



International Men's Day: 19 November 2022

International Men's Day falls on November 19 each year. The intention of the day is to celebrate positive male role models and the positive impact they have on their families and their communities.

Studies suggest that males are less likely to look for support with their mental health. One way to show your support for International Men's Day is by demonstrating, through your own actions, that it's okay for men to talk about feelings and it's not 'unmanly' to ask for help when things don't feel right.

Barriers to seeking help

A 2020 study published in *Frontiers in Psychiatry* found that internalized masculine norms and perceptions of what is 'manly' versus what is 'weak' delayed men from seeking help.

However, once men start to use mental health service the study's findings indicated a change of attitudes toward depression.¹ The authors made multiple recommendations to increase men's ability to engage with services

- addressing the idea that asking for help is 'unmanly'
- using peer-led, men-only groups to improve self-esteem
- training health professionals on the impact of masculine norms on mental health

If you are struggling with negative thoughts or suspect that someone you care about is, encourage them to talk and to get help. You can find resources to help on [Inspire's Support Hub](#).

Mental health of boys and young men

This generation of young people is growing up in an uncertain world and dealing with challenges that are alien to the generations that came before. It's unclear to what extent the coronavirus pandemic will impact on the mental health of the young people who lived through it. What is clear is that young men are less likely to seek out help and access services when they are struggling

Research conducted by the Young Men and Suicide Project suggested the main reasons young men do not reach out for help include embarrassment, shame, stigma, concerns about confidentiality and fear of others finding out.

Deciding to counter this stigma and starting conversations around mental and emotional wellbeing is a meaningful way of marking this year's International Men's Day.



¹ Masculinity and Help-Seeking Among Men With Depression: A Qualitative Study, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2020.599039/full>

² A report on the all-Ireland Young Men and Suicide Project, 2013, <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/19197/1/ymspfullreport.pdf>.

Conversation starters for men

Here are some tips on starting a conversation if you're not sure how to talk to someone about emotional and mental health.

Ask, listen, talk

If you give someone an opportunity to talk and show yourself to be a receptive listener, chances are they'll respond. The best thing you can do is give them the room to talk. Don't feel like you have to offer answers or solve the problem.

Don't open with mental health chat

Start by checking in. Talk about the usual things you talk about; sport, what's on telly, family.

Starting with something lighter helps to establish a connection and get the conversation moving.



Acknowledge any difficulties

It can be hard to find the right words when someone has been through a difficult time. Try to find a way to gently acknowledge any issues that you might be worried about and let the person know that you're there for support if they need it.

Active listening

Show sympathy and empathy if someone is sharing a difficult experience. All you need to do is listen and respond in a way that encourages the other person to keep talking.

Rebuild, restart, reconnect

A mental health reboot can help to restore your outlook on life. Start your reboot by following these simple steps.

Rebuild

Have an objective think about your physical health. Are there small steps that you could take to commit to a healthier lifestyle, which in turn will improve your mental health?

You don't have to take drastic action. Start with some gentle exercise, incorporating healthier choices into your diet or cutting back on your alcohol or substance use. Developing strong routines and healthy habits strengthens your body and boosts your wellbeing

Restart

Sometimes we place ourselves under too much pressure. It may be time to cut yourself some slack. Focus on the things you can control; whether that's improving your sleep routine or taking time for some self-care.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, know how to reach out for support. Use reliable sources of information and speak to a professional if you need help.

Reconnect

The ability to connect with someone helps to build a sense of belonging and self-worth. Our relationships with other give us emotional support and allow us to share in collective positive experiences.

The business of life can sometimes intrude on these relationships and connections. Make a pledge to rekindle a connection. Send someone a text or arrange to meet for a coffee, a walk or a catch-up.