



MEN'S WELLBEING TOOLKIT 1

Talking • Connecting • Coping • Supporting

How you doing bro?

First in a series of practical men's wellbeing resources.

ASK ONCE. IF SOMETHING DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT — ASK TWICE.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK • STRONGER TOGETHER



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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed for men, friends, families, community groups, workplaces and men's groups. It brings together simple conversation prompts, practical wellbeing ideas, alternative ways of coping, and clear routes to further support.

You don't need to have the right words. You just need to start the conversation.

The MWA approach

- Connection before correction.
- Listen before trying to fix.
- Ask open questions rather than making assumptions.
- Give people time and space to talk.
- Encourage practical steps, not perfection.
- Know when a conversation needs more support.

QUICK GUIDE

- 1. How you doing bro? — starting the conversation
- 2. Ask twice — noticing when something is behind "I'm fine"
- 3. Conversation starters
- 4. If a mate tells you they are struggling
- 5. Talking about suicide — practical guidance
- 6. When coping strategies become unhealthy
- 7. Try something different — alternative ways to cope
- 8. Your 10-minute reset
- 9. Stronger together — building connection
- 10. Men's groups and community
- 11. Self-help tools and online resources
- 12. Getting professional support
- 13. Crisis support
- 14. A simple personal wellbeing plan

1. YOU OK, MATE? — STARTING THE CONVERSATION

A simple question can open a door. You do not need to be a counsellor to check in with someone.

Try:

- “You alright, mate?”
- “How are things really going?”
- “You don’t seem yourself. Want to talk?”
- “How have you been doing lately?”
- “Anything on your mind?”
- “Do you want me to listen, or do you want help thinking it through?”

Remember:

- Pick a time when you are unlikely to be rushed.
- Walking, driving, having a coffee or doing an activity together can make talking easier.
- You don't have to fill every silence.
- Don't turn the conversation into an interrogation.

2. ASK TWICE

Sometimes “I’m fine” means exactly that. Sometimes it means “I don’t know how to explain what’s going on.” If you notice a change in someone, it is okay to gently ask again.

“You OK, mate?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“Fair enough — I just wanted to check. You sure?”

Look for changes such as:

- Withdrawing from friends or usual activities
- Irritability or sudden changes in mood
- Drinking or using substances more than usual
- Taking more risks
- Not sleeping or sleeping much more
- Missing work or losing interest in things

- Saying they feel trapped, hopeless or like a burden
- Giving away possessions or saying goodbye

One sign does not prove that someone is suicidal or experiencing a mental health condition. It is simply a reason to check in and listen.

3. CONVERSATION STARTERS

Everyday life

- What's been happening?
- What's been keeping you busy?
- What's going well?
- What's been a pain lately?

Friendship

- What makes a good mate?
- Who can you talk to when things are difficult?
- What helps you feel connected?

Stress

- What's putting pressure on you?
- How do you know when stress is building?
- What helps you switch off?

Life

- What are you looking forward to?
- What's changed recently?
- What are you proud of?

Getting support

- What would make things a little easier?
- Do you want someone to listen or help you find support?
- Who else could you talk to?

4. IF A MATE TELLS YOU THEY ARE STRUGGLING

You do not need to fix everything.

- Listen and let them finish.
- Thank them for telling you.
- Take them seriously.
- Avoid judgement, jokes or comparisons.
- Ask what they need from you.
- Encourage professional support when appropriate.
- If you are worried about immediate safety, act rather than leaving the person to manage alone.

Helpful responses

- "I'm glad you told me."
- "I'm here with you."
- "That sounds really difficult."
- "We can take the next step together."
- "You don't have to sort this out on your own."

Avoid:

- "Man up."
- "Everyone has problems."
- "You've got nothing to be depressed about."
- "Just stay positive."
- "It could be worse."
- Trying to immediately tell your own story instead of listening.

5. TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE — PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

If you are concerned that someone may be thinking about suicide, it is okay to ask directly. Samaritans advises that talking openly about suicide does not cause suicidal thoughts and can help open communication. Take any talk of suicide seriously.

A simple approach

STEP	WHAT TO DO
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ASK	"Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Are you thinking about ending your life?"
LISTEN	Give them space to talk. You do not need to have all the answers.
STAY CONNECTED	If there is immediate danger, do not leave them to manage alone.
GET HELP	Encourage urgent professional support. If life is at imminent risk, call 999 or go to A&E.
FOLLOW UP	If it is safe to do so, check in again. Let them know they matter.

Do not promise to keep a suicide risk secret. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, seek emergency help.

[Samaritans — supporting someone who may be suicidal](#) — Practical advice on listening, asking direct questions and encouraging support.

6. WHEN COPING STRATEGIES BECOME UNHEALTHY

Everyone finds ways to get through difficult periods. Some coping strategies can provide short-term relief but create bigger problems over time.

WHEN STRESS BUILDS	TRY A DIFFERENT NEXT STEP
Drinking to switch off	Delay the drink; go for a walk, call someone or use a calming exercise first.
Using drugs to escape	Move somewhere safer and contact someone you trust or a support service.
Gambling to distract	Step away from the app/site and do something that occupies your attention.
Isolating yourself	Send one message: "Fancy a coffee/walk?"
Anger or aggression	Create space, slow down and return to the conversation when calmer.
Overworking	Take a short break, eat, hydrate and set a clear stopping point.
Endless scrolling	Put the phone down for 10 minutes and change environment.
Risk-taking	Pause and ask: "What am I trying not to feel right now?"

