

Stressed Dads: Mental Health Struggles of Fathers from the Perinatal Period and Beyond

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The slide features a light blue background with several decorative circles of various colors (orange, green, pink, brown) scattered in the top-left and bottom-right corners. The word "Agenda" is written in a large, dark brown, sans-serif font.

Agenda

- Introductions
- Identify issues that surrounding fatherhood and mental health
- Discuss the stressors that fathers face
- Meet a father and hear about his progression through stages of fatherhood and mental health concerns
- Learn about assessment and treatment planning
- Solutions to move forward

Scope of the Problem

- Issues of Mental Health as a result of COVID-19 pandemic
 - Bereavement
 - Isolation and loneliness
 - Loss of income
 - Fear of death
- We've seen a big increase in depression, anxiety, suicidality and suicide.

FATHERS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES COMPARED TO ALL MEN. **DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, ANGER CONTROL CHALLENGES AND SUBSTANCE USE CHALLENGES** ARE SOME COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FATHERS FACE.



10 PERCENT of new fathers experience symptoms of depression that interfere with their life at home and at work. This is sometimes referred to as Paternal Postpartum Depression (PPD).



The following factors can increase risk of PPD in new fathers:

- A history of Major Depressive Disorder
- Partner has Maternal Postpartum Depression.
- Previous pregnancy loss
- Relationship dissatisfaction
- Job dissatisfaction/loss



Some studies say that up to **50 PERCENT** of new fathers experience PPD if their partner is experiencing depression, too.

When fathers do not receive treatment or support for their mental health challenges, **the whole family can be affected...**



Anyone, anywhere can be the difference for someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. Learn more at www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.

Stress can cause...

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy desires and interest
- Difficulty concentration and making decisions
- Physical reactions, such as headaches body pains stomach problems and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of drugs and alcohol (including tobacco)

How do these things impact your ability to be father?

Real life example of a father's experience

- Testimonial of Terry
- a father of 2 and Peer Support Specialist –
Being a provider but not present (not being present).
- Recognize the issue and ask for help
- Elements of success and change
 - Recovery
 - show love

Mental Health and the Roles of a father

- Provider
 - Protector
 - Teacher
 - Coach
 - Disciplinarian
 - Nurturer
 - Role Model
-
- When fathers are stressed or suffering from mental health symptoms, they can experience problems with self-esteem, confidence and have difficulty fulfilling their role as a father.

SUPPORTING FATHERS' MENTAL HEALTH

Did you know?

- **One in 10** fathers get Paternal Postpartum Depression (PPPD);
- Up to **16 percent** of fathers suffer from an anxiety disorder during the perinatal period.



Helping dads be at their best—physically and mentally—during early childhood has a big impact on children's health.

Studies show that FATHER INVOLVEMENT LEADS TO CHILDREN WHO:

are more ready for school



have a better vocabulary

have better social skills



are better able to regulate their emotions

FATHER INVOLVEMENT HELPS MOMS TOO

- It increases both parents' confidence
- It helps both parents be more responsive to their baby
- It decreases mothers and fathers' potential for mental health issues



How Can Health Professionals Help Fathers?

1. Screen for paternal depression during well-child visits
2. Connect dads with resources and interventions

REFERENCES

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26590515>
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/185905>
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/1/e20161128>

Factors that increase the likelihood of mental health issues

- Poverty and unemployment
- Substance abuse
- Incarceration or history of incarceration
- Family history of mental health diagnosis
- Unhealthy relationships
- ACES
- Non-Residential Father Status
- Environmental stressors

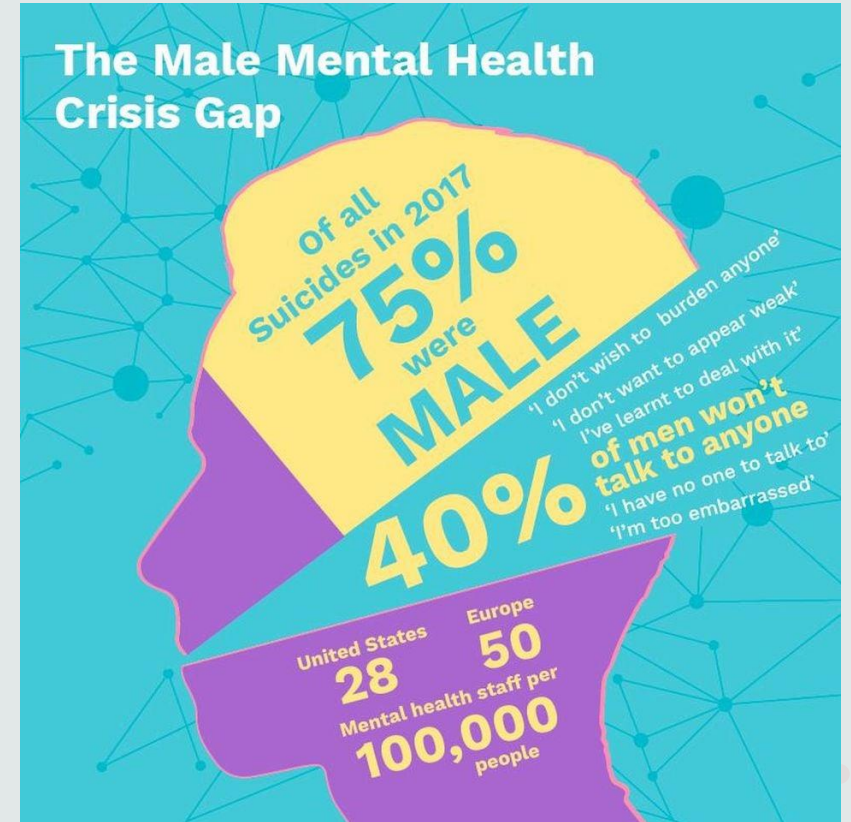
Factors and social determinants that impact higher rates of MH issues with men

- Occupational and employment issues
 - Poverty
- Family issues and divorce
 - Unhealthy relationships
 - Non-Residential Father Status
- Role of masculinity
- ACES
- Life transitions (notably parenthood)
- MH system is feminized and unresponsive and trained to meet men's needs
 - Low rates of MH services utilization
- Substance abuse
- Incarceration

• Source: Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 2018

Mental health and masculinity

- Anger
- Communication Problems
- Misuse of alcohol to dumb distress
- Concealing and ignoring negative emotions
- Engaging in risky behavior
- Valuing self reliance and autonomy over professional health
- Social isolation and withdrawal from relationships
- Low utilization of MH services



Access to Mental Health Services

- Disproportionality, racism
 - Black or Hispanic fathers, social stigma
 - Asian Americans
- Lack of insurance
 - Private pay versus state paid insurance and access to good treatment
- Lack of services available, especially during pandemic

Challenges

- Research, policy and practice –
 - Gender differences in the nature and manifestation of depression between men and woman
 - Not recognizing the gender differences in how symptoms manifest; therefore, proper diagnosis and treatment can be difficult
- Access to care issues
- Stigma
- Masculine culture
- Changing societies views around mental health

Possible solutions:

We need to explore how to identify men's mental health issues through proper assessment and develop treatments plans that address the unique manifestations of mental health distress among men and fathers.

- Early identification
- Providing culturally relevant, individualized treatment that also focuses on fatherhood
- Creating more fatherhood and men's groups that provide support and guidance
- Provide education on the importance of the fathers role in their child's development and their families mental health
- Teach fathers ways to reduce stress and increase coping skills
- Continue to increase public awareness around mental health - make it acceptable and positive to ask for help!