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# SUPPORTING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE:

## A Practical Guide for Organisations

Tools that work | Language that connects | Culture that supports

**This tool kit is a practical, evidence-based guide for organisations looking to improve how they support men's mental health and fitness. It pulls together what works into clear, actionable steps for HR teams, leaders, managers, and wellbeing leads. The approach is grounded in research and real-world learning, including insights from the Performance Habits programme, developed to provide proactive, stigma-free support to men in high-pressure roles. The aim is simple: to help build working environments where men feel able to stay mentally well, reach out early if they're struggling, and get the right support when they need it.**

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# WHY FOCUS ON MEN'S MENTAL WELLBEING?

Men's mental health represents a significant yet often overlooked public health challenge. Despite experiencing mental health issues at rates comparable to other genders, men are far less likely to seek help or access support services. This creates a dangerous gap in care that organisations are uniquely positioned to address.

The workplace provides a crucial environment where men spend significant time and develop important social connections. Evidence has consistently shown that by implementing targeted mental fitness initiatives, organisations can create access points to support that men might not otherwise encounter. This approach not only fulfills a moral obligation to employee wellbeing but can also deliver substantial business benefits. Analysis by Deloitte found that every £1 invested in employee mental health yields an average £5 return in improved productivity and reduced absenteeism. Most importantly, workplace interventions that successfully engage men in mental health support can be literally life-saving.

## 3–4 x

### HIGHER SUICIDE RISK

Men are 3 to 4 times more likely to die by suicide than women in most countries worldwide.

## 40%

### HELP-SEEKING GAP

40% of men said it would take thoughts of suicide or self-harm to compel them to get professional help.

## 50%

### EAP USE

Evidence suggests men are half as likely to look for support with mental health through an EAP than women.

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This comprehensive resource is designed with flexibility and adaptability in mind, allowing you to implement strategies that align with your organisation's specific needs, culture, and resources. Rather than prescribing a one-size-fits-all approach, the guide suggests multiple entry points and pathways to supporting men's mental fitness in your workplace. Using the guide will support your organisation to:

## ASSESS CURRENT APPROACH

Utilise the organisational checklist on page 8 to evaluate your existing mental health initiatives through a gender lens. Identify gaps and opportunities specific to men's needs and preferences in your workplace context.

## IMPLEMENT QUICK-WINS

Start with immediate-impact strategies that can be deployed within 1 to 3 months. These 'quick wins' build momentum and demonstrate organisational commitment while you develop more comprehensive initiatives.

## DEVELOP LONG-TERM INITIATIVES

Plan and implement sustainable changes at both individual and system levels. These deeper system interventions address cultural factors and create lasting improvements in men's mental wellbeing.

For optimal effectiveness, we recommend integrating these tools into your broader wellbeing strategy, while recognising that men may require tailored approaches. The most successful organisations implement small, consistent changes rather than relying on one-off initiatives, creating an environment where mental health and fitness becomes embedded in everyday workplace culture.

Remember that supporting men's mental wellbeing is an ongoing journey rather than a destination. Use this guide as a living resource, regularly reviewing and refining your approach based on feedback, emerging evidence, and the evolving needs of men in your organisation.





# KEY PRINCIPLES: WHAT WORKS WITH MEN

Effectively supporting men's mental health requires understanding how masculine ideals, social norms, and workplace culture influence perceptions and behaviours. The following evidence-based principles will help you adopt approaches that resonate with men in your organisation whilst avoiding interventions that may inadvertently reinforce harmful stereotypes.

### ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACHES

Men often respond better to problem-solving approaches rather than emotion-focused ones. Frame mental wellbeing as something to work on, build, and improve, similar to physical fitness. Provide concrete tools and strategies rather than just encouraging emotional expression or raising awarness.

### SIDE-BY-SIDE COMMUNICATION

Men often communicate more effectively in side-by-side activities rather than face-to-face conversations. Create opportunities for connection during shared activities, walking meetings, or project work where conversations can emerge naturally.

### STRENGTH-BASED FRAMING

Position mental health support as a way to build resilience and performance under pressure rather than addressing deficits. Use language around "mental fitness", "performance," "tools" and "training" rather than "vulnerability" or "weakness". This reframing can help bypass stigma while maintaining appeal.

