can help you take control of your debt and put a plan in place to help you get back on track.



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11. Fatigue and Exhaustion

- Some guys who experience depression will be tired almost all the time.
- This may be associated with a lack of sleep or simply occur for seemingly no reason.
- Fatigue may also occur alongside slowed thought processes and physical movement.
- Studies show that men who are inactive are 60% more likely to suffer from depression.



What Can We Do About It?

What Can We Do About It?

- Recognize symptoms in yourself
- Fight stigma around mental health and getting help
- Don't suffer in silence
- Seek professional help
- Get physically active
- Get control of your finances

Fight Stigma Associated with Mental Health

Stigma

“Negative, unfavourable attitudes, and the behaviour they produce. A form of prejudice that spreads fear and misinformation, labels individuals and perpetuates stereotypes.”



Women Want Us To Be Vulnerable, Right?

Brene Brown, well known TED talk speaker, author, and researcher on vulnerability and shame:

"I did not interview men for the first four years of my study. It wasn't until a man looked at me after a book signing, and said,

"I love what you say about shame, I'm curious why you didn't mention men?"

And I said, "I don't study men."

He said, "That's convenient."

And I said, "Why?"

And he said, "Because you say to reach out, tell our story, be vulnerable. But you see those books you just signed for my wife and my three daughters?"

I said, "Yeah."

"They'd rather see me die on top of my white horse than watch me fall down. When we reach out and be vulnerable, we get the shit beat out of us. And don't tell me it's from the guys and the coaches and the dads. Because the women in my life are harder on me than anyone else."



Don't Suffer in Silence

70% of men avoid seeking support all together so ensure you talk to:

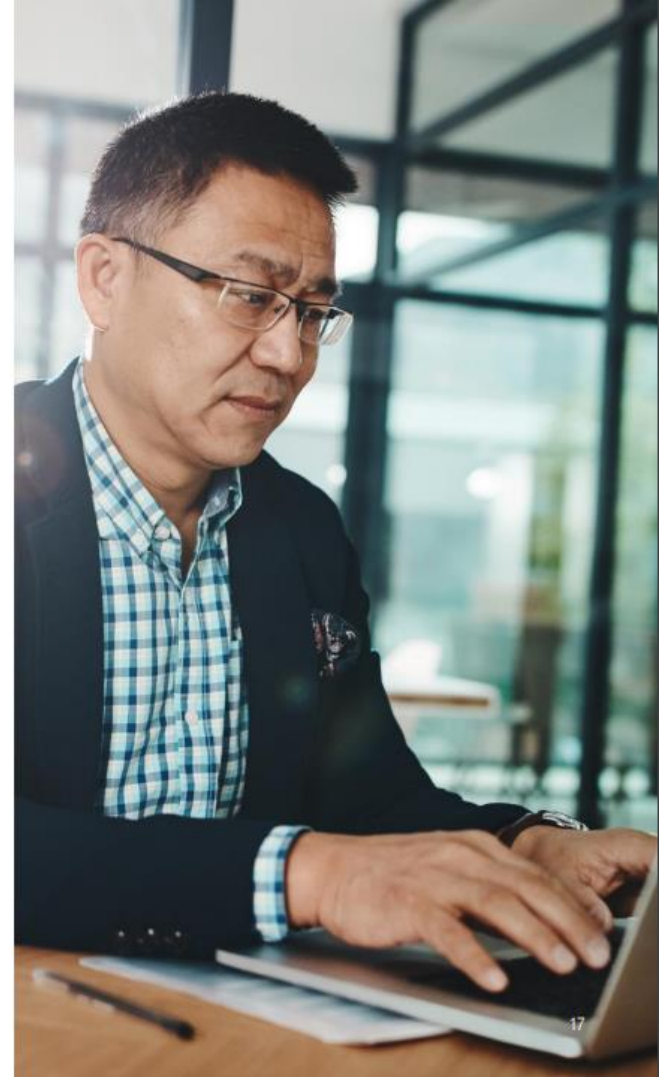
- Men on your team and across MDI
- Family and friends
- Your doctor
- Mental health professionals
- Minister, priest, rabbi, imam, etc.
- HR at work

The men on your team and across MDI are here to support you and help you identify when it may be appropriate to seek professional assistance. But remember that we are not medical professionals and cannot replace assistance from mental health professionals.

