

Masculinity stereotypes

& their effects on health

“real men don't cry”

“men must always be strong”

"men should earn more than their partners"

These are masculinity stereotypes: ideas about how men "should" behave, think and feel.

Their effects...

Stereotypes can become **harmful when they are too rigid**. They can make men feel that they must always be tough, never show emotion, never ask for help and never say “I am struggling”. This constant pressure can cause long-term stress and fear of **not being "man enough"**.

For example, strict masculinity norms are linked to risky behaviours and worse health for men.

...on mental health

- One of the consequences of harmful masculinity norms is men's reluctance to seek professional psychological help.
- Men who do not seek professional help are significantly more likely to turn to binge drinking and substance use to manage anxiety, depression, and stress, creating a cycle that further deteriorated their mental and physical health.
- If men feel that they don't meet expectations, it often leads to workaholism, suppression, avoidance, or chronic stress.



...on violent behaviours

When men are socialised to associate dominance and aggression with masculine identity, the risk of interpersonal violence increases significantly. Research shows that men who adhere to the most rigid masculine norms can be three to six times more likely to report perpetrating sexual harassment than their peers.



Overcoming masculinity stereotypes

There is more than one way of being a man: men can be strong and sensitive, independent and able to ask for help, ambitious and caring.

Men can start overcoming harmful stereotypes by:

- talking honestly with friends and family about how they feel
- going to a doctor or counsellor when something is wrong
- sharing care work at home
- questioning jokes or comments that shame men for being "too soft" or taking care of their health



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