### NORMALISED EXPERIENCES

Reduce stigma by normalising mental health challenges through authentic storytelling from respected figures, especially other men. Peer testimonials from colleagues, particularly those in leadership positions, can be powerful in shifting perceptions. Ultimately, the aim should be for culture to shift to accept vulnerability as strength.

Additional principles to consider include respecting autonomy (offering choices rather than prescribing solutions), creating psychologically safe environments where vulnerability isn't penalised, and recognising that men's distress often manifests differently, such as through irritability, anger, substance use, or risk-taking rather than sadness or anxiety (see page 13).

*It's crucial to acknowledge diversity among men: cultural background, age, sexual orientation and other factors significantly influence how men relate to mental health concepts. A one-size-fits-all approach will inevitably fall short.*

The most effective programmes offer multiple ways for men to engage — on their own terms, in ways that feel relevant and low-pressure. The goal is to meet men where they are while creating space to expand their comfort with emotional openness and help-seeking over time.

# ORGANISATIONAL CHECKLIST

Before introducing new initiatives, assess where your organisation currently stands. This checklist highlights six key areas that influence how well men are supported at work. Use it to identify gaps and focus your efforts where they'll have most impact.

## 1 LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

- ☑ Men's mental health is explicitly included in the organisation's wellbeing plan.
- ☑ Senior leaders model openness about pressure and mental health.
- ☑ There are dedicated resources (time, budget, people) for wellbeing work targeting men.
- ☑ Leaders and managers are trained to spot early signs of distress and respond appropriately.

## 2 COMMUNICATION AND FRAMING

- ☑ Mental health and wellbeing messaging uses plain, relatable language that appeals to men.
- ☑ Mental health offers are framed around performance under pressure, staying well, and everyday stress and challenges.
- ☑ Visuals and stories reflect a diversity of male identities
- ☑ Positive examples of men engaging with support are shared internally.

## 3 ROUTES TO SUPPORT

- ☑ Men have more than one way to access support (e.g. peer-led, digital, anonymous)?
- ☑ Line managers and mental health first aiders are trained on men's help-seeking barriers.
- ☑ Men have the opportunity to speak to someone with relevant lived experience.
- ☑ There are visible peer support or buddy systems for men.



SUPPORTING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ORGANISATIONS

*Identify 2 to 3 priority areas where improvements would have the most significant impact in your specific organisational context. Remember that cultural change takes time – sustained effort in a few key areas will yield better results than superficial changes across many domains.*

## 4 CULTURE AND NORMS

- ☑ Taking time off for stress, burnout, or emotional wellbeing is seen as acceptable for men.
- ☑ Flexible working options are available and used by men.
- ☑ The organisation actively challenges unhelpful or restrictive masculine behaviours or norms.
- ☑ There are low-pressure opportunities for men to connect and talk informally.

## 5 MONITORING AND USE OF DATA

- ☑ Uptake of support services is tracked by gender.
- ☑ There is a clear picture of which groups of men are engaging with support and which are not.
- ☑ Data and insights are used to drive improvements in access to support and its relevance.

## 6 FEEDBACK AND EXTERNAL INPUT

- ☑ Men have safe ways to give honest feedback on what's working.
- ☑ Feedback is used to adapt or improve offers over time.
- ☑ We partner with organisations or experts with experience engaging men.

Use this assessment as a starting point for meaningful conversations with your leadership team, HR department, and employee resource groups. The results will help you identify priority areas for action and establish a baseline against which you can measure progress. Consider repeating this assessment annually to track improvements and identify emerging areas for development.

# PRACTICAL TOOLS AND IDEAS

Implementing effective men's mental health and fitness initiatives requires both quick wins for immediate impact and longer-term strategies for sustainable change. The following practical tools and ideas are organised by timeframe and scope, allowing a broad guide for you to develop a comprehensive approach that delivers both immediate benefits and lasting transformation.

