The Men's Mental Health Playbook

From One Man to Another…

"As therapists, we see the pressure guys carry every day. This guide is so we don't have to keep doing it alone. This is your permission to pause. To reflect. To grow. Let's stop surviving and start healing."
The Men of MASC

Because silence isn't strength. And struggle shouldn't be the norm.

You don't need to be in crisis or hit rock bottom to check in on your mental health. This guide cuts through the noise to help you get real about what you're feeling and what to do about it.

If you're tired, on edge, or pretending you're "fine" then this is for you!

What's Really Going On?

Mental health struggles don't always look the way you expect. It can look like Silence, Overworking. Short temper. Risky behaviour. Or feeling... nothing at all.

Here are 4 of the most common mental health challenges men face, especially those who've been taught to **"**man up, stay tough, and hold it in"**.** Some of these often hide in plain sight!

1. Stress & Burnout: When being strong turns into being stretched too thin.

- **How it might show up:**
  - Working nonstop, even when you're drained
  - Saying "I'm good" when you're far from it
  - Feeling guilty when you rest
- **How it might feel:**
  - Overwhelmed, like you're carrying everything and everyone, snappy
  - Like there's no time to slow down
  - Like everything depends on you
- **What others might notice/say:**
  "You're always on the go; do you ever take a break?"
  "You seem tense or seems like you've been on edge lately."

Reminder: Rest isn't a reward, it's a requirement.

2. Depression: Not always sadness. Sometimes it looks busy, risky, or emotionally shut down.

- **How it might show up:**
  - Overworking to avoid stillness or risky behaviour
  - Isolation masked as being "busy" or "laying low"
  - Using sex, substances, or distractions to avoid feeling
  - Sleeping too much or barely at all
- **How it might feel:**
  - Numb. Empty. Like you're watching life, not living it
  - Low motivation, quick to snap, low energy
  - Nothing feels worth it
- **What others might notice/say:**
  "You've been doing the most lately, you good?"
  "You've been quiet lately, everything cool?"
  "You're good? You've seemed a little off."

Reminder: Depression doesn't always look like falling apart. Just because you're functioning, doesn't mean you're fine.

3. Anxiety: Overthinking everything. Mind racing while trying to keep it cool.

- **How it might show up:**
  - Always bracing for the worst
  - Constant worry about money, relationships, the future
  - Can't relax even when things are "good"
  - Overplanning. Overworking or freezing completely
- **How it might feel:**
  - Panic or fear with no clear reason
  - Like you're stuck in your own head
  - Like you're failing, even when no one says it
- **What others might notice/say:**
  "You always expect the worst."
  "Relax; it's not that deep."

Reminder: If survival mode is your default, calm can feel strange, but that's where healing occurs.

4. Anger & Emotional Shutdown: Not "just mad." This is pressure with no release valve.

- **How it might show up:**
  - Snapping over small things
  - Getting aggressive, or going silent
  - Shutting people out to avoid conflict
  - Can't find words for how you feel, just pressure
- **How it might feel:**
  - Like you're going to explode

    - Misunderstood or alone
    - Wanting peace, but pushing people away
- **What others might notice/say:**
  "You never talk about what's really going on."
  "It's like you're always ready to fight or disappear."

Reminder: Sometimes, anger is just pain with no place to go. You don't have to carry it alone.

"Strong Man" Can't Mean Silent Man! *Being strong shouldn't mean being silent. Or broken. Or invisible.*

From a young age, men are told to:

- "Man up" and push through pain
- Be tough, unshakable, and emotionally locked down
- Protect others, but never protect yourself

This creates a dangerous silence where pain builds and goes unspoken. Let's change that!

The Men's Mental Health Toolbox

1. Box Breathing

- Inhale for 4 sec
- Hold for 4 sec
- Exhale for 4 sec
- Repeat 3–5 times when feeling overwhelmed, stressed or anxious.

2. Move Your Body

- 10–15 min walk, stretch, or pushups
- Movement helps release tension and shift your mental state
- Doesn't need to be anything serious, just move.

3. Clear Your Head

- Write or voice note for 5 mins: "Here's what's on my mind…"
- No structure. No judgment. Just let it out.

4. Daily Joy Check

- Do one thing a day just for you
  (music, cooking, praying, laughing, gym, calling your people or whatever centers you)

When to Get Support:

You don't have to "hit rock bottom" to ask for help. If you've been feeling off for more than 2 weeks, don't brush it off.

It might be time to talk to someone if you:

- Feel consistently low, angry, or anxious
- Start avoiding people, work, or life
- Use sex, substances, or distractions to numb or block out
- Have thoughts of giving up or feel like "I'm not myself anymore"

Where to Start:

- Talk to someone you trust, a friend, a partner, a mentor, family
- Connect with a therapist
- Join a men's group, community club, or safe space to talk

Remember: *"You're not alone. You're not broken. You're just overdue for a tune-up."*

This journey isn't about perfection, it's about starting.
Start by checking in.
Start by taking off the mask.
Start by giving yourself the same grace you give others.

You're not too far gone. You're not too tough to heal.
You're just getting started.