



Stronger starts with speaking up

*A practical guide to men's physical
and mental health*



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The hidden weight men carry

The pressure to be 'fine' is silently costing lives.

Most men don't set out to burn out, break down, or bottle things up. They just keep going – another deadline, another "I'm fine."

But beneath that autopilot, many are quietly running on empty. The pressure to perform, provide, and stay composed slowly separates us from what we actually feel.

We stay busy because slowing down might mean facing something uncomfortable – pain, fear, loss, or the sense that we're not doing enough.

The silent crisis

- Suicide remains the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK.
- Men are still less likely than women to see their GP or refer themselves for therapy, even when symptoms are clear.

That silence isn't strength - it's conditioning. Movember exists to rewrite it.

"Strength isn't silence. Strength is showing up."



Know your body: check, don't chance it

Ignoring your body doesn't protect you from fear; it feeds it.

Testicular health

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer in men under 45. It usually presents as a painless lump or swelling - something you could easily miss if you're not looking.

How to check properly

Checking takes under two minutes:

1. Do it ideally after a warm shower.
2. Gently roll each testicle between your fingers.
3. Notice the shape, size, and texture. The goal is to know what normal feels like, so you notice change early.

When detected early, testicular cancer has a 95–99% survival rate.

If you find something unusual, book a GP appointment that week. Most lumps aren't cancer, but waiting only fuels anxiety and delays reassurance or treatment.



“During my doctorate, I worked with a young man who ignored a lump for months because he didn't want to ‘make a fuss.’ By the time he went, the tumour had spread. He survived, but the experience changed him. He now mentors other young men through recovery groups, using his story to break the silence that nearly cost him his life.” — **Dr Bradley Powell**



Know your body: prostate health

Prostate cancer affects one in eight men (and one in four Black men).

Risk rises after age 50 (or 45 if you're Black or have family history).

Warning signs

The disease is often silent early on, but symptoms can include:

- Needing to urinate more often, especially at night.
- A weak flow.
- Blood in urine or semen.
- Pain in the lower back.

What to do

- If you're over 50 (or high risk), you can request a PSA blood test from your GP.
- Prostate Cancer UK offers an online risk checker to help you decide if testing is right for you.

The fear many men have isn't about the test - it's about what it could mean.

“Avoidance doesn't prevent bad news. It just delays good treatment.”

Train your mind like your body



“Mental fitness is the new strength training.”

Mental fitness isn't about repair; it's about training. It's the psychological equivalent of strength work - small, consistent habits that build resilience long before crisis hits.

Six strategies for mental fitness

- 1. Sleep like it matters:**
Aim for 7-9 hours with consistent sleep and wake times. Without it, your brain's threat alarm (the amygdala) becomes overactive.
- 2. Train your stress system:**
Use breathing techniques like the 5-in, 7-out method to calm the vagus nerve - the body's internal brake.
- 3. Move most days:**
Physical movement is one of the most potent antidepressants available. It helps metabolise emotion.
- 4. Connect on purpose:**
Isolation is a huge predictor of male depression. Join structured communities - a sports team, run club, or men's group - for accountability and shared meaning.
- 5. Mind your inputs:**
Be intentional about what you consume: caffeine, alcohol, news, and notifications. A small digital detox (e.g., 30 minutes phone-free before bed) can make a big difference.
- 6. Progress, not perfection:**
True growth is steady repetition. Celebrate consistency over intensity.





Connect and recharge in nature

City life keeps our nervous system constantly wired. Nature provides the reset.

Spending just **two hours a week** in natural settings improves mood, sleep, and cognitive clarity. Exposure to greenery lowers cortisol (stress hormone) and blood pressure.

Research fact

A study found that neighbourhoods with more street trees had significantly lower antidepressant prescriptions (Scientific Reports, 2021). Nature literally changes the chemistry of our wellbeing.

The cold-water reset

Sometimes, the reset needs shock - not just calm.

Cold-water immersion (like an open-water swim or cold shower) jolts your system. Within minutes, breathing slows, heart rate steadies, and the mind feels startlingly clear.

The benefits:

- Activates the vagus nerve.
- Boosts dopamine.
- Reduces inflammation.
- Creates belonging - a group of strangers laughing, shivering, and cheering each other on.

"When I swam at Hampstead Heath Ponds for the first time, I left with an unfamiliar sense of peace. It wasn't just the water. It was nature, challenge, and connection - the three ingredients most men quietly crave."

— Dr Bradley Powell



Recognising when wellbeing is slipping

Mental health problems rarely appear overnight - they build gradually through subtle shifts. Knowing what to look for is half the battle.

Look out for...

- Persistent low mood, irritability, or emotional flatness.
- Loss of pleasure in things you normally enjoy.
- Changes in sleep, appetite, or libido.
- Feeling restless, agitated, or constantly on edge.
- Using alcohol, drugs, or work to numb emotions.
- Withdrawing from friends or activities.
- Thoughts of hopelessness or being a burden.

If these signs persist for more than two weeks or start to impact daily life, **it's time to talk.**

When vigilance becomes avoidance

Health anxiety

Health anxiety is common among men, especially when physical strength is a part of their identity. The fear is protective, but unchecked, it can spiral into obsession.

In therapy, Dr Powell often meets men who:

- Check for symptoms daily.
- Google diagnoses late at night.
- Avoid medical appointments altogether because they “don’t want to know.”

Both checking and avoidance temporarily reduce fear - but both keep the anxiety alive.

CBT for health anxiety therapy helps by teaching the brain to tolerate uncertainty instead of eliminating it.

Practical steps include:

- **Scheduling specific times** for health checks (e.g., once a month).
- **Replacing catastrophic thoughts with data** (“Most lumps aren’t cancer, but I’ll check once and follow up”).
- **Delaying reassurance-seeking** (like Googling) by 30 minutes and noticing the anxiety fade naturally.



Your five-minute movember check

Men wait to get help because of norms around control, invulnerability, and self-reliance. But these same traits can be reframed as assets: courage, discipline, persistence.

Courage isn't ignoring pain; it's facing it.

When clients finally get help, it's rarely a total collapse - it's a moment of connection. A friend asking, "Are you okay, really?" Or a partner saying, "You don't seem like yourself lately."

We can normalise this by modelling it.

Your five-minute action plan:

This could change two lives.

- **2 minutes:** Self-check your testicles in the shower.
- **2 minutes:** Book a GP PSA discussion if you're 45+ or high risk.
- **1 minute:** Text a mate and ask how he's really doing.



If you are struggling

- Self-refer to NHS Talking Therapies – no GP referral needed.
- For private care, look for HCPC-registered psychologists or BABCP accredited CBT therapists.
- Join Andy's Man Club for free, peer-led groups nationwide.
- In crisis: Call Samaritans (116 123) or James' Place (London, Liverpool, Newcastle).



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