**1**

**QUICK WINS (1 TO 3 MONTHS)**

Initiatives that can be implemented rapidly with minimal resources to build momentum and demonstrate commitment

## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: QUICK WINS

- **Challenge-based engagement:** Reframe wellbeing activities as short-term challenges with a clear purpose, e.g. improving sleep for one week or taking three breaks a day. Many men respond well to goal-driven, time-limited tasks.
- **Practical skills sessions:** Offer short, focused, sessions e.g. five tips for managing pressure/ improving sleep/switching off etc. Keep them actionable and framed around everyday function, not therapy.
- **Use of digital tools:** Provide access to apps or self-help tools that prioritise privacy, structure and clear feedback; features men often prefer over open-ended talking.
- **Build on physical health offers:** Integrate mental fitness prompts into existing physical health programmes, e.g. including short planning or reflection tasks alongside gym, step or movement initiatives.

## SYSTEM LEVEL: QUICK WINS

- **Language check:** Audit internal wellbeing materials for tone, clarity, and relevance. Avoid clinical or emotive language and use terms that reflect how men describe stress and coping.
- **Visible male advocates:** Identify men across roles who can speak credibly about mental health. Peer modelling and perceived credibility are consistent engagement drivers.
- **Rethink meeting formats:** Use walking meetings or practical check-ins to create informal space for conversation. Activity-based environments reduce pressure and support natural disclosure.
- **Manager micro-training:** Equip line managers with short, repeatable training on how to notice signs of difficulty and open up safe conversations. Emphasise listening and consistency over problem-solving.





**WALKING MEETINGS**

Encourage "walk and talk" meetings that facilitate side-by-side communication, reduce formality, and incorporate physical activity, can make conversations about challenging topics more accessible for men.

**SKILL-BUILDING WORKSHOPS**

Short, practical sessions on managing stress, switching off, or improving focus can give men useful tools while creating space to talk about mental load in a non-clinical way

**LEADERSHIP STORYTELLING**

When male leaders speak openly about pressure, burnout, or low points, it normalises help-seeking and sets a clear tone that mental health is part of the job, not a weakness

**IMPLEMENTATION TIP:** Start with initiatives that align with your organisation's existing culture and values for easier adoption. Track effectiveness through both quantitative metrics (utilisation rates, absence data) and qualitative feedback to refine your approach over time.

**2**

**LONGER-TERM SHIFTS (6 TO 18 MONTHS)**

Deeper interventions that address systemic factors and create sustainable workplace cultural change

## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: LONGER-TERM SHIFTS

- **Structured mentoring with wellbeing focus:** Develop mentoring schemes that include space to talk about pressure, workload, and balance, especially where senior men model openness. Peer credibility and trust are key engagement factors.
- **Support during transitions:** Provide targeted check-ins or brief interventions for men during known stress points: returning from leave, taking on new roles, relationship breakdown after organisational change, fatherhood or approaching retirement. These periods are linked to increased mental health risk.
- **Peer support with clear boundaries:** Train men to support each other through informal, structured peer networks. Focus on active listening, signposting and knowing limits.
- **Practical communication and relationship skills:** Offer low-pressure sessions on managing conflict, navigating relationships or understanding emotional cues. Keep content concrete and situational.

## SYSTEM LEVEL: LONGER-TERM SHIFTS

- **Policy review for male inclusion:** Audit policies like paternity leave, flexible working and return-to-work processes to ensure they actively support men's wellbeing. Include mental health in job by design as opposed to providing reactive support.
- **Embed in leadership development:** Make mental health part of leadership standards. Train leaders to recognise male-specific barriers to help-seeking and model psychologically safe behaviours.
- **Challenge cultural norms over time:** Build in education and discussion across the organisation to surface and address restrictive masculine norms. Move beyond an individual focus towards team and organisational culture.
- **Track what matters:** Introduce clear metrics to monitor men's access, engagement and outcomes in wellbeing offers. Use gender-disaggregated data to adapt and improve delivery.

# PITFALLS TO AVOID

Even well-intentioned mental health initiatives can falter or backfire if not carefully implemented. Understanding common pitfalls allows you to design more effective programmes that avoid potential unintended consequences and resistance. Here are some key mistakes to avoid when developing men's mental health initiatives in your organisation.

## ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACHES

Men are not a monolithic group. Programmes that ignore diversity among men (age, race, sexuality, cultural background) will inevitably miss the mark for many. Different men connect with different messaging and interventions.

**Solution:** Develop multiple pathways to support and varied communication strategies to reach different segments of your male workforce.

## ONE-OFF INITIATIVES

Single events or awareness days create momentary interest but evidence shows that they rarely lead to sustained behaviour change or cultural shifts and can lead to initiative fatigue. Mental health requires consistent, ongoing attention.

**Solution:** Develop a coordinated, year-round strategy with regular touch points rather than isolated campaigns.

## REINFORCING HARMFUL STEREOTYPES

Some approaches inadvertently reinforce rigid masculine norms or stigmatising attitudes by using language such as "man up about mental health" or exclusively focusing on traditionally masculine activities (e.g. sport).

**Solution:** Balance using language that resonates with men while gradually expanding conceptions of masculinity and wellbeing.

## LACK OF MEASUREMENT

Without proper metrics, organisations can't determine if their initiatives are making a difference. Anecdotal evidence alone is insufficient for refining and justifying continued investment.

**Solution:** Establish baseline measurements and track both implementation and impact metrics over time.

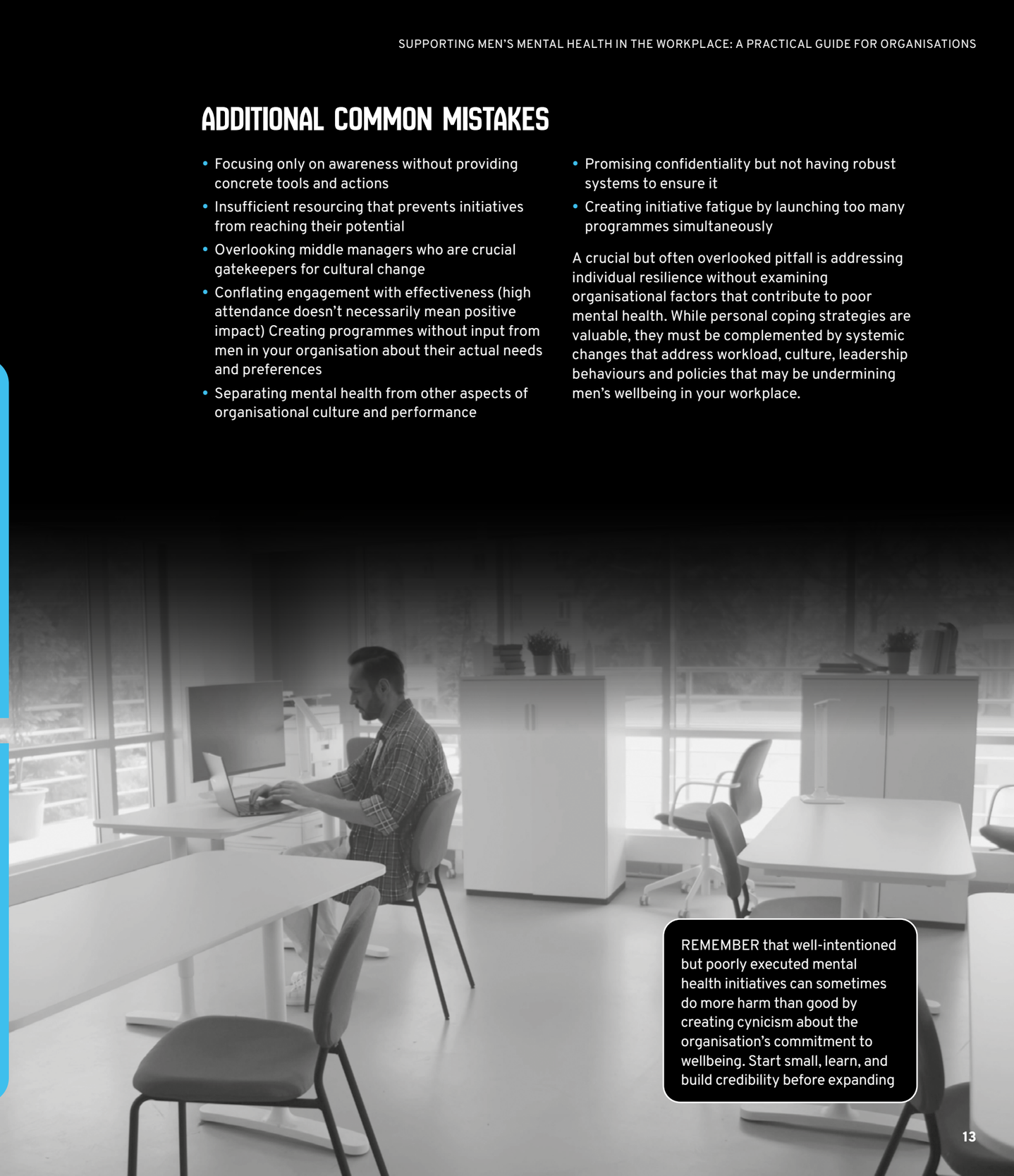




## ADDITIONAL COMMON MISTAKES

- Focusing only on awareness without providing concrete tools and actions
- Insufficient resourcing that prevents initiatives from reaching their potential
- Overlooking middle managers who are crucial gatekeepers for cultural change
- Conflating engagement with effectiveness (high attendance doesn't necessarily mean positive impact) Creating programmes without input from men in your organisation about their actual needs and preferences
- Separating mental health from other aspects of organisational culture and performance
- Promising confidentiality but not having robust systems to ensure it
- Creating initiative fatigue by launching too many programmes simultaneously

A crucial but often overlooked pitfall is addressing individual resilience without examining organisational factors that contribute to poor mental health. While personal coping strategies are valuable, they must be complemented by systemic changes that address workload, culture, leadership behaviours and policies that may be undermining men's wellbeing in your workplace.



REMEMBER that well-intentioned but poorly executed mental health initiatives can sometimes do more harm than good by creating cynicism about the organisation's commitment to wellbeing. Start small, learn, and build credibility before expanding

