Supporting Men Through Tough Times

Relationships Australia WA has developed a range of tip sheets to provide accessible information and support to help people navigate life's challenges and building respectful relationships. This guide is for men, and for the people around them. It explores how challenges can show up, why conversations may feel difficult, and how connection and support can make a meaningful difference.

Many men experience stress, anxiety, loneliness, burnout, or personal challenges without speaking openly about them. Social expectations around being "fine," staying productive, or handling things independently can make it difficult to recognise when support is needed, or when to ask for help.

Opening up can feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar. As a result, conversations about mental health are often avoided until things feel overwhelming, which can leave people feeling isolated or unsupported during difficult periods.

Connection, honest conversations, and regular check-ins can make a meaningful difference.

Signs someone may be having a difficult time

Everyone responds differently when life feels overwhelming, but some common signs can include:

- Withdrawing from social plans or group chats
- Becoming quieter, harder to reach, or less responsive
- Increased frustration, irritability, or emotional reactions
- Constant tiredness or low motivation
- Changes in sleep, appetite, or routine
- Working excessively or struggling to switch off
- Increased alcohol use or other coping habits
- Spending long periods disengaged from others, scrolling or gaming
- Downplaying concerns (e.g., "I'm fine", "I'm just tired," "It's nothing")

Someone may appear to be coping outwardly while struggling internally.

How to start conversations

Supportive conversations do not need to feel formal or intense to be effective. For many men, it can feel easier to talk:

- Side-by-side rather than face-to-face
- During an activity (e.g., driving, walking or doing a task)
- When there is no pressure to immediately open up

Focus on listening, rather than fixing.

Instead of asking:

- “Are you okay?”

Try:

- “You haven’t seemed yourself lately.”
- “How have things been for you?”
- “You’ve had a lot going on.”
- “How are you really doing?”
- “Want to go for a walk or grab a coffee?”

Consistency matters more than finding the perfect words.

Ways to stay connected and offer support

Support often comes through small, everyday moments. Some ways to stay connected and support men through overwhelming or challenging periods include:

- Invite them for a walk, coffee, gym session, or do a shared activity
- Talk side-by-side during an activity instead of making it a formal conversation
- Send a simple check-in message
- Ask direct but low-pressure questions
- Keep inviting them, even if they say no the first time
- Share your own experiences with stress to normalise conversations
- Encourage time away from constant work, screens, or isolation
- Notice changes in mood, routine, or behaviour

Not everyone will open up immediately. Consistent connection and genuine support can still make a meaningful difference.

When to seek professional support

Professional support may help if stress, anxiety, anger, isolation, or low mood are affecting daily life, relationships, work or sleep.

Seeking support early can help prevent things from becoming overwhelming.

Support might include:

- Counselling or mental health support
- Speaking with a GP
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services
- Men's support groups or community connections
- Relationship or family support services

Reaching out for support is not a sign of weakness. It is a positive step toward wellbeing, connection, and healthier relationships.

Every relationship journey is unique. Relationships Australia WA is here to help people navigate life's challenges with care, respect and compassion.

Whether you are seeking support for yourself, your relationships or your family, you don't have to navigate things alone.

For more information, please visit our website www.relationshipswa.org or call us on 6164 0200.