

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS.

A wellbeing guide for
young men and teenage
boys

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WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Mental health is an essential part of overall wellbeing, but it's not always talked about enough, especially when it comes to boys. Growing up as a teenage boy comes with unique pressures, and understanding why mental health matters can help you take better care of yourself and your friends.

WHY MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

- Boys are often taught to “be tough” or “man up,” which can discourage them from sharing emotions or seeking help. This can lead to feelings of isolation and make it harder to cope with stress.
- Many boys grow up believing that showing emotions like sadness or fear makes them weak. In reality, acknowledging emotions is a sign of strength and self-awareness.
- Research shows that boys and men are less likely to seek help for mental health issues but are at higher risk of facing severe consequences, including self-harm and suicide. Early intervention is key to changing this.
- Teenage years are a time of significant change—academically, socially, and physically. For boys, these changes can feel overwhelming, and without proper tools, they may struggle to cope.



WHAT DOES GOOD MENTAL HEALTH LOOK LIKE?

Good mental health doesn't mean feeling happy all the time. It means:

- Being able to handle stress in healthy ways.
- Building strong, supportive relationships.
- Feeling confident about who you are and where you're headed.
- Seeking help when things feel tough.

IMPACT OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUR LIFE

- In School: Poor mental health can make it harder to focus, complete work, and perform well in exams.
- With Friends: Emotional struggles can lead to misunderstandings or withdrawing from social activities.
- Physically: Stress and anxiety can cause headaches, stomach issues, and trouble sleeping.
- In the Future: Developing healthy mental habits now can set you up for success in relationships, careers, and personal goals later in life.

By understanding and prioritising mental health, boys can break the cycle of stigma and develop the tools to thrive in every area of life. Mental health matters because you matter.



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

START A ROUTINE

Wake up, eat, and go to bed at regular times. Consistency helps reduce stress.

SET REALISTIC GOALS

Break big tasks into smaller, manageable steps.

PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Write down three things you're thankful for each day to stay positive.

LIMIT SOCIAL MEDIA

Spend more time in real life, connecting with people face-to-face.

STAY CURIOUS

Keep learning about yourself and how you can grow.



BUILDING HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS AND SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY FRIENDSHIP:

- You feel safe being yourself.
- Your friends support your goals and interests.
- They listen when you need them and respect your boundaries.

HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND:

- Check in: A simple “How are you really doing?” can mean a lot.
- Offer kindness: Small gestures like paying for their drink or including someone in a group activity can make a big difference.
- Be honest: If something’s bothering you, talk about it calmly.



MANAGING STRESS: TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Stress is a natural part of life, but managing it in healthy ways can make a big difference. Here are some effective techniques to help you stay calm and focused when life feels overwhelming:

DEEP BREATHING:

Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and breathe out for 4 seconds. Repeat 5 times. This simple exercise helps calm your mind and body.

THE “5-4-3-2-1” GROUNDING EXERCISE:

Focus on your senses to stay present. Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

TAKE BREAKS:

Step away from what’s stressing you for 10–15 minutes. Go for a walk, listen to music, or simply sit quietly.

USE APPS FOR CALMNESS:

Apps like Headspace or Calm offer guided meditations, relaxation exercises, and mindfulness practices.

TALK IT OUT:

Sharing your feelings can lighten the load. Whether it’s a trusted adult, a teacher, a counsellor, or a friend, opening up about what’s bothering you can help you process emotions and get support.



BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES ABOUT MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

IT'S OKAY TO:

- Feel sad or anxious.
- Ask for help when you're struggling.
- Cry, be vulnerable, and express emotions.

CHALLENGE HARMFUL STATEMENTS LIKE:

- "Boys don't cry."
- "Man up."

REPLACE WITH THEM:

- "It's okay to feel this way."
- "How can I help you?"

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH REMINDERS

B R E A K T H E S T I G M A

YOU ARE
NEVER
ALONE.

YOU DO NOT
NEED TO
"MAN UP".

SUFFERING
DOES NOT MAKE
YOU WEAK.

YOU ARE
NOT A
BURDEN.

IT'S OK TO
SHOW YOUR
EMOTIONS.

IT'S NOT
"UNMANLY" TO
STRUGGLE.

SPEAKING
UP IS
COURAGE.

THERE IS
HELP OUT
THERE.



WHAT IS TOXIC MASCULINITY?

Toxic masculinity refers to harmful beliefs and stereotypes about how boys and men "should" behave. These ideas often pressure boys to act in ways that limit their emotional expression and growth.

Examples of toxic masculinity include:

- Believing that “real men” should never cry or show emotions.
- Thinking that being aggressive or dominant makes someone more “manly.”
- Avoiding activities or interests that are seen as “feminine.”
- Feeling the need to suppress vulnerability or ask for help.

While being strong, independent, or ambitious can be positive traits, toxic masculinity forces boys and men to live up to unhealthy standards that can harm their mental health and relationships.





HOW TO CHALLENGE TOXIC MASCULINITY

Toxic masculinity can limit boys' ability to express themselves and build meaningful connections. Challenging these harmful stereotypes starts with small, intentional actions that promote healthier ways of thinking and behaving.

Talk about your feelings

- Create safe spaces to discuss emotions without fear of judgement. Recognise that emotions like sadness, fear, and joy are human, not “weak.” It’s okay to talk about them openly.
- Let yourself and others know it’s okay to feel sad, scared, or unsure. For example, if a friend seems upset, say, “It’s okay to feel this way. I’m here if you want to talk.” Remember that true strength lies in being honest, asking for help, and supporting others.

