

Improving men's mental wellbeing in your workplace.

Traditionally, Australian men aren't known for being proactive in seeking health advice - especially mental health advice. Which is problematic, considering men have more premature deaths, lower life expectancy, double the rate of heart disease, higher rate of suicide, and other health concerns that impact them more.

Although there has been significant progress recently, when it comes to men discussing their mental health, it's estimated that about a third (33%) of men aged 16-34 admit 'feelings of embarrassment' could prevent them from seeking help (1).

So, when it comes to men's mental health in the workplace, all businesses, no matter their size, need to be aware of the potential issues and actively promote a healthy workplace culture - one that can address individual needs, while providing a holistic approach to wellbeing.

Men need to feel comfortable reaching out if they need support, no matter how minor or major their issues may be - without fear of judgement, or repercussions.

If you have an employee who is experiencing mental health issues, through personal or workplace factors, it can impact on their productivity, performance and motivation. It's important to be aware that some workplaces can be triggering environments, particularly if your industry is prone to stressful, or high-paced work.

Signs someone's being negatively affected

Mental distress in men is unique to each individual, there are no signs that work for everyone, but the following are some of the ways it can manifest.

Becoming withdrawn

Taking excessive sick leave, not joining in social activities, avoiding contact with others.

Outwardly expressing emotions

Anti-social behaviours, becoming frustrated (high irritability, snapping etc.) low impulse control.

Being distracted

Difficulty concentrating, excessive time gaming or on devices, working extreme hours, diminished performance (missing deadlines etc).

Escapism

Binge eating or drinking, spending too long on indulgent activities.

How can you help?

It's important to build a culture where everyone, regardless of gender, feels comfortable talking about their mental health at work - one where people are willing to show vulnerability, which is something men can be reluctant to do. Creating that environment, where men feel able to speak up, can be approached in various ways.

Here are a few examples of how to increase their comfort in discussing their wellbeing.

Build a supportive work environment by:

- Encouraging open communication
- Providing support for those dealing with health issues
- Promoting a healthy work-life balance
- Setting realistic work goals and expectations
- Encouraging regular breaks, providing spaces for relaxation

Mention when you've sought help.

Show your vulnerability by sharing when life or work challenges impacted on your mental health, and any occasions when you've reached out for support. This helps normalise openness and encourages them to express their emotions. If possible, a less formal setting is preferred, like grabbing a coffee or sharing lunch.

Choose positive, non-confrontational language.

Hearing words like 'depression' and 'sadness' in relation to their mental health condition can make some men less likely to open up. More helpful terms could be 'dealing with stress' or 'building mental strength' or 'coping with burnout'. The words (or labels) we choose make a difference.

Promote mental health awareness.

Normalise peer support across your workforce and build mental health programs into your annual safety plans as an 'always on' strategy, rather than oneoff, responsive events. Ensure your culture is one where mental health is openly discussed and provide resources like a quality Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and mental health workshops.

The information contained in this article is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as health, medical, or financial advice. Always consult a qualified health provider or independent financial, taxation or legal advice specific to your circumstances and objectives.

Sources

- Third of young men too embarrassed to seek help for men
- We Need to Talk About Men's Mental Health at Work
- Engaging men in health care
- National Men's Health Policy - Healthy workers
- How workplaces can improve men's health | Healthy Male

Something on your mind?

If you require counselling, coaching or support, our clinicians are here to help. Call, chat or request an appointment online.

Looking for more resources?



Register for [Wellbeing Gateway](https://assureprograms.com.au). Your mental health and wellbeing companion.