

# Working Well: Shedding Light on Men's Mental Health

## Authors:

Kathryn George, MA, RCC (Manager of Psychological Health, Safety & Wellness)

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As many people now face the consequential mental health impacts of COVID-19, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of men's mental health vulnerability is still relatively new to talk openly about in Canada. Societal expectations around masculinity and the associated stigma around seeking support continue to present obstacles for men. We can all play a role in changing this.

Studies and surveys from around the world are shedding light on this important topic, and as a result, conversations are starting both in and out of the workplace. Mothers are not only vulnerable to post-partum depression, new fathers are too. [Data](#) reveals that 10% of men in Canada experience symptoms of mental health disorders and substance use dependencies. Among Canadians of all ages, more than 75% of [suicides](#) involve boys or men, and suicide is particularly high among divorced men. In Canada, young and middle-aged men are being hospitalized for schizophrenia in increasing numbers. Men also have higher rates of alcohol use, as well as illicit drug use, which is more likely to result in overdose deaths.

Knowing when to ask for help and not "go it alone" can be a challenge. Reaching out for support, either from friends and family, or professional help, such as from a counsellor or psychologist, is best to do earlier rather than later.

## Barriers to seeking help

Societal attitudes towards people with mental health concerns have fostered silence and a reluctance for men to disclose how they're really feeling, leading to greater levels of psychological distress. This distress is further amplified when the reality of emotions and behaviors are contrary to 'expectations'. Even when reaching out for medical support, men may find it easier to acknowledge physical symptoms, rather than psychological ones. As a result, mental health concerns can go undiagnosed, resulting in isolation and loneliness. Bottling up emotions may be masked by use of substances. There is a need to raise awareness about men's psychological well-being and their vulnerability to depression, as symptoms of depression may not be recognized as such. Depression may have a long lasting and significant impact on self-esteem and relationships. Building a circle of support can help to share reciprocated strength, fight stigma, and promote mental wellbeing.

### Addressing men's mental health challenges

1. Become better informed.
2. Ask what you can do to help.
3. Be there to listen.
4. Don't blame or judge.
5. Guide the person to appropriate supports. You can either direct them to our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), local support groups, a counsellor, or a psychologist. But always ask first.
6. Be optimistic and encouraging.
7. Take care of yourself. You cannot support anyone with mental health challenges if you are emotionally drained.

“You will find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view.” — Obi-Wan Kenobi, Return of the Jedi

### **PHSA Resources**

Visit PHSA's [Supporting Our Workforce page](#) for articles, resources, and tools that provide psychosocial support during COVID-19.

### **Interested in learning more how to support yourself and others?**

- Resilience at Work (R@W) workshop: Interested in learning how to maintain or boost your resilience during COVID-19? Register on the LearningHub for [Resilience in the Workplace – Co-Existing with COVID-19: What is your plan?](#) These 90 minute interactive Zoom sessions are facilitated by R@W accredited practitioners and offered either as an open forum (any PHSA employee can sign up), or for teams. Leaders can request sessions for their teams by contacting [psychhealthsafety@phsa.ca](mailto:psychhealthsafety@phsa.ca).
- Employee Psychosocial Check-In for Leaders sessions: [Sign up here](#) to join this 45min session for a step-by-step guide on how to provide a first-line response to staff who are experience psychological distress in the workplace. Several dates and times are available.
- Tune-in Tuesday mindfulness meditation sessions: [Mindfulness meditation sessions](#) will be held on Tuesday June 30 from 7:45am-7:55am. Email [mindfulness@cw.bc.ca](mailto:mindfulness@cw.bc.ca) for zoom details or to be added to the distribution list.

### **Additional Men's Resources**

- [Article: Men's Mental Health, by Homewood Health](#)
- [Articles: Managing Your Mental Health During COVID-19, by Heads Up Guys](#)
- [Website: A resource for gay, bisexual, queer, and men who are into other men, by Goodhead](#) (use Chrome browser)
- [Resources: Men's Health Foundation](#)
- [Resources & help lines by jurisdiction, Government of Canada](#)
- [Support for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse, by the British Columbia Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse](#)

*PHSA's Psychological Health and Safety team supports the mental health of all employees in any PHSA program, service, or division. To learn more about the programs and services available to staff, [visit us on POD](#) or at [PHSA.ca](#). Questions? Email [healthpromotion@phsa.ca](mailto:healthpromotion@phsa.ca).*