

emale

improving men's health & wellbeing
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international
MEN'S DAY

First Nations men tackling mental health stigma

Forbes hasn't lived a long life but he's already seen many men lost to suicide. Husbands and brothers, fathers and friends. More often than not, young men who should have had long lives. Sometimes, he wonders if he could have done more. "How come I didn't say anything?" he said. "How come I didn't pick it up?"

The Tangentyere Men's Family Safety Group has created a series of videos highlighting mental health. Hidden within the walls of Aboriginal town camps in Mparntwe — Alice Springs — is an all-too-silent crisis. But a group of men in these communities is speaking up to stop it.

"We've got to break that barrier and stereotype and say it's alright to cry, it's alright to reach out, it's alright to say, 'I need help'," Chris said. "It's just about starting the conversation."

Chris is the coordinator of the Tangentyere Men's Family Safety Group — town camp leaders focused on improving safety and wellbeing in their communities. Right now, male suicide is one of the biggest issues. So the men have worked together to create videos featuring their personal mental health stories, in an effort to encourage others to break the silence. The project has been funded by the Northern Territory government, and created in conjunction with the Mental Health Association of Central Australia. And a few weeks ago, as part of Mental Health Week in the Northern Territory, it was released to the public.

Chris said it was a highly vulnerable experience. "From a young age, as men we get told to hide our emotions. But it's that stereotype that we need to break down as a whole community," he said.

"You're not any less of a man. If anything, it makes you more of a man for showing your emotions."

Mparntwe town camps aren't the only First Nations communities rocked by this issue. Across the nation, Indigenous men are dying by suicide at twice the rate of non-Indigenous men. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Indigenous males, behind heart disease. Evidence shows this is due to a complex range of interrelated factors. These include socioeconomic disadvantage, transgenerational trauma from colonisation and poorer overall health outcomes. High rates of incarceration, domestic violence and alcohol and drug abuse are also added risk factors.

First Nations men aged 25 to 34 are particularly at risk, dying by suicide at three times the rate of non-Indigenous men. For young men like Graham Malbunka, this is more than just statistics. This is real life. "I grew up in the rough life, you know. No shirt, no shoes, no nothing. I was sniffing petrol at the age of five," he said. At first, speaking up about his mental health struggles seemed too big a barrier to conquer. "But I overcame my fear and started talking out to people," he said.

"And they were there to help me."

Patrick Nandy has been just one of those community leaders helping younger men like Graham. He's had his own battle with mental illness — when his wife died, he didn't know if he wanted to keep living. "I didn't want to talk to anyone, not even my brothers, not even my mum and dad," he said.

"I just went into my room and just sat there and cried." He said it was the love of his family that brought him back from the brink. And now, he wants to do the same for others. "I've got to stand up and say something about the suicide," he said. "Because too many young people are dying."

Click below to watch video.



Gender differences and mental wellbeing

Most people are familiar with the five senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste), but not everyone knows that we have an additional sense called interoception. This is the sense of our body's internal state. It helps us feel and interpret internal signals that regulate vital functions in



our body, like hunger, thirst, body temperature and heart rate. Although we don't take much notice of it, it's an extremely important sense as it ensures that every system in the body is working optimally. It does this by alerting us to when our body may be out of balance – such as making us reach for a drink when we feel thirsty or telling us to take our jumper off when we're feeling too hot.

Interoception is also important for our mental health. This is because it contributes to many psychological processes - including decision making, social ability and emotional wellbeing. Disrupted interoception is even reported in many mental health conditions – including depression, anxiety and eating disorders. It may also explain why many mental health conditions share similar symptoms – such as disturbed sleep or fatigue.

Despite how important interoception is to all aspects of our health, little is known about whether men and women differ in how accurately they sense their body's internal signals. So far, studies that have investigated whether cisgender men and women (a person whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex) sense and interpret interoceptive signals from their heart, lungs and stomach differently have found mixed results. Finding out if differences exist is important, as it may improve our understanding of differences in mental and physical health.

Our analysis found that interoception does in fact differ between men and women. Women were significantly less accurate at heart-focused tasks (and to some extent lung-focused tasks) compared with men. These differences do not seem to be explained by other factors – such as how hard participants tried during the task, or physiological differences, such as body weight or blood pressure. Women were less accurate at understanding cardiac signals – such as counting their heartbeat. Though we found significant differences across heartbeat tasks, results for other tasks were less clear. This might be because only a small proportion of studies have looked at lung and stomach perception. It might be too early to tell whether men and women differ in their perception of these signals. Our findings may be important for helping us understand why many common mental health conditions (such as anxiety and depression) are more prevalent in women than men from puberty onward. Several theories have been proposed to explain this – such as genetics, hormones, personality and exposure to stress or childhood adversity. But because we know that interoception is important for wellbeing, it could be possible that differences in interoception may partly explain why more women suffer from anxiety and depression than men. This is because difficulties with interoception can affect many areas, including emotional, social and cognitive function, which are all known risk factors for many mental health conditions.