# WORKING WITH MEN IN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

For clinicians and wellbeing practitioners, understanding and adapting approaches when working with men is crucial for effective mental health support. Here are some practical tips to foster engagement and positive outcomes.

- **Use straightforward language**
  Avoid clinical jargon. Use everyday terms men relate to like pressure, stress, or feeling off-track.
- **Make goals clear and practical**
  Collaboratively set concrete goals. Focus on what the man wants to change or improve, not abstract outcomes.
- **Normalise, don't pathologise**
  Acknowledge distress without medicalising it. Use language that reinforces competence and control.
- **Start with action, not emotion**
  Begin with doing structured tasks, behavioural routines, or problem-solving then allow emotion to surface naturally.
- **Lean into strengths**
  Reframe help-seeking as taking responsibility or improving performance. Link support to values like mastery, accountability or showing up for others.
- **Build rapport with realness**
  Use humour, shared interests or informal conversation to build trust. Be human, not clinical.
- **Design for flexibility**
  Offer low-commitment entry points. Drop-ins, brief sessions, or task-based check-ins lower the threshold for engagement.
- **Train for gender responsiveness**
  Equip staff to recognise how masculinity norms affect engagement. Reflect on your own assumptions and adapt accordingly.
- **Use activities to open conversation**
  Embed conversations within shared tasks or movement. Side-by-side is often easier than face-to-face.
- **Follow up without pressure**
  If a session is missed, check in informally. Avoid punitive framing, show that the door is always open.



# SPOTTING THE SIGNS: WHAT DISTRESS CAN LOOK LIKE IN MEN

Men often express emotional distress differently to women. Without a clear understanding of these patterns, signs can be missed by managers, colleagues, and men themselves. Improving mental health literacy across your organisation is key to earlier support and prevention.

## COMMON SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN MEN MAY INCLUDE:

- **Irritability or anger** – frustration may be directed outward, especially under pressure
- **Withdrawal or silence** – men may 'go quiet' or pull away from team interactions
- **Overworking or presenteeism** – coping may involve working long hours or staying busy
- **Risk-taking or substance use** – increased drinking, gambling, or other behaviours
- **Fatigue or loss of focus** – difficulty concentrating, appearing tired or flat
- **Changes in routine** – altered punctuality, disengagement, or uncharacteristic behaviour

These signs are often misinterpreted as performance issues, not emotional distress — particularly in high-pressure, male-dominated environments. Normalising these presentations as valid expressions of mental load helps men and their colleagues identify when something might be wrong.

