Western Cape Government
FOR YOU

lyra wellbeing
Formerly ICAS

What Do You Choose: A Sucker Punch or a Heart-to-Heart?

It's been said that, for many men, getting sucker-punched is a more attractive prospect than talking about their feelings.

According to the World Health Organization, men often struggle with depression and anxiety, and are twice as likely to die by suicide than women. However, they're less likely to get a formal diagnosis, and therefore don't always get the help they need.

Fear of being judged

Despite efforts to encourage individuals to discuss their emotions and their struggles, we know there's still a stigma around poor mental health in many societies.

In 2022, a review of studies dealing with societal stigma around poor mental health was published in the American Journal of Public Health. The results indicated that, because of the stigma, many men were disinclined to seek help for psychological issues. They were also more likely to encounter challenges, and face a greater risk of poor mental health.

Many felt that, even if they do speak out and are honest about their struggles, the people in their lives are either not equipped to help them, or simply don't care enough to do something about it. There's often so much judgement that they won't dare to open up again.

What can be done?

The message needs to change. Men need to know that their loved ones care about them. They need to know that they matter and that what's going on in their mind matters. If you have boys or young men in your life, do the work to change the narrative. Encourage them to share, and make the effort to really listen. Furthermore, healthcare professionals need to be better trained in dealing with men's mental health. We also need better mental health literacy and resources, especially in schools.

If you're a man reading this, remember:

- It's alright not to feel 100% every day. Find someone you trust to whom you can talk, and let out what you've been bottling up.
- If you grew up hearing that men shouldn't cry, let go of the lie. Crying is human, and it's how our body processes and heals from trauma.
- Take care of yourself. Get enough sleep, exercise and healthy food to fuel your body. Spend time in the sunshine (safely) and get outside for fresh air.
- Whatever you do, don't turn to gambling, alcohol or drugs to numb your emotions. If you're struggling with addiction, get help immediately.
- Talking about it isn't a sign of weakness; it's a sign of bravery and maturity.

If you're feeling that you can't get out of a dark place, speak to a professional.

Men's mental health is an issue that needs attention. Men need to feel safe to be open about their mental wellbeing, and understand how to better take care of themselves. By changing the narrative, we can raise the next generation with a more positive and healthier message.

Toll-free: **0800 111 011**
Request a call back: ***134*905#**
Get in touch online: **http://app.icas.health/**
Your company code: **WES007**
Email: **wced@icas.co.za**