

Take Action on Men's Health

The issues surrounding Men's Health are many. These issues apply to everyone regardless of gender, but why is it that Mens Health is such a concern in todays society? This article will examine the why, the what, and the how.

Why

When we look at why mens health is in need of discussion and awareness, we need to look at some external factors surrounding men and how they can be impacted by them. Society plays a massive role in the mindset of men from a very young age. In some environments, men are encouraged to be viewed in a certain way that makes them look confident, assertive, aggressive, strong, always ready to combat a perceived threat. These traits, believe it or not, are not negative aspects to have in life. The problem lies within the fact that they are encouraged to be viewed these ways in society and the world around them. Having these qualities embedded into their psyche means that boys will lean heavily into these traits without understanding the balance required to have a positive approach to their overall wellbeing as men. To overindulge and become shaped by this ideology men will care only about what others see in them instead of what they can see in themselves. Confident men become arrogant men, assertive men become controlling men, aggressive men become angry men and strong men become men that refuse to show weakness or vulnerability. These men are unknowingly isolating themselves from a society they want to be admired and accepted by yet they cant understand what they are doing wrong as this is what they grew up with, they were encouraged to be viewed as so-called "men"!

What

What this can do is leave men with a misunderstood view of the world. Again, they see no wrong in what they do because they were never shown ways in which to balance these masculine traits, these traits have a massive impact on their physical and mental health. No one is made from the same mould. We are all unique and have varying degrees of emotion and ways in which we can express them. What needs to be done is to ensure men are educated and encouraged to understand feminine traits (no, this does not mean you need to become a woman, keep reading).



Feminine traits are many. Yet both traits are necessary in order to achieve a healthy balance in life. Some feminine traits can be described as tenderness, understanding, nurturing and kindness. If we combine these traits with confidence, assertiveness, aggressiveness and strength we can paint a much more colourful picture as to what a healthy balance can look like. What is needed is openness and education to all boys and men of any age, as it is never too late to become more willing to expand our knowledge on this matter. This will allow our perception of the world to change and we can come to realise that what we should be focusing on is how we view ourselves internally instead of how the world views us, externally.

How

This is always the challenge...How! The answer is simpler than you may think and something I have used for many years when presented with any challenge or problem that I have faced.

HOW – **Honest**, **Open**, **Willing**.

Be Honest with yourself that physically or mentally there may be an issue.

Be Open to the fact that we are not perfect, and we can be vulnerable, we can suffer, we can become sick. We must be open to what we are feeling.

Be Willing to give ourselves up to honesty and openness and be willing to seek advice and seek help. Be willing to give ourselves a healthy way of life.

Tips for a Healthy Mind and Body

In order to begin that journey to improve our overall wellbeing I have 5 Tips below that can assist and support in taking action.

Accept who you are – as I have stated above, acceptance of the world outside of you should not be a priority, you need to accept yourself and do not compare yourself to others. Your own self-worth is more valuable beyond words or materials that this world can provide.

Listen to your feelings – Mens Mental Health is surrounded by so much stigma. One of the main reasons is that men often refuse to talk about issues such as isolation, anxiety and depression. According to Samaritans, as of May 2023, the male suicide rate is 73%, a truly saddening figure to see. If you are feeling any emotions that are leading to a dark place please reach out and seek help. Contact the Samaritans, Mens Sheds, Mens Development Network or if you have an Employee Assistance Programme with your employer, please use this service! You are needed here more than you will ever know.

Get Active – Being physically active will not only increase longevity by increasing our cardiovascular endurance (healthier heart and lungs) but also help you to release dopamine and endorphins into your system, these are the happy hormones that keep us positive and motivated. Aim for, on average, 30 minutes of moderate activity, five days a week. Do you have a gym in your place of work, can you get outdoors into nature, workout at home? That's 150 minutes a week, there are 10,080 minutes in a week. Don't view this as a chore, view this as a healthy habit. Make the time, get active!



Breathwork/Meditation – This is still a method that some men find hard to grasp, that it may seem “touchy feely” or “too feminine”. Yet, we breathe autonomously each and every day, shocking, I know! Our breath can have a dramatic effect in the body. If we are presented with something that we perceive as a threat or certain emotions can show up within us, our fight or flight response can kick in. Breathwork has been proven to combat and recognise what is an actual threat and whether we need to engage fight, or flight. Emotions that can crop up such stress, anxiety and depression can be regulated and controlled through breathwork and/or meditation.

Diet – Nutrition plays a huge part in how we perform physically and mentally. We all know the impact excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol can have on our mental state. Same can be said for certain foods too high in sugar and fat. They make our blood spike to give us energy but what goes up, must come down, be mindful of your intake. Aim for a balanced diet, enjoy the treats, but enjoy them in moderation. If you are unsure of what you should and should not eat based on your requirements, you can reach out to registered dietitians and nutritionists. But stay hydrated and keep it balanced.

Connection – I am closing off with this tip as I feel this is one of the most important aspects that help us in our goals to maintain a healthy mind and body. Humans by nature are a social species. It’s how we learn and teach one another in ways to evolve and grow. We should surround ourselves with connections that are positive, open and trusted. These connections can take time to source throughout our lives, and they will change but we are, in many cases, a product of what we are surrounded by. Negative circles can create negative actions and behaviours. As I spoke about earlier, leaning too heavily into toxic masculine traits will breed isolation, that we can go it alone, this is when we lose men before their time. Take action as a man who has the courage to be open. Take action as a man who seeks help when needed. Take action as a man who encourages others. Take action, as a man!

