

## Engaging with men

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## The problem

Men don't seek help - for relationship problems (partner, family)  
mental health issues (note: suicide stats)  
physical health issues

Men don't seek help - ever  
soon enough  
often enough

The goal - encourage help-seeking behaviours

## Men's awareness of the problem ...

Many men are aware of their problems here  
& have the desire to talk -

our objective is to provide an  
opportunity that is easy, non-threatening, etc

## Are men and women different?

Do the differences 'explain' differences in help seeking  
behaviour?

Does it matter anyway?

Why don't we just investigate the barriers & develop  
strategies & interventions to remove or minimise these?

## What are some differences?

Cognitive                      Social                      Personality

Men ...	Women ...
More assertive	More agreeable
More aggressive (strangers)	Warmth
Less empathic	More tenderminded
Less emotionally expressive (except anger)	Higher anxiety
Sociality and intimacy	Greater trust
Openness to ideas	Openness to feelings

## Sociality & Intimacy: Differences in belonging – fundamental human need

Myth: women seek interdependence; men seek independence

Fact: both seek connections -

Women seek fewer, more intimate relationships; men seek broader  
range of less intimate relationships

Men achieve belonging via status and power; women via empathy  
and positive emotional expression

### Sociality & Intimacy

Men are more aggressive – but in wider society where achieves status and power – connections

Men hide signs of weakness, vulnerability – not good for status, power and autonomy image of strong and dominant

Men still desire intimacy in partner relationship – evidence that experience greater distress after breakups (and more women initiate a break than do men)

### Sociality & Intimacy

Broader social networks suggest social norms campaigns could be more effective for men than women

And that appeals to strength and power could be effective for men – if credible

### Research about why men don't seek timely help

Metro & rural men: relationship counselling

Rural and remote men: mainstream'; indigenous; CALD: help seeking in general; partner violence in particular

Metro and rural men (including CALD): physical health issues

Metro & rural men: parenting issues

Previously distressed & suicidal men

### Barriers to Men Attending Counselling

*(Frances, Viala, Zappelli, Demerutis Research 1998)*

Self reliance - belief that problems should be sorted out within a relationship

Ego deflation - reluctance to admit failure / weakness

Fear - of the unknown/ - of 'self-exposure'

Social stigma : embarrassment associated with admitting that you are having relationship counseling - more prevalent for older than younger men, and in rural locations,

Misconceptions: 'counselling doesn't work', or that 'counsellors take sides'

Lack of awareness : a simple lack of knowledge of how to access counselling services (ie. 'how to begin')

### Distressed/suicidal men's reasons for not seeking help ...

Reasons	Ranking (by frequency reported)
Thought I could sort it out myself	1
Didn't want to burden anyone with my problems	2
Didn't know where to go	3
Don't talk to my mates about emotional problems	4
Problem too personal to share with others	5
Men don't seek help	6
Didn't think it would help	7
Didn't know what was wrong at the time	8
Worried about being labelled/stigma	9
No faith in services	10
Financial reasons	11
Previous negative experience with services	12

Süßburn & Miller, 2004

### What our research suggests for engaging men ... to overcome these inhibitors

Gain trust & confidence – empathy via similarity; non-judgemental

Don't overclaim – but be clear that help will be formal and effective

Be concrete – give specific directions & examples – have scores

Quote 'scientific' data – avoid abstract concepts – use 'scientist' rather than male celebrity (unless celebrity has the 'problem') -

Make it easy – make it discreet when necessary

**What our research suggests for engaging men ...**

**Male testimonials – especially of similar background or can empathise with – esp re how ‘solved’ or dealt with the problem**

**Get group to make/support decisions (informal or formal)**

**Publicise men taking action**

**Act local – services, publicity,**

**Culturally appropriate**

**What our research suggests for engaging men ...**

**Intrusive media necessary: Posters; TV reaches --- radio leads to talking about it**

**Community talks --- if on specific topic, well known identity, partner encouraged**

**Make it clear that the service is for MEN**

**Overall positioning: opportunity to regain control; also need to address a sign of strength/weakness; and expected discomfort/unknown**

**Car analogy well accepted**