Knowing the differences in how men and women sense interoceptive signals may also be important for treating mental illness. While new studies suggest improving interoception improves mental health, studies also suggest that men may use interoceptive signals – for example from their heart – more than women when processing their emotions.

Other differences have also been reported, with studies suggesting that women pay more attention to interoceptive signals than men. This could mean that treatments that target or seek to improve interoception may work better for some people, or that different techniques may work better for others. This is something future research will need to investigate.

Source: Jennifer Murphy Lecturer in Psychology, Royal Holloway University of London and Freya Prentice PhD Candidate at Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, UCL

5 Wellness Habits That Slow Down Aging

Staying on top of your overall health and wellness game as you grow older is not a question; it's a necessity. Living a long, healthy life may require more than a few tweaks to your regular routine, but don't stress. We've put together the wellness habits that slow down aging so you don't have to.

1 Do some yoga.

Getting your namaste on is not only relaxing; it can slow down the aging process. Many studies reveal that practicing yoga has a wealth of health benefits, including positively impacting cellular aging, balance, mobility, and mental health, along with warding off cognitive decline. For example, a study published in the journal *Oxidative Medicine and Cellular Longevity* reveals that doing yoga for 12 weeks can slow down cellular aging among healthy individuals.

2 Opt for a Mediterranean diet.

According to *Blue Zones*, a Mediterranean diet can decrease your chance of developing heart disease and tack up to six years onto your life. If you're unfamiliar with this diet, get familiar, because it's a golden key to longevity! The Mediterranean diet is all about olive oil, fresh veggies, whole grains, beans, some fish, and tinier portions of meat and dairy. And research backs up just how great the Mediterranean diet is. According to Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, research shows this particular diet can lengthen your lifespan and promote healthy aging.

3 Maintain and build your muscle mass.

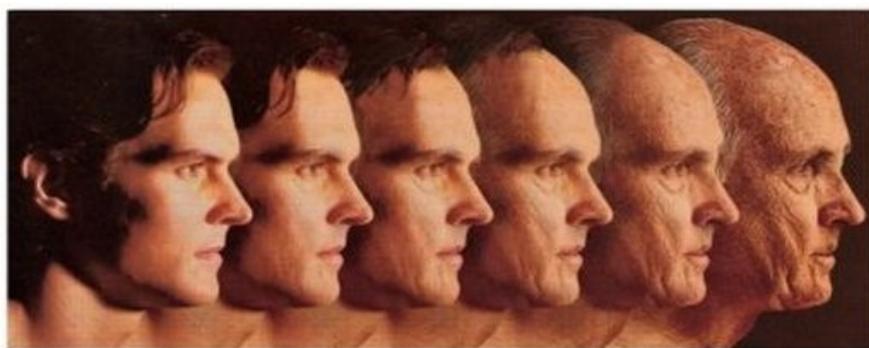
You've likely heard this before, but preserving and building muscle mass as you get older is critical. According to *Harvard Health Publishing*, after you hit the age of 30, you start to lose anywhere from 3% to 5% of lean muscle mass every 10 years. This natural part of your body's aging process is called sarcopenia. What can you do about it? Well, *Landmark* reports consuming protein, getting in strength training (specifically two to three half-hour workouts each week, after speaking with a medical professional), adding more omega-3s to your diet, keeping your vitamin D levels in check, and going on walks can all help preserve muscle mass.

4 Get social!

Getting social is a major part of your health and wellness that shouldn't be overlooked. According to *Mayo Clinic*, socializing helps kick any feelings of loneliness to the curb, along with boosting your cognitive and memory skills, mood, and overall wellness. It can even help extend your life. *Mayo Clinic* psychologist, Dr. Craig Sawchuk, explains, "We are social animals by nature, so we tend to function better when we're in a community and being around others." He says that people who spend much of their time by themselves have a greater chance of feeling depressed and leading an all-around lower quality of life.

5 Get enough solid shut eye

Getting sufficient sleep is imperative to your overall wellness. Some say it's just as important to ensure you stay in good health as a solid workout routine and diet. Not getting enough solid sleep can put you at greater risk of developing disorders or diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, dementia, and stroke. Sleep researcher at the University of Colorado, Dr. Kenneth Wright, Jr., explains, "There are certain repair processes that occur in the body mostly, or most effectively, during sleep. If you don't get enough sleep, those processes are going to be disturbed" (via NIH). **Source: Alexa Mellardo**



International Men's Day November 19



It's International Men's Day (IMD) on Saturday 19 November 2022 and our theme in Australia is "Celebrating Mateship". Our aim is to inspire more men to #MakeTime4Mates.

Mateship is a key feature of Australian national identity and has a particular association with close male friendships. Research shows that close friendships and social connections can promote good health. Our International Men's Day 2022 theme aims to highlight the role mateship plays in helping men live longer, better, healthier lives. In Australian culture, mateship is often viewed as an archetypal masculine value and virtue. So many strengths-based, men's health projects have harnessed this positive, masculine trait. For example, the men's sheds movement, which was born in Australia, prides itself on providing a "safe and busy environment where men can [enjoy] an atmosphere of [old-fashioned mateship](#)".

