



Men's Health Awareness Week

This week, to celebrate International Men's Health Week, Health Promotion Officer, David Bergin shares ten simple but highly effective steps to help Restore Balance for the week and to take into your day-to-day.

- 1. Perspective.** Low mood and feeling down are emotions we can all relate to. Putting things into perspective can help us get through a difficult time. Following South Africa's Rugby World Cup win against England, SA head coach Rassie Erasmus talked about pressure and how the team put game-time pressure into life perspective. "In South Africa [pressure] is not having a job, [or] having a close relative who is murdered. Rugby should not create pressure, it should create hope. We have a privilege, not a burden."
- 2. Volunteer.** Volunteering is a great way to find meaning in our life. While many things such as family and work can provide satisfaction and meaning, giving up free time can add to this, boosting your mood and confidence. If you don't already volunteer some of your time, make this your number 1 resolution!
- 3. Talk & Listen.** It's not ground-breaking research to say men don't talk about their emotions enough. Thankfully however, this has improved in recent times. As stigma of mental health is beginning to be addressed in society, men are finding it easier to speak about their feelings. If you have a male colleague or friend that you feel is going through a tough time, ask them to go for a coffee. Ask if everything is okay, listen to what they say and then empower them to take action of the situation.
- 4. Be Active.** Take stock of how physically active you are. Whether it's wearable technology, the number of reps you hit in the gym or how many steps it takes you to climb before getting out of breath, find a way to measure how active, or inactive, you are. Set yourself a measurable goal and move. Regular physical activity has been shown to improve mood and help cure mild depression. Starting to move more can have the biggest impact to make positive changes to your health.
- 5. Coping.** How do you cope with daily and weekly stressors? Is it a pack of cigarettes every day or a skip of pints at the weekend? Stress is a normal biological response to difficult situations. How we deal with this stress can determine how harmful it will be to our body. Coping mechanisms like tobacco products and alcohol might seem like the best way to deal with an imposing deadline but often, they only exacerbate the problems. Visit [Ask About Alcohol](#) to learn how alcohol is impacting your mental wellbeing and how to cut down. Advice on tobacco? Quit.

6. **Slow down.** The 11th edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) listed Burnout as a “..a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed..”. It is vital to recognise the triggers of stress and to address them in a proactive manner. As stress is often unavoidable, we can take steps such as practicing mindfulness, attending a gym class or going for a walk in the outdoors.
7. **Eat More Veg.** in the 2018 edition of the Healthy Ireland Survey, just 3 in 10 males responded to say they ate 5 pieces of fruit and vegetables. Low in calories, high in fibre and packed with essential vitamins and minerals. Increasing our fruit and veg intake is an easily achievable goal to improve health and wellbeing.
8. **Breaking Norms.** Strength, bravery, the breadwinner. These are some of the traits some men feel are necessary to ensure they provide for their family, friends and are performing to the highest standards in work. But sometimes these societal expectations can be damaging to men, specifically their mental health. Men take longer to report health issues to family and friends and less men will open up about struggling with their mental health. It’s ok to not be ok. If you’re struggling with your mental wellbeing, call your Employee Assistance Programme, available 24/7/365.
9. **Look After your Heart.** Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in men in Ireland. While taking steps discussed already such as being active and avoiding tobacco will protect your heart, there are additional steps to improve heart health. Reduce your salt intake. Find out your blood pressure. Measure your waist circumference.
10. **Be a Positive Role Model.** By living a lifestyle as discussed above, you’re well on the way to being a positive role model for the next generation. Take an objective look at your approach to your health. Ask yourself, do you want the next generation to emulate your behaviours? If not, start by leading by example.