

tune in now



MODULE 2: IDENTIFYING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

HOW TO SPOT ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.

TOPIC 1: What is depression?

Everyone feels 'down' at some point. But if you think someone has been sad, moody, angry or unable to sleep for more than a few weeks, it might be depression. It's a serious illness that makes it hard for people to function. And, long-term, it can impact on their physical and mental health.

With one in eight men experiencing depression at some stage of their lives, it's helpful to know what to look out for so you can help empower men to take action.

Signs and symptoms

A man may be depressed if, for more than two weeks, he has...

1. Felt sad, down or miserable most of the time, or
2. Lost interest or pleasure in most of his usual activities
AND experienced a number of these symptoms:

Behaviour

- General slowing down or restlessness
- Neglecting responsibilities and not looking after himself
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Becoming confused, worried and agitated
- Inability to find pleasure in any activity
- Finding it difficult to get motivated in the morning
- Behaving differently from usual
- Denying depressive feelings – this can be used as a defence mechanism.

Thoughts

- Indecisiveness
- Loss of self-esteem
- Persistent suicidal thoughts
- Talking negatively: "I'm a failure", "It's my fault", "Life isn't worth living"
- Excessive worrying about finances
- Perceived change of status within the family.

Feelings

- Moodiness or irritability – this can come across as anger or aggression
- Sadness, hopelessness or emptiness
- Feeling overwhelmed, worthless or guilty.

Physical Symptoms

- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Feeling tired all the time
- Unexplained headaches, backache or similar complaints
- Digestive upsets, nausea, changes in bowel habits
- Agitation, hand-wringing, pacing
- Loss or change of appetite
- Significant weight loss or gain.

Remember, everyone experiences some of these symptoms from time to time. But when symptoms are severe and lasting, and cause some impairment, it's time to take action and seek help. Early detection and treatment is the best way to prevent depression from becoming severe.

Types of depression

There are many types of depressive disorders. Symptoms can range from relatively minor to very severe. For further information on specific depressive disorders go to the *beyondblue* website link below.

Useful resources

- *beyondblue* Depression Types in Detail
beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/depression/types-of-depression

TOPIC 2: What is anxiety?

One in five Australian men will experience anxiety in their lifetime. For men, anxiety is more common than depression.

Anxious feelings are a normal reaction to high-pressure situations such as speaking at a group therapy session or meeting a new practitioner. Sometimes, anxious feelings happen for no apparent reason and continue long after the stressful event has passed. They can seem uncontrollable and interfere with a person's ability to cope with daily life. This is when anxiety becomes a problem.

Signs and symptoms

For most men, symptoms develop gradually. This makes it hard to know what type of anxiety a person is having, and how best to combat it.

Common symptoms are:

- Feeling on edge or fearful
- Racing heart
- Tightening of the chest
- Snowballing worries
- Repeatedly worrying about the same thing
- Avoiding a specific situation out of fear it will cause anxiety.

Types of anxiety

There are several types of common anxiety disorders. For further information on specific anxiety disorders and symptoms go to the *beyondblue* website link below.

Many men experience more than one type of anxiety disorder, and depression as well. If untreated, anxiety can lead to serious relationship and family problems, difficulty finding and holding down a job, and drug and alcohol problems.

Useful resources

- ➔ *beyondblue* Anxiety Types in Detail
beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety/types-of-anxiety

TOPIC 3: Screening for depression and anxiety

An easy way to know if someone is experiencing anxiety or depression is by using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale. This simple checklist measures how a person may have been affected by depression and anxiety in the past four weeks. The person you're supporting may wish to complete the checklist himself.

"The K10 is a psychosocial screening tool to screen for depression and anxiety."

– Merinda

TOPIC 4: Debunking myths about depression and anxiety

Myth

Men experiencing homelessness who also experience depression and anxiety have little chance of recovery.

Fact

There are effective treatments for all people who experience depression and anxiety, including those experiencing homelessness. Research shows a decrease in homelessness when outreach activity occurs together with case management, medical treatment, housing and other supportive services.

Myth

There's no hope for men with depression or anxiety.

Fact

Depression and anxiety are both diagnosable, treatable conditions. Around 80 percent of people treated for severe depression have a decrease in symptoms. Many anxiety disorders are actually curable.