Meanwhile, [MATES In Construction](#) has been working to prevent suicide in male-dominated industries since 2008. MATES builds on the [Aussie characteristic of mateship](#) by giving workers the tools they need to look out for their mates' mental health. Elsewhere, [AMHF's guide to male-friendly services](#) makes the case that health programs that engage effectively with men, tend to work with masculine strengths such as helping others and [being a good mate](#).

There are lots of different ways to [celebrate International Men's Day](#) in your workplace, community or online. We've identified 15 different ways people can mark IMD in Australia and invite you to pick one, get involved and help us make this year the biggest celebration of International Men's Day yet. IMD is a great opportunity to take part in a global conversation about manhood, masculinity and men's issues by:

1. Highlighting some of the social issues that men and boys face
2. Making a difference for the men and boys in your community
3. Celebrating men and boys in all their diversity
4. Having some serious fun in the process

You can run an event that promotes [our "Celebrating Mateship" theme for 2022](#) or focus on one or more of the six objectives of IMD instead:

- Valuing male role models
- Acknowledging the contribution of men and boys
- Improving male health
- Tackling discrimination and disadvantage
- Fostering positive gender relations
- Making the world a safer place for everyone

Pick a theme or topic that inspires and then decide which one of our 15 ways of celebrating International Men's Day you're going to run with. And remember, while lots of people host an event on the actual day, many people also schedule activities in the run up to the day or even in the week afterwards. See some ways of celebrating International Men's Day [here](#).

Source: Glen Poole, AMHF CEO.

Online Training Workshops



ENGAGING MEN Online Thursday November 17 10.00 am – 1.00 pm

This core Male Health Promotion program equips anyone who wants to work with men with knowledge and skills to work more effectively, with the aim of improving men and boys health, wellbeing, and lives. The program recognises the challenges that men and boys face in today's world of rapid change and provides a space for men and women who work with men and boys to develop health promotion skills and strategies that are made with men in mind. No previous experience or knowledge is required - only a willingness to learn, explore and grow.

WORKING WITH MALE SURVIVORS OF DV & SEXUAL ABUSE TRAINING

Online Thursday November 24 10.00 am – 1.00 pm

This training program is for health, welfare, community workers, workers with men and anyone who wants to gain skills in working with male survivors of DV and sexual abuse. The course is for men and women. It provides information and strategies for working with men affected by violence and presents a model you can use for this work.

\$160 for each training workshop, which is delivered online. Resources sent to you include a copy of the ***Men's health and wellbeing: an a – z guide***.

To register please email me at greg@menshealthservices.net with the name of the Training Workshop you would like to attend, your name, organisation/service details and phone number.

Feel free to contact me for any further information on these Workshops. Mobile 0417772390.



Lowdown on Mindfulness

The Why of Mindfulness...

The nature of the mind is to worry about the past and be anxious about the future. The mind left unattended will generate various types of thoughts: daydreams, memories, emotions, recognition of sensations, and various sensory stimuli.

Mindfulness is important for several reasons:-

#1. Being in the present.

When you are mindful you live in the present. Through correct understanding, the present is known to be free from anxiety and worry.

#2. Allows you to be content.

When you are content, you are not desiring more and hence at peace.

#3. Effective communication.

You can give your full attention to another person, such as your partner or child. Enabling you to share in their happiness or to assist when they are in need.

#4. Rested throughout the day.

You are sapped of energy when the mind is continually running to the past and future. As a result, you generate emotions and adrenal responses that create tension and fatigue in the body.

Mahasi Sayadaw captures it even better... *“Mindfulness frees the mind from those mental states that causes suffering.”*

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is when you are aware of the present moment. You are aware of the thoughts as they arise, exist, and subside. There is no judgment of the thoughts as being good or bad, right or wrong.

With Mindfulness, there is a continual recognition of ‘what is’ in each moment.

Here’s how it works:

- **Focus attention on the now (Eckart Tolle)** — become intensely conscious of the present moment. Create a gap in the thought stream by directing the focus of your attention into the now.
- **Observing thoughts (Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn)** — attend to the stream of thoughts through observation of the thoughts. Allow thoughts to arise and pass.
- **Noting/Labeling (Mahasi Sayadaw)** — label all mental and physical movements in each moment (whether sitting, lying, standing, or walking) for example when breathing, one mentally says when the belly is expanding *“rising rising”* and when the exhaling and the belly deflate *“falling, falling”*.
- **Beware of the breath (Ajahn Chah)** — observe the inhalation and exhalation and don’t change the breath, allow it to flow naturally. Maintain the resolve to stay aware of the breath and have no other agenda.

The modern lifestyle is such that it doesn’t encourage you to be mindful: social media, violent movies, disruptive technologies. As such you need to decide to take ownership and responsibility of your own physical and mental condition if you wish to be content and happy.

The time to be Mindful is now, as tomorrow will never come.



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Contact Greg on **0417 772 390** greg@menshealthservices.net www.menshealthservices.net