

## **If you or someone you care about is in crisis:**

Men are often hesitant to share feelings or seek help, which may be why men are four times as likely to commit suicide as women.

If you or someone you care about is in crisis, **we urge you to seek help immediately.**

You can:

- Call your doctor or therapist
- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room
- Call 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255); TTY at 1-800-799-4889.
- In Connecticut: families in crisis can call 211 for counseling and support 24 hours a day.
- In New York City: Lifenet (1-800-LIFENET or 1-800-543-3638) is available 24 hours a day.



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For more information about men's depression and other topics, visit our website:

**[www.ManhattanMFT.com](http://www.ManhattanMFT.com)**

# **Too Strong for His Own Good: Men and Depression**

**What you need to know about this silent killer.**



Manhattan Marriage & Family Therapy

## MEN AND DEPRESSION

Depression is a major mood disorder that can have debilitating and long-reaching impact. It affects men and women equally, but men are less likely to seek treatment and **four times more likely to commit suicide**.

Societal norms make it difficult for men to share their struggles, express sadness or weakness. Strong emotions such as anger create the illusion of power and control, but also mask the feelings of defeat, failure, and inadequacy.

### Symptoms of depression in men

Although individual experiences may differ, some common depression symptoms among men should be a cause for concern when present for longer than two weeks. Fewer signs may suggest a milder depression while more symptoms indicate more severe depression. These include:

- Anger, irritability, or aggressiveness
- Anxiousness and restlessness
- Feeling sad, empty, or hopeless
- Appetite and weight change
- Feeling extremely tired or low energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Psychomotor agitation or delay
- Diminished interest in work, family, and activities you once enjoyed
- Poor concentration, difficulty remembering things or making decisions
- Low self-esteem or self-worth, or inappropriate guilt
- Isolating or withdrawing from others
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Substance abuse
- Back aches, headaches, heartburn and low sexual desire
- Working too much
- Suicidal thoughts or plans

Review **Depression Symptoms Checklist** on our website for quick self-assessment.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

### Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy provides a platform to talk about things that are troubling you, express feelings, address behaviors, and develop coping skills. The goal of individual therapy is to feel better and live to your fullest potential. Therapy is confidential and can be tailored to your unique needs and preferences. There are many different types of therapy.

Couples or family therapy is a form of talk therapy that provides people with an opportunity to strengthen emotional connections, repair attachment injuries, improve communication, and learn conflict resolution skills. When a relationship gets stronger each person in the relationship feels better.

### Medication

Psychiatric medications used to treat depression are called antidepressants. Different types of antidepressants address varying causes of depression and provide corresponding solutions. Although a general practitioner can prescribe antidepressants, a psychiatric specialist is usually better trained to assess the condition, find the best course of treatment, hone in on the right medication combination and dosage, and minimize any side effects.

It is important to note that antidepressants may take several weeks to become effective, may cause serious side effects, and should not be discontinued without doctor's supervision.

### Alternative treatments

Brain stimulation therapies rely on special devices to stimulate the brain using electric and magnetic fields and include the highly effective electroconvulsive therapy and transcranial magnetic stimulation.

**Learn more at [www.ManhattanMFT.com](http://www.ManhattanMFT.com) under Special Projects.**

## PERSONAL COPING SKILLS

- **Name your feelings.** Acknowledge and **name** your sad, lonely, rejected, abandoned, feelings. Be curious about them. Understand why they are happening or **what is triggering them**. Maybe it's the time of the year that is triggering sadness or a toxic relationship triggering rejection and abandonment. Next, think about **how to express what you are feeling**. Is it something that just needs to be acknowledged before the feeling passes or does it need to be shared with others, an action taken or a boundary set?
- **Get support.** Isolation feeds depression and boredom. Surround yourself with people you can vent to and share with: people you can lean on and count on in hard times. Reduce or distance from toxic relationships.
- **Practice good self-care.** Get plenty of sleep, exercise, eat well, avoid mind-altering substances, and be gentle on yourself by temporarily simplifying your schedule and lowering your performance expectations.
- **Amplify your positive experiences.** When we focus on negative self-talk and failure, we set ourselves up to fail and feel bad. Train your brain to focus on the good with positivity exercises. Make a list of positive things that happened today, scan the situation for the positive, be aware of negative thoughts and try to shift to positive. Go to places that encourage creativity, inspiration and joy. Find things that stimulate energy fun and curiosity even small things like opening the blinds, making the bed, eating a healthy yummy breakfast.
- **Practice gratitude.** Watch for the small signs of feeling better. Find gratitude in the small moments of relief from depression, notice the times when you feel stronger. A gratitude list can bolster new wins and help the mind recognize the shift from depression or loneliness. Honoring our support and expressing appreciation can make healing intentional.