

Men with Depression - “It takes courage to ask for help”

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Being a man in the 21st Century is no easy task. Demands and expectations have changed dramatically, and the way we live now is vastly different to our grandparents' generation. Technology, wealth and social change have brought about a new freedom. Our lifestyles are varied and men and women are redefining who they are and creating new ways of relating to one another. For many men, this has created some confusion regarding what a man “should” be.

There are many contradictory messages about masculinity and advice our grandfathers gave their grandsons about manhood might seem out of place in today's modern world.

Although surrounded by health and leisure opportunities that enhance health and well-being, men seem reluctant to take advantage of the benefits. Medical practitioners know from clinical experience that men are far less likely to visit a GP than women. Men also avoid regular visits to the dentist. Obesity amongst men is a spiralling problem. And men are far less likely than women to protect their skin by slapping on sunscreen and wearing a hat.

Step into the private practice of a psychiatrist or psychologist and you will predominately see women in the waiting room. Women tend to seek help and men tend not to.

It is therefore not surprising that women are more frequently diagnosed with depression and yet it is men who die from suicide at least two to four times more often than women.

For many men, depression is viewed as a

weakness and their solution is to try and deal with it on their own. Instead of acknowledging how they feel and asking for help, men are more likely to mask their feelings and behave in ways that divert attention from their depression. It is not uncommon for men to attempt to hide how they really feel from the people who matter most to them, such as close family, friends, and colleagues.

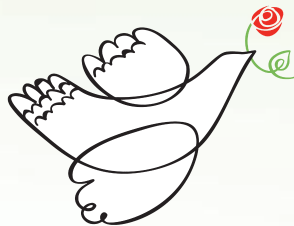
What to look for when a man may be depressed -

- ◆ Working long hours and always feeling tired
 - ◆ Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
 - ◆ Somatic forms of distress like headaches and digestive problems
 - ◆ Chronic pain
 - ◆ Risk-taking behaviours
 - ◆ Social isolation
 - ◆ Irritability, aggression and violence
 - ◆ Sexual misconduct and promiscuity
- When we recognise that depression underlies our patient's difficulties he may not be receptive

to the treatments offered. These suggestions may help you steer him towards acceptance of the problem and treatment:

- ◆ Acknowledge that being told you are depressed is difficult for most men to handle
- ◆ Normalise his response and tell him it is understandable that he has become depressed given the pressures he has been under
- ◆ Help him to identify what would happen with his job, relationship and family if he does not accept help for his depression
- ◆ Let him know that it does take courage to accept help and that he can take control of his depression with the right help
- ◆ Provide written information on depression and website links
- ◆ Refer appropriately to other services and health providers that can help

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in the US has a website specifically for men with depression titled - Real Men Real Depression. An Australian based website for information about depression is Beyond Blue. When we next see a man with depression, remember to let him know that “It takes courage to ask for help.”



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- **A full range of specialists** including Consultant Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologists, Mental Health Nurses and other Mental Health Professionals have all worked together to develop this new evidence-based service.
- **The 31-bed inpatient unit** in the Subiaco medical precinct will finish refurbishment in October 2006.

We look forward to working with you in providing treatment for your patients and their families in a safe, caring, understanding and supportive environment.

For further information please contact Ms Maggie O'Dea, Director of Administration, at The Marian Centre, West Perth
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