

# Breaking the Silence: Addressing Men's Mental Health on Campus

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**By Nima Shahmoradi, Student Life Ambassador.**

From the bustling corridors of our college to the quiet ambiance of the library, there's a topic often left untouched – men's mental health. Despite progressive strides in dismantling stigmas around mental health, male students seldom engage in these crucial conversations. Why? Because societal constructs have conditioned men to equate emotional vulnerability with weakness.

My journey understanding men's mental health issues began when a close friend at gym experienced overwhelming anxiety. Like many, he believed that "toughing it out" was the only way forward. This silent endurance is what many male students believe is expected of them, accentuating a campus culture that inadvertently overlooks their mental well-being.

## Unmasking the Issue

Firstly, we need to address the societal pressures that contribute to the silence. Traditional gender roles have long dictated that men be the stoic providers, impervious to emotional fluctuations. These stereotypes are not only unrealistic but also harmful. They invalidate genuine feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression, often escalating the risks associated with mental health disorders.

Such cultural expectations can manifest intensely in a college environment. Here, students grapple with academic pressures, financial stress, and social dynamics. When support is absent, or when men feel they cannot seek it, they are more likely to engage in detrimental behaviors, including substance abuse or physical aggression, drugs, as unhealthy coping mechanisms.

## Changing the Narrative

How do we change this? By fostering a campus culture that encourages vulnerability and open dialogue. It begins with each of us recognizing and reforming our perceptions. Here are a few steps we can all take to make a difference:

1. **Promote Open Conversations:** Create safe spaces where men feel comfortable

sharing their experiences without judgment. Encourage student-led initiatives, discussions, and support groups that focus on men's mental health. Normalize these conversations to diminish stigma. Seneca provides Accessible Learning Services and Personal Counselling Services.

2. **Educate and Inform:** Incorporate mental health education into campus life. We are holding different Workshops, seminars, and blogs on mental health issues can equip students with the knowledge to understand and articulate their feelings better and seek help when needed.
3. **Accessible Resources:** Advocate for accessible mental health resources on campus. Counseling services, peer support groups, and mental health first aid such as WeConnect can provide immediate assistance. Ensure these services are inclusive, acknowledging the unique challenges male students face.
4. **Encourage Allyship:** Foster a community of allies across all genders. Support from female and non-binary peers is crucial in breaking down gendered stereotypes. Allies can play a pivotal role in encouraging men to express themselves authentically and seek assistance.
5. **Self-Care Isn't Selfish:** Instill the philosophy that prioritizing one's mental health isn't selfish or unmanly. Whether it's through meditation, sports, art, or talking it out, self-care is a testament to strength. It's about men reclaiming their well-being.
6. **Amplify Real Stories:** Encourage sharing authentic stories of struggle and recovery. When students, especially public figures or influencers within the college, speak up about their battles, it resonates more. It portrays a powerful message: "You are not alone, and it's okay to seek help."

### **My Personal Pledge**

As a peer wellness ambassador, I'm dedicated to facilitating a transformative dialogue around men's mental health on our campus. In collaboration with fellow students and faculty, I believe we can cultivate an environment where mental health is discussed as freely as any other topic.

### **In the quiet, unseen moments, our peers may be fighting battles we know nothing about.**

It's time we stand together, reach out, and show that being open about one's struggles is not just accepted but applauded. Our collective efforts can forge a campus ethos where every student, regardless of gender, feels seen, heard, and supported in their darkest times.

Let's break the silence on men's mental health. Because when we do, we're not just breaking barriers – we're building bridges to a more compassionate, empathetic, and supportive collegiate community.

*For those who are struggling, remember, reaching out for help is a testament to your strength. Our campus is a community, and in communities, we uplift one another.*

### **References:**

1. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/mens-mental-health-man-up-is-not-the-answer>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7444121/>
3. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/3811-mens-mental-health-how-are-canadian-men-doing>

### **Resources:**

1. [WeConnect - Student Mental Health and Wellness Program](#)
2. [Accessible Learning Services and Personal Counselling Services](#)
3. [Personal Counselling Articles](#)

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