The aim is not to shame people for coping. It is to create more choices. If alcohol, drugs, gambling, self-harm or other behaviours are becoming difficult to control, seek additional support.

7. TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT — ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO COPE

When the usual response is not helping, try a different channel: connect, move, calm, distract or solve.

CONNECT	Call a mate, sit with someone, attend a men's group or take a walk with someone.
MOVE	Walk, stretch, do some gentle exercise, Tai Chi, Qi Gong or another activity you enjoy.
CALM	Try slow breathing, grounding, meditation or progressive muscle relaxation.
DISTRACT	Music, cooking, a game, DIY, gardening, a film, photography or another absorbing activity.
SOLVE	Write down the problem, identify what you can control and choose one small next step.
GET OUTSIDE	Spend time in nature or change your environment for a few minutes.
CREATE	Draw, write, make something, play music or work with your hands.
REST	Eat, hydrate and give yourself permission to recover.

8. YOUR 10-MINUTE RESET

When things are building up, try this short routine:

- Minute 1 — Stop and notice: "What am I feeling right now?"
- Minutes 2–3 — Slow your breathing and relax your shoulders.
- Minutes 4–5 — Change location: step outside or move around.
- Minutes 6–7 — Contact someone: text or call a trusted person.
- Minutes 8–9 — Choose one useful action.
- Minute 10 — Decide what support you need next.

If this does not feel enough, step up the support rather than trying to handle everything alone.

9. STRONGER TOGETHER — BUILDING CONNECTION

Mental wellbeing is not only about what happens inside our heads. Relationships, belonging, activity and purpose matter too.

- Make regular contact with friends.
- Join a group or community activity.
- Try something new with other people.

- Create a regular walk, coffee or activity with mates.
- Volunteer or contribute to your community.
- Ask someone else how they are doing.
- If someone disappears from the group, check in.

STRONGER TOGETHER — YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING ALONE.

10. MEN'S GROUPS AND COMMUNITY

Men's groups can create a regular place to connect without making every conversation about mental health. Walking, sport, Tai Chi, practical projects, coffee, nature and shared interests can all create opportunities to talk.

A good group should be:

- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Non-judgemental
- Non-political and non-partisan
- Free from discriminatory or sexist language
- Clear about confidentiality and safeguarding

Use the MWA Men's Groups Practical Guide alongside this toolkit for group setup, session structure, ethics and safeguarding.

11. SELF-HELP TOOLS & ONLINE RESOURCES

[Every Mind Matters — Your Mind Plan](#) — A free NHS quiz creating a personalised plan for stress, anxiety, sleep and wellbeing.

[Every Mind Matters — talking about mental health](#) — Practical guidance on choosing someone to talk to, starting the conversation and asking for support.

[Every Mind Matters — self-help CBT techniques](#) — Practical tools for worries, unhelpful thoughts, problem solving and building wellbeing habits.

[Every Mind Matters — meditation and relaxation](#) — Beginner-friendly meditation and relaxation guidance, including breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.

[Shout 85258](#) — Free, confidential, 24/7 UK text support. Text SHOUT to 85258.

[Stay Alive](#) — UK suicide prevention resource with a safety plan and tools for people at risk and those supporting someone else.

12. GETTING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Self-help can be useful, but it is not a substitute for professional care when someone is struggling significantly.

- Speak to your GP.
- Use NHS Talking Therapies where available and appropriate.
- Contact a mental health professional or existing care team.
- Ask a trusted person to help you make the call or attend an appointment.
- If you are worried about someone else, encourage them to seek support and offer practical help.

[NHS Every Mind Matters](#) — Mental wellbeing information, practical tools and routes to support.

13. CRISIS SUPPORT

IF THERE IS IMMEDIATE DANGER OR SOMEONE CANNOT KEEP THEMSELVES SAFE: CALL 999 OR GO TO A&E.

SERVICE	CONTACT / PURPOSE
999	Emergency services if someone is in immediate danger.
NHS 111	Urgent NHS help when you need medical or mental health support and it is not an immediate emergency.
Samaritans — 116 123	Free, day or night, for anyone who is struggling to cope or having suicidal thoughts.
Shout — text SHOUT to 85258	Free, confidential, 24/7 UK text support.

[Samaritans](#) — Free support by phone and information for people struggling or worried about someone else.

[Shout](#) — 24/7 text support and mental health resources.

[Stay Alive](#) — Safety planning and crisis-prevention tools.

14. MY SIMPLE WELLBEING PLAN

People I can talk to	_____
Things that usually help me	_____
Early warning signs I notice	_____
Things I want to avoid when struggling	_____
A place/activity that helps me reset	_____
Professional support I can contact	_____
What I want people to do if I'm having a really bad day	_____

One thing I can do today

IT'S GOOD TO TALK.

YOU OK, MATE?

ASK ONCE. ASK TWICE. LISTEN. STAY CONNECTED.

STRONGER TOGETHER.



Men's Wellbeing Alliance • Walsall