Forget "man up"...

**Words by
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IS THERE
A MATE
MISSING
AROUND
THIS TABLE?
REACH OUT
TO HIM.

For many years there has been these societal norms surrounding men and women and it is about time that we start to tear them down. Men have always been expected to be strong and silent. Always looking after those around them, protecting women and children, and never speaking about their feelings. This is wrong.

We all need to talk about our emotions just so that we can remain sane. If men keep bottling all their emotions up, they will end up overflowing and struggling to continue with their day-to-day lives. Despite men being in the majority when it comes to mental health disorders, only 36% of referrals to IAPT (Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies) are men. And it's not as if these men have anyone else to talk to instead of going to a professional. In fact, men have much lower access to a social support group of friends and family than women. It's not just that men are too ashamed to discuss their

mental health, it's also the fact that other men are too ashamed to listen to their friends.

Research from the Priory Group shows how 36% of men "don't wish to be a burden to anyone" and so, instead, choose to bottle up their emotions and suffer in silence. However, there are some men who do wish to speak out about their mental health, yet they feel that they have no one to talk to (14%). This shows just how important it is to reach out to those around us as further statistics show that 77% of men feel unable to speak to friends or a professional about something with potentially serious symptoms. The stigma behind men constantly having to bottle up their emotions needs to end before we cause more and more of the males in our lives to end up with life-altering mental illnesses.

In the 2016 survey of 1,112 employed men, 34% agreed that they were "constantly feeling stressed or under pressure". The

constant stress from work can ultimately become too much for men to handle as over three quarters of people who kill themselves are men. This is not to say that stress always leads to suicide, but there are statistics that show a link between stressful job roles and male suicide rates. For example, men working in 'elementary occupations' account for 19% of male suicides, while men in skilled trade occupations account for 29%. However, despite there being strong evidence that stressful jobs can cause bad mental health in men, over half of men suffering with mental health problems (52%) said that they did not want to tell their employers as they were concerned that they would think worse of them.

This cannot continue.

If you are an employer at a mentally strenuous company, then you need to start taking better care of your employees. 85% of men have admitted that they wouldn't take time off work for "feeling low or down", while 81% said they wouldn't for anxiety. These are seriously shocking statistics that need to be looked into further so that we can change them as soon as possible. Taking time off work for anxiety or low moods IS okay. In fact, I encourage you to do so. There is no reason too small for you to warrant taking time off work, if you think you need a day off to look after your mental health then that is exactly what you need. We all need to start looking at mental illnesses like they're the same as physical illnesses. If you would take the day for the flu, then you can take the day for your anxiety or depression.

Suicide rates have been consistently lower in females than males for the last three decades. This shows that mental health in men is a much larger issue than it is in women. With campaigners such as CALM highlighting that suicide is the biggest cause of death in men under 45, it is time that we put a stop to the stigma that men can't discuss their emotions. Mental illnesses are causing more and more men to end their lives because they can't see any other way out and this isn't okay. It is time that we reach out to the men in our lives and check up on them. Make sure that they know who they can talk to and where they can get help from.

Reaching out for help doesn't mean that you are weak. It takes a lot of courage and bravery to admit that something is wrong and that you need support. Getting the advice that you need to help you cope with your fears will help you become the strong person you so desperately feel that you need to be. Make sure you know where to turn when life gets too challenging. Remember those who are willing to listen and make use of them. No problem is too small for someone to care about and support you getting through it.

...let's "man down".