



Men's Health Week

Inspire Workplaces Calendar, June 2021

Men's Health Week 2021 runs from 14th to 20th June. This year, we're looking at caring for our mental health as we emerge from our latest – and hopefully our last – round of Covid-19 restrictions.

The course of this pandemic has left many of us feeling emotionally exhausted. Nearly four in ten (38%) men surveyed in the UK last year noticed a negative effect on their mental health after the onset of the first lockdown in March 2020.ⁱ According to a second study, men reported declines in their mental health following the imposition of stringent Covid-19 measures.ⁱⁱ

The first wave of the Irish COVID-19 Psychological Survey suggested that mental health problems have been common and are affecting men and women differently: Over a third (38%) of men reported feeling lonely; with 1 in 5 (19%) reporting clinically meaningful levels of depression or posttraumatic stress disorder. Of all the risk factors investigated, the most important was found to be loneliness.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now, as the vaccine programmes continue their rollouts, society has a chance to start the process of moving on from Covid-19. To help with that, we want to emphasise our three key headings for a Covid-conscious post-lockdown reboot:

REBUILD, RESTART and RECONNECT...

REBUILD

In order to keep ourselves – and others – safe, we were all forced to change our routines in 2020, quickly adjusting how we worked, connected and lived.

As we look forward, this is the time to rebuild.

Lots of us will have stuck close to home since the pandemic began. With gyms closed, sporting activities curbed and access to public spaces limited, our fitness may have regressed. We might even have put on some weight.

One simple first step is to look after our physical health. Enjoy some fresh air, exercise, engage with the world outside and commit to a healthier diet.

According to the CDC, men are more likely to drink excessively than women. With lockdowns having changed how we socialise, as well as the amount of time we've been spending at home, now is a good opportunity to step back and objectively look at our drinking habits – taking positive steps if we need to cut down.

(See the further reading section for more on alcohol and mental and physical health.)

Rebuilding strong routines and healthy habits, will not only strengthen our bodies, but boost our wellbeing too.

RESTART

We've all been concerned with making it through each day, and that will have impacted our mental health in various ways. If it feels like life has been on hold, restart by making plans and gaining knowledge.

Given the obvious stresses faced during this once-in-a-century pandemic – such as juggling childcare, healthcare and work priorities – it's understandable to feel like we're languishing, unable to cope or lacking in motivation.

We can hit the reset button by 'cutting ourselves some slack' and concentrating on basic things: self-care, sleep, a balanced diet and physical activity.

Establishing specific, positive and easy-to-reach goals, following a clear daily regime and taking breaks to give ourselves a change of pace; all of these will enable us to focus on the tasks at hand and save us from becoming overwhelmed.

Nor is it necessary to face these things alone. Mental health and wellbeing issues can affect us all, but it's widely acknowledged that men are less likely to seek support when they need it.

It's important that we reach out and ask for help when we need to. If we're feeling unwell, mentally or physically, speak with a GP or start a conversation and let others know that it's OK to do the same.



Seek mental health information and resources from reliable sources. There's so much out there, just a click away. The more we know, the better prepared we will be to face the world once again.

The Inspire Support Hub is a great place to start. Accessible via your EAP, it contains a wide range of information and resources that can help you to make positive lifestyle choices.

For more, visit: www.inspiresupporthub.org

RECONNECT

The arrival of widespread remote working last year made it more of a challenge to keep in touch with colleagues, friends and family. Due to social distancing, our lives

became much narrower. It's crucial that we reconnect, safely.

Connecting is important because relationships can help us to build a sense of belonging and self-worth, providing emotional support and allowing us to share in positive experiences.

Re-socialising may initially seem daunting or awkward. We will have grown used to being disconnected from people; in fact, staying apart has been a major part of our efforts to slow the spread of the virus – feelings of uncertainty are to be expected. Throughout the process of readjustment, it is vital to be patient with ourselves. Remember: things may not be as they were before.

We can tackle anxieties by controlling what's controllable, pacing ourselves and not rushing into things we don't want to do. Setting small challenges every day will build up our tolerance levels and varying our schedules allows us to encounter new situations and different people.

Remember, you can use the '5 steps to wellbeing' database on the Inspire Support Hub for ideas on resources that can support your wellbeing. Visit: www.inspiresupporthub.org

REFERENCES:

- i Survey by YouGov and Jacamo, 2020
- ii Understanding Society, COVID-19 Survey Briefing Note, 2020
- iii www.maynoothuniversity.ie/news-events/covid-19-mental-health-survey-maynooth-university-and-trinity-college-finds-high-rates-anxiety
- iv www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/mens-health.htm

FURTHER READING:

Men's Health Forum UK

www.menshealthforum.org.uk/

Men's Health Forum in Ireland

www.mhfi.org/

Male Health

www.malehealth.ie

Alcohol and mental health:

www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/alcohol/mental-health/how-alcohol-affects-your-mental-health.html

and;

www.alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/fact-sheets/alcohol-and-mental-health

Alcohol and physical health:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/risks/

and;

www2.hse.ie/alcohol-and-health/

Managing feelings about lockdown easing

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/managing-feelings-about-lockdown-easing/

Mental Health Ireland, 5 Way to Wellbeing

www.mentalhealthireland.ie/five-ways-to-wellbeing/

PHA, Take 5 steps to Wellbeing

www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/take-5-steps-wellbeing-english-and-11-translations