

HOPE

**Empowering men
to understand
and improve
their mental
health.**

Top Five Self-Help Ways to Deal With Stress

- Get out of the immediately stressful situation (even for a few moments) to give yourself space to think about how to tackle the problem. Go for a quick walk to clear your head.
- Plan regular time out from your everyday routine, and build at least 30 minutes of physical activity into your daily routine.
- Get enough sleep, but avoid sleeping medication.
- Watch what you eat, drink and do. Avoid alcohol, smoking, junk food, caffeine and sugary drinks. Drink plenty of water.
- Don't go it alone. Find someone to talk to about what you're going through and learn some simple relaxation techniques.

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Top Five Statistics

- Northern Ireland has the highest rate of suicide in the UK (Office for National Statistics 2017)
- There were 297 deaths from suicide in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area in 2016.
- Males account for approximately three quarters of all suicides (74%).
- In Northern Ireland a total of 221 men and 76 women died by suicide in 2016, the youngest was a male aged under 15.
- Men in north Belfast, aged between 30 to 34, are most at risk with the area the worst affected since 2013.

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Top Five Stressors for Men

- Changing roles and expectations
- Finances / money / debt
- Unrealistic work-related pressures, long hours
- Relationship breakdown
- Bereavement

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Top Signs of Stress in Men

- Not sleeping properly (especially waking early and not getting back to sleep) / tiredness.
- Eating / drinking / smoking / having sex more or less than normal.
- Poor memory / forgetfulness.
- Lack of concentration and focus.
- Feeling tense / anxious / useless moody / off-hand.

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Top Five Things to Do When Trying to Engage Men. Do...

Self-reflect. Ask yourself these questions about engaging with men. Why do I want to do this? Is it needed? Who can help and support me? What benefit will it have?

Think simple, small and practical. Keep ideas simple and manageable with clear goals. Many men respond better to programmes which are task-orientated and which meet a real need.

Use empathy to identify the killer hook. Put yourself in the man's shoes and see the world through his eyes. This will help with mapping out a realistic action plan and way forward.

Focus on building relationships. Posters and fliers will let men know when something is happening, but are unlikely - on their own - to get them to come along. Use good communication and networking to actively promote the project and recruit participants.

Create and sustain a safe, friendly and welcoming environment. Many men won't participate because they dislike being an outsider. Create a 'male-friendly', inclusive environment where participants feel comfortable and part of the group.

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Top Five Don'ts When Trying to Engage Men. Don't...

See men as a problem. Men have unique and individual needs and respond best to those who want to work with them rather than 'fix' them.

Make the event / programme inaccessible from the start. Is the venue easy to get to? Will the session be held in a familiar setting rather than a threatening one? Is the location seen as 'neutral'? Does the time clash with other obvious attractions for men? Is there car parking nearby and/or public transport access? Consider bringing the programme to them at a time that meets their needs?

Communicate badly. Don't use jargon. Use visual images (infographics or short film clips) rather than lots of text. Promote messages which encourage men to associate help-seeking with being strong rather than a sign of weakness.

Exclude men's input. Consult with men before, during and after the programme and, when possible, include their suggestions. Regularly check with the participants to make sure that it's going the way they wish it to - don't second guess their opinions.

Worry about the sex of the facilitator. A good group facilitator is knowledgeable, listens well, creates a safe environment and promotes inclusiveness but doesn't necessarily have to be a man. However, having other males around may also help to normalise the experience for some men.

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Top Five Sources of Support

- Your own **GP** can advise about any aspect of your mental or physical health. See How to talk to your GP about your mental health (Mental Health Foundation)
- **Lifeline** is the Northern Ireland crisis response helpline service for people who are experiencing distress or despair and counsellors are available **24 hours a day, seven days a week** to listen and help. Telephone **0808 808 8000** free
- **The Samaritans** offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal. Telephone **116 123** free
- **Men's Action Network** supports and promotes the Health and Well-being of men in the North West of Ireland" by offering advice, counselling and support in a range of issues such as Men's Health Education and Health Promotion, Telephone: **028 7137 7777** or visit **www.man-ni.org**
- **Minding Your Head** is a website with lots of useful information about how to protect your mental health. It also contains information about local services that can offer help and support **www.mindingyourhead.info**