

Movember - the Workplace and Men's Mental Health

- 45% of all Australians aged 16-85 years have at some point in life experienced a mental illness. 65% of them don't take serious steps to rectify the issue, like seeing a professional.
- Only 40% of Medicare-subsidised mental health services in Australia are accessed by males.
- This is despite the fact that the number of suicide deaths is alarmingly 3 times higher in males than females.

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

November has become synonymous with Movember and a time to shine a spotlight on men's mental health.

So, what role does the workplace have to play?

A recent survey of 15,000 employees across 30 Australian organisations conducted by Mind shows that men:

1. Are twice as likely to have mental health problems due to their job compared to problems outside of work.
2. Mostly blame this directly on their job role (32%).

Then, there's the issues surrounding seeking help. According to research from Towergate Health and Protection men are half as likely to reach out for emotional support in the workplace compared to women. Given that we spend much of our lives in the workplace, it's clear that employers can do a lot to provide a supportive atmosphere and accelerate the culture shift required to effect change in men's mental health.

WHAT'S IMPACTING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH?

While there are numerous factors impacting men's poor mental health in society, there are also some problems specific to the workplace. These include:

Monetary pressure: Although the women's empowerment movement is changing this culture, there is still an 'expectation' for men to provide for themselves and their families and any issues with their mental health could be potentially seen as them not fulfilling their responsibility to family.

Work culture: The stereotypical 'macho culture' of some workplaces and the harmful perception that male employees should 'man up' and not talk about their emotions continues to be detrimental to men's mental health. It increases the chances that men will continue to work through mental health issues rather than take a much-needed break or seek out help.

Work pressures: According to research conducted by wellbeing insurance company Cigna, 66% of men suffer from work-related stress, with 13% saying it's unmanageable while only 12% have spoken to a professional about it.

FIND OUT MORE

1300 687 327

info@convergeintl.com.au

convergeinternational.com.au

Converge
INTERNATIONAL

Other factors, that are not necessarily specific to men, that contribute to poor mental health at work include:

- Lack of clarity about job role and responsibilities
- Inadequate resources, tools, and training
- Work overload and pressure to meet targets
- Job insecurity
- Long working hours
- Bullying
- Poor communication with colleagues and management
- Lack of control and exclusion from decision-making

HOW TO SUPPORT MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

Health-improvement initiatives in the workplace that are tailored specifically to men are not only effective at engaging men, but are also welcomed and valued by them. A study published in Health Promotion International supports this, showing that men respond well to health support designed and delivered for men.

The first, and perhaps the most important step, in addressing mental health challenges is promoting a workplace where:

1. All staff members are supported,
2. communication is open,
3. help is accessible, and
4. positive mental health is actively promoted.

Ultimately, the alternative is a workplace where problems are ignored and vulnerable individuals are in danger of spiraling into stress and mental health conditions.

Other initiatives that can aid men's mental health in the workplace include:

Manager training: Line managers should be trained in to looking out for the symptoms of poor mental health. Spotting the signs of poor mental health can make a huge difference to someone who is suffering. Line managers should also be trained to have difficult conversations about mental health.

Target the language: For men, the words 'mental health' can cause detachment from the conversation. When men talk about mental health, they usually use more specific terms like anxiety, stress, anger, and overload. Using terms such as 'stress' and 'burnout' rather than 'mental health' can be more beneficial, as it is relatable.

Create safe spaces: From forums to Team's channels, create a safe space for employees to talk about their mental health so they don't feel alone in their experiences. Ensure these are well-advertised and free of prejudice.

Have an open approach: Having your CEO or managers being open about their mental health issues will help your teams feel like they can be open too.

Clearly signpost places of support: From the company's EAP service to specific men's mental health support, these contacts should be clearly signposted throughout the office place. Throughout Movember, it can also be beneficial to create an email banner about where employees can go if they require mental health support.

Normalise conversations: An environment where men can open up about their feelings will help support conversations around mental wellbeing. Charities such as Movember make it easy for workplaces to raise awareness of male mental health issues by providing resources and event ideas that approach the topic in a lighthearted, engaging way.

Keep it confidential: Ensure that the support employees can access is kept completely confidential.

Ultimately, both individuals and employers need to encourage men to share mental health challenges and let them know that it's not a sign of weakness – it's a sign of strength – to address the issues of depression, anxiety or loneliness.

FIND OUT MORE

1300 687 327

info@convergeintl.com.au

convergeinternational.com.au

NEED SUPPORT?

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **Open Arms - Veterans & Family Counselling:** 1800 011 046
- **Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467
- **Sane Australia:** 1800 18 7 263
- **Beyond Blue:** 1300 224 636
- **Your Company's EAP Provider** - Converge's number is: 1300 687 327



FIND OUT MORE



1300 687 327



info@convergeintl.com.au



convergeinternational.com.au