



Health & Wellbeing

June / 2021



The CAN DO approach to mental wellbeing

Let's Talk About Men!

Everybody's mental health has been challenged by the lockdowns and insecurities of the last 15/16 months and unfortunately it's not over yet. Hopefully we are emerging from what we hope will be the worst of the pandemic, but questions, concerns and anxieties remain. We all need to spend more time being aware of our health and mental health, but historically this has been more difficult for men to do. There seems to be a stigma around men talking about and being open about their health issues and mental health issues. *This needs to change.*

If we're coming out of Covid (hopefully), why does mental health matter?

Even before the pandemic, men's mental health was a cause for concern. There is a grave disparity in the high number of men who die from suicide and the low number of men who seek treatment for depression, anxiety and other mental health challenges. During the pandemic, children and young people have been disproportionately affected by lockdowns. There has also been a considerable rise in youth unemployment, while home-schooling has hit boys and young men at school and university, especially from BAME backgrounds. Particular groups of male-dominated workforces have suffered disproportionately in terms of income and some (taxi drivers, for example) have received little support from government to compensate for this loss. Men are more likely to be in the sort of jobs that cannot easily be done from home with the result that many male-dominated workforces are also at greater risk from Covid-19. (<https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/mhw>)

Men's Health Week for 2021 is **14th - 21st June** and this year's theme is: **how do we move forward?**

The CAN DO Challenge

There are five days of the week and five ways to wellbeing. The idea is focusing around calling on everyone to choose a different way to wellbeing to try each day of Men's Health Week. At the week-end, pick your favourites and do them again!

The five ways to wellbeing are five things we can all do that are scientifically-proven to help us feel better. For the **CAN DO Challenge**. This year's Men's Mental Health Week is calling on everyone to choose a different way to wellbeing to try each day of Men's Health Week.

Every day, a different way

The five ways are:

Connect - connect with other people (eg. call an old friend you haven't since before lockdown) #connectmonday

(Be) Active - move your body (eg. go for a run/walk/swim/dance/etc) #activetuesday

Notice - take notice of the environment around you (eg. turn off your phone for an hour) #noticewednesday

Discover - learn something new (eg. read a book you haven't read before) #discoverthursday

Offer (or give) - do something for someone else (eg. volunteer for a local community group) #offerfriday

For Men's Health Week 2021, www.menshealthforum.org.uk are asking as many people as possible to try the CAN DO Challenge. Let them know what you're doing by sharing on social media etc. Use the hashtags shown above and #menshealthweek

You **CAN DO** it by yourself. Or with friends. **CONNECT** Monday is the perfect day to round up your friends for the rest of the week.

You **CAN DO** it for fun. Or you **CAN DO** it to fund raise. Support your favourite charity.

EMOTIONS HAVE NO GENDER
DON'T LOCK YOURS IN THE DARK

"The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively."

- Bob Marley



www.2aspire.org.uk
01522 555795

How to Encourage Healthy Emotional Development in Boys



To change the stigma we need to start young

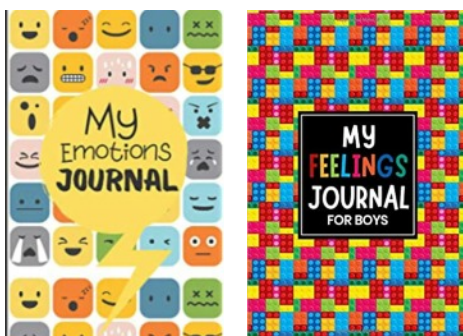
"Real men don't cry" is part of a larger lie about men and emotions, which could inhibit healthy emotional development in our boys. All too often, boys learn that the ideal man is the strong, silent type. Weak men are "girly men."

It has been said that many boys have exactly two speeds when it comes to emotion: They are "okay," or they are "angry." Many parents are shocked at how quickly their sons become belligerent, but it should come as no surprise.

Anger is culturally acceptable for boys (and men) and creates its own set of problems. Research shows that most males struggle not only to express, but to identify their emotions. If you ask most men what they are feeling, you are likely to hear what they are thinking instead. Men (and their sons) often find it difficult to tell the difference.

Boys are healthier and happier when they have solid emotional resources and access to all of the varied and intricate parts of themselves. How can parents teach boys to have a rich emotional life, deep connections to others and still be full members in the society of men?

To build emotional literacy in our boys, we should start by teaching our sons an emotional vocabulary. From infancy, speak with a rich and varied emotional vocabulary. Babies are not born with words for their feelings; they must be taught. Say things like, "You look sad" or "You must feel disappointed" without rescuing or coddling them. Talking about our own feelings without making our boy's responsible for them. For example saying things like, "I felt scared; did you?" to your boy, you give him permission to feel and to express his own emotions.



Some top tips for helping to develop boys emotional literacy

Listen

Be sure to listen to your son. Then listen some more. One of the best ways to encourage expression is simply to listen without judgment. Show empathy; don't rush to offer solutions. Give your son time to explore his emotions.

Remember, you don't have to agree with your son's feelings to listen, nor do you have to accept inappropriate behaviour. Listening well is the first step to creating connection and solving problems together.

Let Him Express Himself

In addition to listening and teaching your son an emotional vocabulary, make room for your son to be himself. Avoid telling your son what he should or should not feel; give him room to explore his strengths and weaknesses in a safe environment. When your son doesn't need to fear shame or rejection, he can express his emotions, needs and dreams openly.

Remembering Your Role

Importantly, you should recognise that the outside world will "toughen up" your boy; your job is to nurture and encourage him. All boys inevitably learn the hard lessons about being a "real man." You can best help your son by nurturing his heart and spirit and providing compassion when the world hurts him.

Because boys are sometimes prone to anger and aggression, it is wise to model being calm and respectful when dealing with problems. Take a cool-off if you must, but avoid yelling and anger, and remember that emotions are not mysterious forces that threaten to overwhelm us; they are part of what makes us most human.

When you can teach your boy to understand and express his feelings respectfully and clearly, you are helping him take a giant step toward true manhood.

Ideas taken from:

<https://www.familyeducation.com/life/social-emotional-development/raising-boys-teaching-emotional-vocabulary>

"Shout out to all the men going through a lot, with no one to turn to, because this world wrongly taught our men to mask their emotion & that strong means silent." Alex Myles