

Tip sheet – for managers

Men's mental health at work

Despite huge progress in the gender equality movement and work towards reducing stigmas, men still often face pressures to appear 'invulnerable', often leading to unspoken struggles that can impact performance, relationships and overall wellbeing.

Work in particular forms a large part of these pressures, with many men still acting as the main breadwinner of their family or keeping up with expectations. That's why it's so important for organisations to recognise, react to and prevent (where possible) the challenges men face before they become a problem.

A note on terminology

This tip sheet uses the terms 'men' and 'male' and is intended to include all people who identify as men.



Mental health at work

In a 2024 survey by EMA and nib¹, 55% of employees expressed concerns about their mental health, and 52% worried about burnout. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated these challenges, with 50% of employees feeling its direct impact on their mental health.

When it comes to men, about 1 in 5 reported poor mental wellbeing in 2023, and approximately 1 in 8 will experience severe depression in their lifetime. Men are also 3 times more likely than women to die by suicide, highlighting the urgent need to address male mental health issues.²

Where do these issues come from?

Mental health can be impacted by a number of factors, with some originating at work and some being influences from home or the community. A few possible causes could be:

- pressure to provide financially
- job insecurity
- overly-long hours
- poor communication with others
- stress at work (e.g. unbalanced workload)
- harassment or bullying
- inadequate training/preparation.

What does this look like at work?

Research has shown that men are often less likely to open up about mental health issues at work, which can manifest in a number of ways, such as:

- withdrawal
- irritability
- over-investment
- fatigue
- isolation
- aggression
- loss of productivity.

¹ <https://www.nib.co.nz/news-and-media/news-details/mental-health-impacts-and-burnout-concerns-rise-due-to-cost-of-living>

² <https://www.health.govt.nz/publications/annual-update-of-key-results-202324-new-zealand-health-survey>
<https://www.pathways.co.nz/stories/mens-mental-wellbeing>

Remember, if you see that fewer men are accessing your EAP counselling service or speaking directly to you about issues, this does not necessarily mean that there are no concerns. Instead, the situation may require a different approach.

How workplaces can help

Encouraging more men to seek support begins with a workplace that is psychologically safe. When employees feel safe to express concerns, this can help to ease any issues before they grow and create a healthier workplace overall. Without this sense of safety, teams report higher rates of bullying and turnover.

So how do we build a workplace that is safe, supportive and thriving?

Lead by example

Normalise discussions around mental health by being open with employees and having honest conversations about wellbeing. This is especially valuable for male employees when their male managers make this connection, as it helps to break stigmas around not sharing emotions with other men.

Provide training to managers

While casual discussions are great, managers also need to recognise those signs of struggle in the first place and understand how to appropriately escalate where needed.

Harness your workplace wellbeing (EAP) service

Regularly remind employees that Vitae's service is there for free, confidential support. Placing posters in common areas and sending out reminders during Mental Health Awareness

Week, periods of stress or after a traumatic event can help men find the help they need sooner rather than later.

Create confidential channels for conversation

Encourage safe spaces online and in person for employees to directly discuss their mental health, work concerns and other issues with each other. Having male-specific groups can allow men to share with each other in a way they might not otherwise.

Promote initiatives like Movember

Movember is a yearly event that raises awareness and funding in support of men's physical and mental health. Beginning in Australia in 2003 and taking place across the month of November, the project has since spread to Aotearoa and beyond.

By participating in Movember (either by growing a moustache if you can, or taking part in another activity) you show your commitment to men's health at work.

This is also a great opportunity for team bonding, as promotions for the event around the office and/or organised fundraising efforts can bring people together and form new connections.



Engaging with men in practical conversations to offer support and raise awareness is a vital part of managing a healthy, happy workplace.

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