### PRACTICAL TIP: USE THE ALEC MODEL

The ALEC framework (https://conversations.movember.com/en/ALEC/) offers a simple way to open supportive conversations:

- **A**sk – Start by asking how he's doing
- **L**isten – give his response your full attention without judgment or trying to fix
- **E**ncourage action – help him develop next steps that may improve how he feels
- **C**heck in – follow up and continue to check in

Instead of *"How are you feeling?"*, try:
*"You've seemed pretty flat lately… you OK?"*
or
*"Noticed you've been working through lunch a lot lately, just wanted to check in."*

Training managers and wellbeing leads in male-specific signs and conversation tools like ALEC creates more touchpoints for early intervention, before issues escalate.

## LIFE TRANSITIONS, FAMILY PRESSURES AND FINANCIAL STRESS

Some of the most common triggers for poor mental health in men happen outside of work, but spill over into how men show up in the workplace. Family pressures, financial stress, and key transitions can be destabilising, particularly when support is absent or poorly timed.

### HIGH-IMPACT TRANSITIONS INCLUDE:

- **Becoming a father** – new routines, identity shifts, and pressure to 'cope' can affect mental health, even if unspoken
- **Relationship breakdown** – separation and divorce often trigger financial strain, disrupted routines and isolation
- **Caring responsibilities** – men may take on new caregiving roles, sometimes without visibility or support
- **Redundancy or retirement** – for many men, work is closely tied to identity and purpose; stepping away can bring anxiety or low mood
- **Financial stress** – debt, insecurity or the rising cost of living are significant sources of strain, especially for men who see financial provision as part of their role

These moments often go unspoken, especially where masculine norms discourage admitting difficulty. But they present crucial opportunities for employers to offer timely and relevant support.

### WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO:

- **Normalise support at life stage flashpoints** – create space for informal or peer-based conversations about common transitions
- **Promote uptake of support services** – ensure line managers are aware of EAPs, debt advice, legal help, or parental support offers
- **Offer planning sessions tailored to men** – provide short, practical prep sessions for transitions like retirement or fatherhood. These may be male-specific and offer space to explore practical and emotional challenges from a male perspective
- **Embed flexibility** – flexible working arrangements, phased returns, or access to financial wellbeing tools should be made available and visible
- **Address financial health directly** – Run short sessions or share resources on budgeting, managing change, or debt advice — particularly during periods of economic pressure

Acknowledging these transitions as legitimate mental health flashpoints, and designing support that men recognise as relevant, increases the chance men will use it.

# EMPLOYEE RESOURCE: 5 EVERYDAY HABITS FOR MEN'S MENTAL FITNESS

This section provides an employee resource for direct use with staff. It sets out five everyday habits from the Performance Habits programme, grounded in behavioural activation, to help men strengthen their mental fitness. The habits are practical, straightforward, and designed for high-pressure work environments where time and energy may be limited.

## WHY THESE HABITS WORK

**These aren't random tips – they're grounded in BA, a proven approach for lifting mood and breaking cycles of stress and burnout by changing what you do, not just how you think. The principles are straightforward:**

1. **What you do shapes how you feel**
2. **Waiting for motivation doesn't work – action sparks it**
3. **Small steps create momentum you can build on**
4. **Making a plan keeps you going when willpower fades**
5. **Avoidance can ease stress now but keeps you stuck later**





## FIVE HABITS TO START NOW **Pick one and start today.**

### 1 MAP YOUR WEEK

**WHY:** You can't change what you don't notice. Seeing what lifts or drains you makes it easier to schedule more good stuff in.

**HOW:** For 3 to 4 days, use a notepad or notes app to write down your main activities. Rate each from 1 (drains me) to 5 (boosts me).

