

5 Ways We Can Improve Men's Mental Health in Business

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Men's mental health is in crisis worldwide. Statistics show that men account for 70% of suicides worldwide, as described in an article by Rob Whitley, a professor in psychiatry from McGill University in Canada. Despite this alarming fact, men are less likely than women to seek help when experiencing poor mental health. This is due to the fact that there is still a social stigma that makes many men believe that being perceived as vulnerable or seeking help goes against the norms of societal constructions of masculinity.

Interestingly, research by Mind, a UK mental health charity, found that work life is the main source of men's mental health issues. The charity found that one in three men attribute work stress to the ill effects on their mental wellbeing, which is twice as many as women who report this. According to another study conducted by CV Library in 2019, 61% of men surveyed wanted to quit their work as it affected their mental health, compared to only 48.5% of women who said so.

Moreover, the pressure to perform well in business has meant that CEOs and entrepreneurs are disproportionately affected by mental health issues, too, compared to the wider public, according to an article published in Small Business Economics.

Related: Taking Care of Mental Health Is Powerful, Not Weak

When the Priory Group, a mental healthcare facilities provider in the UK, interviewed 1,000 men for a survey on men's mental health, they discovered that although 60% of men have talked

about their mental health with someone at some point in their lives, 40% of men still haven't discussed their mental health issues with close friends, family or even a medical professional. Among these men who have never opened up about their mental health, the majority reported that the underlying reason for it is that they'd learned to deal with it themselves, with the second and third most popular reasons being, "I don't wish to be a burden to anyone" and "I'm too embarrassed."

These findings tell me that there is a way forward, but it requires out-of-the-box thinking. To tackle men's mental health in business, we need to craft solutions that will make men more likely to seek help in their workspaces, without feeling embarrassed about it. Here are five ways we can do this:

1. Bringing awareness to the workplace

One of the first steps to destigmatizing the shame many men face with regard to mental health issues is to normalize the discourse around mental health issues. According to an independent workplace mental health review by Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer conducted in 2017, "the correct way to view mental health is that we all have it and we fluctuate between thriving, struggling and being ill and possibly off work." Bringing the realization that even a seemingly healthy and productive employee or business leader can have underlying mental health issues will lessen the pressures many men face around seeking help.

Through normalizing these discussions via newsletters, group projects and even casual training sessions, a workplace can be an easier space for men to discuss their mental health challenges if the subject matter is actively framed as something that everyone collectively could go through.

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2. Reduce the usage of the term “mental health”

To ensure that mental health services in the workplace are utilized by men, it is vital that we change the language we use to describe the problem in the first place. Using the term “mental health” can be distressing or off-putting for men, according to research, and instead, more specific terms such as “stress” or “burnout” should be used to describe mental health problems.

Men prefer focusing on and talking about problems that are more solvable, so avoiding broader terms when discussing mental health issues can make them open up more. Asking men specific questions relating to work performance could be easier for them to tackle instead of asking more general questions like, “Are you okay?”

3. Encourage lifestyle-based solutions

Men can often feel isolated if they are identified as having a personal problem in their workplace. Instead, greater benefits could be achieved in men’s mental health when mental health solutions are tied to wider lifestyle solutions, creating workplace activities that carry out themes such as sportsmanship, camaraderie and teamwork. Making mental health something that a company can work together to improve will make men’s participation more likely, since the focus is not entirely on them as individuals.

Well-being outings, group mentorships and friendly sporting events could be promoted as activities that could improve the

collective well-being of a workplace and help colleagues work together collaboratively. According to the mental health charity Mind's "Get It Off Your Chest" study, men have a high preference for physical activities when it comes to tackling their mental health.

4. Provide access to online therapy

Research has found that men are more likely to seek help when they can consult a mental health professional, especially when this can be done online, where anonymity can be guaranteed. This approach would also ensure that men would be confident to discuss their mental health struggles without feeling like they're putting their job or position at the company at risk.

Related: [We Need a Real Commitment to Mental Health at Work. Here's How \(and Why\).](#)

5. Create good senior role models

Men are more likely to be empowered to take care of themselves and others when other men in leadership positions are seen to be doing the same. It can be very powerful, for instance, for a male CEO or senior executive to talk to their employees about their own mental health struggles and explain how they work towards their mental well-being. The same could be said about the CEO and entrepreneurial communities, where businesses can work together to ensure that their leaders can work collaboratively and share personal experiences to improve their mental health and well-being together.

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