Look for healthy male role models

- Look for male role models who value kindness, respect, and emotional intelligence.
- Share stories of athletes, artists, or leaders who openly talk about mental health or challenge gender stereotypes.

Speak up against harmful comments

If you hear phrases like “man up” or “don’t be such a girl,” respond calmly:

- “Why does showing emotions make someone less of a man?”
- “Being strong doesn’t mean ignoring feelings.”

You don’t need to argue—sometimes, simply questioning a statement can spark a change in perspective.



HOW TO CHALLENGE TOXIC MASCULINITY

Celebrate individuality

- Encourage yourself and others to explore interests, no matter how they're labelled.
- Break away from stereotypes by pursuing hobbies or activities you love without worrying about what's "manly."

Example: If you enjoy art, writing, or dance, embrace it—these activities can help you grow and express yourself.

Build healthy friendships

- Create friendships based on mutual respect and support, not competition or dominance.
- Practice active listening and be there for friends when they're struggling.

Challenge stereotypes in the media

- Be critical of movies, games, or ads that promote hyper-masculine traits like aggression or emotional suppression.
- Share and consume content that portrays men in diverse, relatable, and emotionally open ways.

Teach others what you learn

- Share what you've learned about toxic masculinity with peers or younger boys.
- Discuss these ideas in school or community groups to spread awareness and promote change.



PHYSICAL HEALTH AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL WELLBEING

Your body and mind are deeply connected, and taking care of your physical health plays a big role in maintaining good mental wellbeing. Small changes can make a big difference!

EAT FOR ENERGY

Include fruits, vegetables, proteins, and whole grains. Avoid too much sugar and junk food.

EXERCISE REGULARLY

Sports, walking, biking, or dancing can release endorphins that improve your mood.

SLEEP WELL

Aim for 8–10 hours of sleep each night. Poor sleep can worsen stress and anxiety.

STAY HYDRATED

Drinking water helps your brain work better and keeps you focused.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH: FINDING BALANCE

Social media is a big part of how we connect, share, and express ourselves. While it can be a great tool for staying in touch with friends or discovering new interests, it can also impact your mental health if not used in a healthy way. Here are some of our top tips:

BE MINDFUL

Limit comparisons to others' seemingly perfect lives online.

SET LIMITS

Use apps like Screen Time to track your social media usage.

FOLLOW POSITIVITY

Choose accounts that promote well-being and kindness.

TAKE BREAKS

Have "screen-free" hours during your day.



FINDING YOUR PASSION: HOBBIES THAT HELP YOUR MIND

Engaging in hobbies and activities you enjoy isn't just fun - it's also a powerful way to boost your mental health. Whether it's sports, art, music, or anything else, pursuing something you're passionate about can provide a sense of accomplishment, reduce stress, and improve your mood.

SPORTS

Join a team or play casually with friends.

CREATIVE ARTS

Draw, paint, or write to express your feelings.

MUSIC

Learn an instrument or create a playlist of songs that uplift you.

VOLUNTEER WORK

Helping others can boost your mood and give you purpose.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Explore nature through hiking, cycling, or gardening.



HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Talking about your mental health can feel intimidating, but it's an important step toward feeling better. Sharing your thoughts and emotions with someone you trust can help you process how you feel and find support.

Why Is It Important to Talk?

- **Relieves Stress:** Sharing what's on your mind can make challenges feel less overwhelming.
- **Builds Connection:** Opening up can strengthen your relationships and help others understand you better.
- **Leads to Solutions:** While talking doesn't solve everything, it can help you find clarity and explore options for support.

Who Can You Talk To?

- A trusted friend
- A parent or family member
- A teacher, coach, or school counsellor
- A helpline or support organisation



HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

How to start the conversation...

It's okay to feel unsure about how to bring up mental health, especially if you haven't done it before. Here are some ideas to help you start:

- "I've been feeling overwhelmed lately. Can I talk to you about it?"
- "I don't need you to fix anything; I just need someone to listen."
- "I've been feeling really stressed about school, and I'm not sure how to handle it."
- "I've noticed I'm not as happy as I usually am, and it's been bothering me."

Use writing if talking feels hard...

Write a note or text to get the conversation started:

- "I've been struggling lately, and I think I need to talk to someone about it. Can we chat when you have time?"

What to remember when talking about mental health....

- It's okay if you can't fully explain how you feel. Just starting the conversation is a big step.
- Talking about emotions takes practice. The more you do it, the easier it will become.
- Asking for help shows courage and self-awareness. It's a strength, not a weakness.



HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

If you're unsure how they'll react...

Start with small steps. Choose someone you trust, and begin with a casual tone. Most people are more supportive than you might think, and if the first person you talk to doesn't respond well, don't give up—try someone else.

By starting a conversation, you're breaking the stigma around mental health and taking charge of your wellbeing.

**REMEMBER YOU'RE
NOT ALONE, AND
THERE ARE PEOPLE
WHO CARE AND
WANT TO HELP.**

RESOURCES FOR HELP AND SUPPORT



IN SCHOOL OR COLLEGE:

Speak to a teacher, counsellor, or school nurse.

ONLINE AND HELPLINES:

Mates in Mind www.matesinmind.org

Movember uk.movember.com

Samaritans Call 116 123 samaritans.org

Childline Call 0800 1111 or childline.org.uk



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Take a look at our social media channels for more ideas, tips and free mental health resources.