**EXAMPLE:** Skipped lunch = 1. Coffee with a friend = 4. Spot the patterns, then plan more 4s and 5s into your week.

### 2 LOCK IN ONE POSITIVE ACTIVITY

**WHY:** Specific plans work better than vague intentions. Even one scheduled activity can bring structure and energy.

**HOW:** Pick something realistic and put it in your calendar. Commit to it.

**EXAMPLE:** "Walk the dog after dinner Monday and Thursday" or "kick a ball around with the kids after work on Tuesday."

### 3 STICK TO YOUR PLAN ON LOW MOOD DAYS

**WHY:** Mood follows actions. If you wait to feel better first, you stay stuck.

**HOW:** On low days, just start. Completion isn't the goal – getting going is.

**EXAMPLE:** Planned to cook? Chop an onion. Planned to go to the gym? Grab your workout gear and drive there. Momentum kicks in once you move.

### 4 BREAK ONE JOB INTO STEPS

**WHY:** Big jobs can look like mountains. Small steps get you moving.

**HOW:** Pick a task you've been dodging. Break it down to the tiniest first step and do it today.

**EXAMPLE:** Garage a mess? Step 1 = chuck empty boxes in recycling. Emails piling up? Step 1 = reply to one message.

### 5 PLAN FOR PRESSURE POINTS

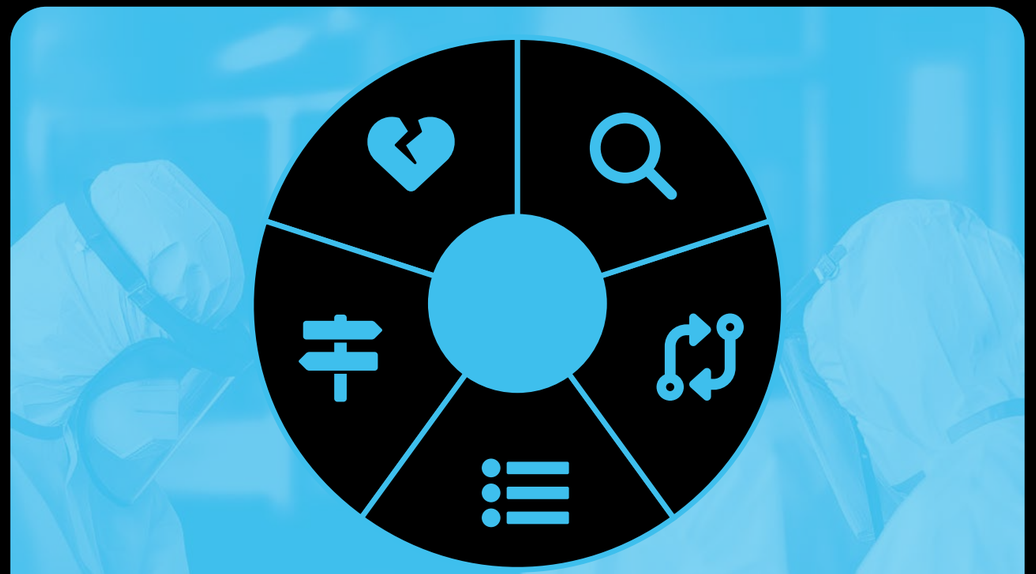
**WHY:** Stress scrambles your thinking. Having a default plan keeps you steady.

**HOW:** Think ahead to a likely flashpoint. Plan two helpful actions in advance.

**EXAMPLE:** Got a brutal week ahead? Plan "5-min break every hour" and "call a friend Friday after work." No thinking needed when you're in it.

# SIGNPOSTING AND FUTURE SUPPORT

Even the most comprehensive workplace strategy cannot address all men's mental health needs. Organisations must be prepared to connect men with appropriate external resources when necessary, especially for clinical mental health concerns. This section provides guidance on effective signposting and building sustainable support systems that complement your internal initiatives.