Get Professional Help

Reach out for help

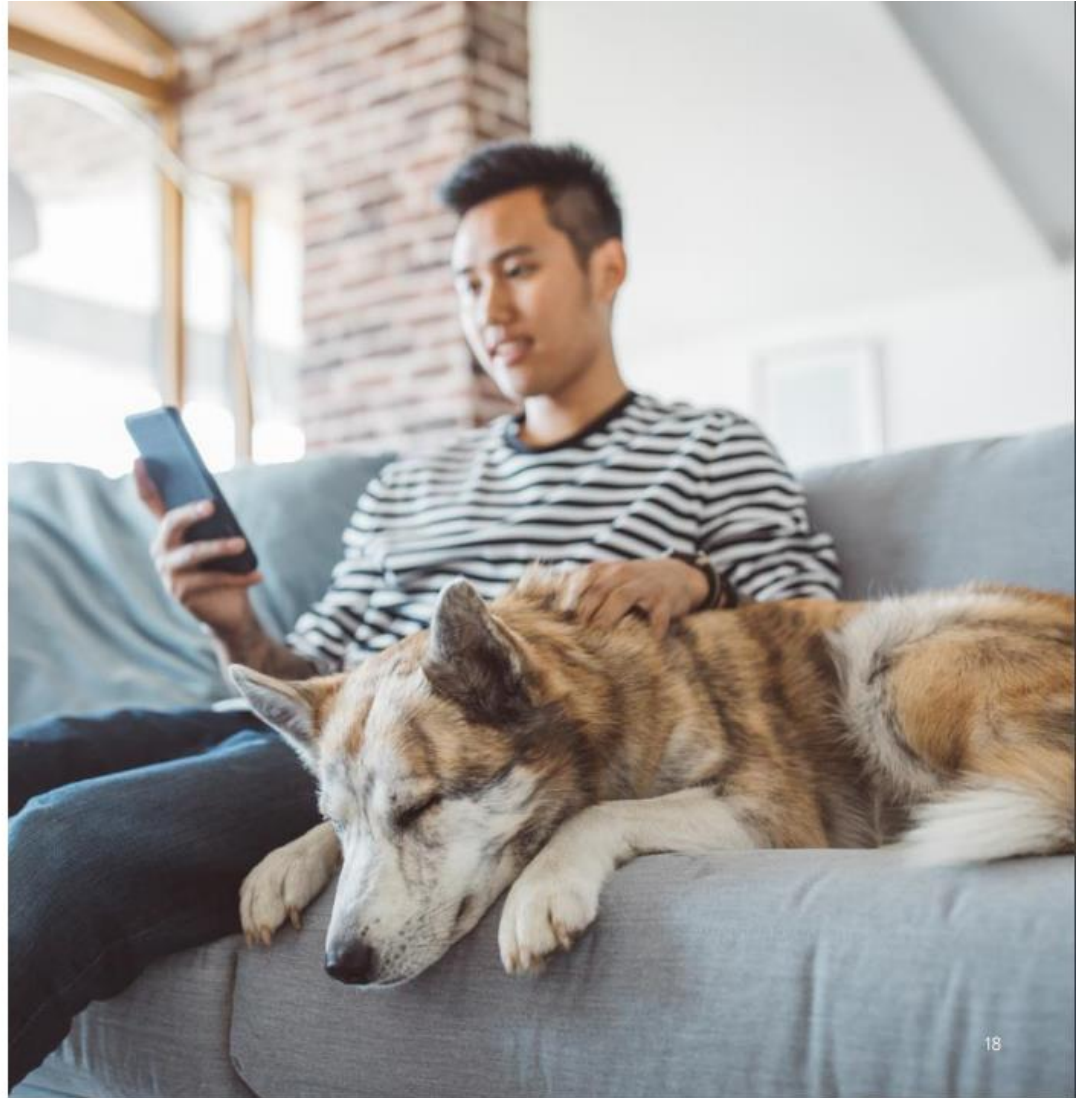
- Family physician is a good place to start and ask questions
- Find out extended health coverage for psychological services
- Check out local community resources, support groups, etc. (Wellness Together Canada, provincial mental health resources)



Get Professional Help

Ways to access counselling

- Face to face
- Telephonic
- Virtual
- Therapist-assisted digital
- Mixed modalities



Overcoming Obstacles to Getting Help \$\$\$

- What if you don't have a regular GP?
- What if you don't have benefits that pay for counselling?
- What if you have financial issues and cannot afford to pay for professional support?
- What if you reach out for professional support and you do not get the support you need?
 - *Cautionary tale: Man was seeking support, but since he didn't identify himself as suicidal, was not prioritized and ultimately got no support.*
 - *Need to be explicit, don't minimize your issues*
 - *Need to advocate for yourself – Don't give up*

Conclusion

- Questions?
- *Comments?*