For some, depression can become severe and disabling; depression is a high risk factor for suicide, with men accounting for 80 percent of all deaths.

Useful resource

- ➔ *beyondblue* Man Facts
beyondblue.org.au/resources/for-me/men

TOPIC 5: Suicide risk

Disclosure of suicidal thoughts

If someone discloses suicidal thoughts, you should refer to your own organisation's policies and procedures in dealing with an emergency situation. For immediate crisis intervention when life may be in danger, call the ambulance or police on 000 or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Useful contacts

- ➔ Lifeline: 13 11 14
- ➔ Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

Men and suicide

Suicide is the biggest killer of men aged 15 to 44. In Australia, nearly five men die by suicide every day. And, in most cases, depression and/or anxiety is untreated at the time of death.

Warning signs

Most men give warning signs or signals of their intentions. The best way to prevent suicide is to recognise these warning signs, ask about their intentions and respond to them. It's good to be aware of the following signs, signals and situations:

Situations

- Recent loss (a loved one, job, relationship or pet)
- Major disappointment (missed promotion at work, failed exams)
- Change in circumstances (divorce, retirement, separation, children leaving home)
- Mental disorder and illness
- Physical illness and injury
- Suicide of someone they know or recognise
- Financial or legal problems.

Feelings

- Hopelessness
- Feeling trapped
- Depression
- Irritable, moody and angry
- Worthlessness
- No sense of purpose or reason for living.

Behaviours

- Previous suicide attempts
- Talking or writing about suicide or death, even if it seems to be a joke
- Seeking access to something they can kill themselves with
- Being moody, withdrawn or sad
- Saying goodbye or giving away possessions
- Losing interest in things they previously enjoyed
- Taking less care of their appearance
- Anxiety or agitation, including difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Engaging in self-destructive or risky behaviour
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawal from other people.

Sometimes, a positive mood after a period of being down may indicate the person has made up their mind to take their own life, and feels relief the decision has been made.

Suicide prevention training

The Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) online suicide prevention training program outlines three simple steps that anyone can quickly learn to minimise the risk of suicide.

➔ suicideprevention.salvos.org.au/training/qpr-suicide-prevention

Useful contacts

- ➔ Lifeline: 24 hour helpline, suicide prevention information, self-help toolkits lifeline.org.au
- ➔ Salvation Army: Suicide Prevention Fact Sheets suicideprevention.salvos.org.au/resources/special-downloads

Confidentiality

You should talk to men you're working with about their rights to privacy and confidentiality with regards to any information they may give to you. Explain their privacy and confidentiality is secure, unless you believe their health (mental or physical) is putting themselves or other people at risk of harm. At this point, you may have to disclose their personal information in order to protect themselves or others.

TOPIC 6: Alcohol and other drug use

Men with anxiety and depression use drugs and alcohol for the same reasons as those without these conditions: to feel better when anxious or sleepless, or when they're bored, lonely or traumatised.

Alcohol

It's common for men with social anxiety to use alcohol to overcome it. But heavy, prolonged use can lead to depression, heightened anxiety and dependency.

Other drugs

Some drugs can trigger a mental illness, while others can interfere, complicate or even delay treatment. For example, the use of drugs like Valium or Xanax can prevent progress in psychological treatments for anxiety.

When 'having the conversation', consider whether the person is affected by drugs. Will he remember the conversation? Is he experiencing a low mood because he's coming down from a bender? When the person is off drugs and alcohol, he may be completely different.

Helpful screening questions

- It's common for men to use alcohol or other drugs to cope and enjoy themselves. Which drugs do you use and how much?
- Does your alcohol or other drug use cause you any problems?
- Is anyone close to you such as family members, friends or housemates worried about your alcohol or other drug use?

Useful resources

- ➔ Turning Point: Online self-screening tool for alcohol and other drug problems turningpoint.org.au
- ➔ Counselling Online: 24/7 telephone and online counselling service for anyone concerned about alcohol and other drugs counsellingonline.org.au
- ➔ Sane: Podcasts and fact sheets about drugs and mental illness sane.org/information/factsheets-podcasts/203-drugs-and-mental-illness=
- ➔ Lifeline: 24 hour helpline, suicide prevention