**IDENTIFY RESOURCES**

Research and verify appropriate external support services, ensuring they have expertise in men's mental health specifically

**ESTABLISH PATHWAYS**

Create clear, simple processes for connecting men to appropriate resources when needed

**REVIEW AND UPDATE**

Regularly review effectiveness of signposting systems and update resource lists as services change

**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**

Develop connections with external providers to facilitate warm referrals rather than cold handoffs

**CREATE RESOURCE LISTS**

Develop comprehensive, regularly updated lists of support services categorised by need and accessibility





## ESSENTIAL EXTERNAL RESOURCES

| RESOURCE | NEED | ACTION |
|---|---|---|
| **CRISIS SUPPORT LINES** | Immediate risk of harm, suicidal thoughts, acute distress. | Make numbers visible in multiple locations; include in email signatures. |
| **MEN-SPECIFIC SERVICES** | Issues particularly affecting men (fatherhood, relationship concerns). | Research local services with expertise in men's mental health. |
| **PRIMARY HEALTHCARE** | Clinical symptoms, medication needs, physical health concerns. | Provide guidance on discussing mental health with healthcare providers. |
| **DIGITAL RESOURCES** | Self-directed support, after-hours access, preference for anonymity. | Curate a list of evidence-based apps and online programmes. |
| **SPECIALISED SUPPORT** | Substance use, gambling, anger management, trauma. | Build relationships with specialised providers for warm referrals. |

## CREATING EFFECTIVE SIGNPOSTING SYSTEMS

### MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

Ensure information is available through multiple channels (intranet, physical materials, manager toolkits) and is accessible without having to publicly identify as seeking help. Consider how men access information differently– some prefer digital resources, others face-to-face guidance.

### KEEP IT CURRENT

Assign responsibility for regularly reviewing and updating resource lists. Nothing undermines confidence more than outdated or inaccurate information when someone reaches out for help. Establish a quarterly review process with clear ownership.

### CREATE CLEAR PATHWAYS

Develop simple decision trees or guidance documents that help men and managers determine which resources are appropriate for different situations and how to access them. Visual flowcharts can be particularly effective for navigating complex support systems.

### BUILD SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

For long-term success, organisations should focus on developing sustainable systems rather than relying on the passion of individual champions. Integrate men's mental fitness into regular processes, create knowledge transfer mechanisms, build community connections, schedule regular reviews and implement succession planning for mental health champions.

**REMEMBER** that supporting men's mental health is an ongoing journey rather than a destination. As societal attitudes toward masculinity and mental health continue to evolve, so too should your organisational approach. The most effective programmes remain flexible, responsive to feedback and continuously improving.

# GETTING STARTED

Improving men's mental fitness at work doesn't require reinventing the wheel. The most effective organisations start small, build from what's already working, and crucially, involve men directly in shaping what comes next. These lessons reflect what we've learned from research and real-world implementation across sectors:

### 1 START WHERE YOU ARE

Don't over engineer. Embed men's mental health into what already exists, e.g. onboarding, team meetings, leadership programmes or health and safety briefings. This keeps change practical, familiar and easier to sustain.

### 2 INVOLVE MEN IN THE DESIGN

Ask before acting. Use focus groups, short surveys or informal conversations to understand what matters to men in your workplace. Co-designed programmes are more likely to hit the mark and avoid reinforcing unhelpful assumptions.

### 3 COMMUNICATE PURPOSEFULLY

Language matters. Men are more likely to engage when messaging is clear, non-clinical, and grounded in values they relate to, such as performance, autonomy, responsibility and getting the job done. Use trusted messengers, speak plainly, and avoid over promising.

### 4 BUILD IN FEEDBACK AND MEASUREMENT EARLY

Start tracking from day one. Use simple measures: who's engaging, what's being used and how people are responding. Combine basic data with regular check-ins or short feedback loops to shape improvement over time.

### 5 SHARE LEARNING

Capture and pass on what works and what doesn't. Create space to document lessons so that learning isn't lost when people move on. This builds long-term momentum and helps embed men's mental fitness into organisational memory.

## A FINAL WORD

You don't need to get it perfect. You need to get it moving.
Start with what's most likely to resonate in your context. Focus on action, measure what matters, and build from there. Sustained cultural change takes time, but even small shifts can have a big impact.

By taking deliberate steps to address the specific barriers men face, your organisation can improve wellbeing, reduce risk and create a culture where more men stay well and seek support early.

*"The most successful men's mental fitness initiatives don't try to fix men – they create environments where men can thrive."*

PROFESSOR PAUL GALDAS





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