

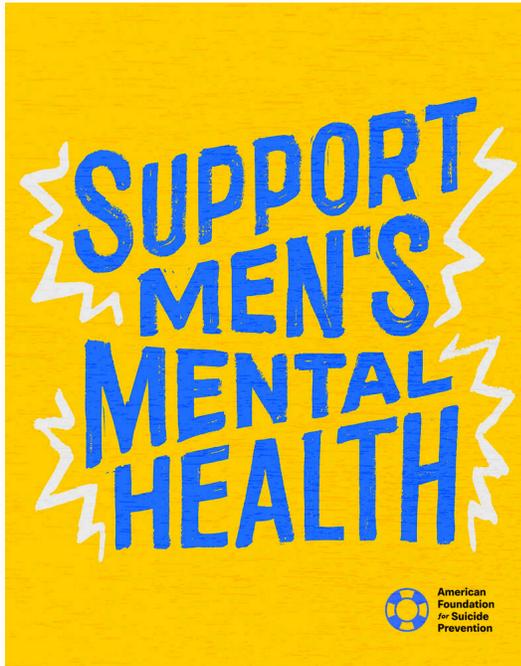
# Talking Tazewell

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June 2025, vol 4

The Wellness Playbook

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June is Men's Health Month, and while there's often a spotlight on physical health – things like fitness, routine check-ups, and heart health – mental health is just as important to overall well-being.

This month, The Wellness Playbook is focusing on men's mental health, a topic that too often goes unrecognized and overlooked.

Together, we can help to create a culture and a community where men feel safe to speak up and seek support. As we've said before (and will continue to say): you are not alone. No one should have to struggle in silence.

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## DID YOU KNOW...

5% of men and 6.3% of women surveyed in Tazewell County reported that they were unable to find mental health treatment when needed due to stigma, shame or lack of trust.

Because of factors like stigma or shame, men in Tazewell County died by suicide five times more often than women in 2022.



## Prevalence

Although men are less frequently diagnosed with mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety, they experience significantly higher suicide rates compared to women. This disparity may be influenced by several factors, including lower rates of healthcare utilization, misdiagnosis, limitations in existing assessment tools and harmful societal norms around masculinity that ultimately discourage vulnerability and help-seeking behaviors. Men are also more likely to express depression through external behaviors such as anger, social withdrawal, or substance use. Additionally, they are less likely to seek support – whether professional or informal – which can contribute to prolonged or worsening mental health challenges.

## How Can We Help?

Research suggests that the sooner a person receives help for a mental health challenge, the easier recovery is for the person. However, it is estimated that 11 years pass between the onset of symptoms and when a person reaches out or receives help. Imagine how much changes and happens over the course of a decade and how that could contribute to worsening mental health outcomes. We need to make sure that we are providing a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. Small steps can lead to significant change. So how can we help to best support the men in our lives?

- Encourage open conversations (with yourself or others)
  - Let them know it is okay to talk about emotions. Ask how they're really doing, and listen without the intent to "fix" – feeling heard can change everything.
  - Be patient and consistent. Not everything will come out at once. You want to cultivate a safe space for those who are struggling to come back to.
- Challenge stereotypes
  - Push back against toxic societal norms like "men don't cry", or "toughen up". Remind them that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Recognize the signs
  - Men may not always outwardly express distress through sadness or crying. Pay attention to shifts in behavior or hobbies.
- Normalize mental health support
  - Talk about therapy and self-care like you would any other routine health choice. It may be helpful to share your experiences with therapy if the situation calls for it.
- Promote healthy coping mechanisms
  - Therapy is a great place to start, but it can take time to get into. Whether it's insurance, waitlists, availability for therapists, transportation, etc., we want to encourage all positive outlets like exercise, hobbies or connecting with friends. Support doesn't need to be all formal all the time.

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HAVE AN IDEA OR TOPIC YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT?  
SEND IT OUR WAY!  
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