

Men? Emotions? Um, Yup.

Emotions Play a Larger Role for Men to Becoming Healthy than Most Realize

Stereotypes abound for all kinds of people. Unfortunately, often these stereotypes become no more than cardboard cutouts and vague generalizations; they don't come close to reflecting the reality—that a complex and ever-changing set of beliefs, logic, emotions, and personality make up a person's character, regardless of their gender or identity.

One pernicious stereotype for men lingers stubbornly in most western cultures: that men do not act or form decisions based on emotion.

It's bullshit, of course. But we keep on believing it!

The amazing thing is that this myth keeps hanging around like that red pimple exploding on your nose that doesn't seem to want to go away. What's worse is that men tend try to live out the myth. It's truly astounding how persistent it is. Author Daphne Rose Kingma wrote the following in *The Men We Never Knew*:

We've dismissed men as the feelingless gender—we've given up on them. Because of the way boys are socialized, their ability to deal with emotions has been systematically undermined. Men are taught, point-by-point, not to feel, not to cry, and not to find words to express themselves.

When it comes to recovery from addiction or other mental health issues, the myth of the emotionless man can be especially destructive. Life changes such as trying to quit

painkillers are no piece of cake; most will fail if they go at it alone. And the more frustrating it becomes for men, the more pain, shame, and anger they'll bottle up inside. Nine times out of ten, they'll fail and revert back to using.

Here are three big points at the role emotions play for men when they're trying to become healthy.

Emotions Prevent Men From Honestly Dealing With Their Addiction

The fact is that men possess the same wide scope of emotions as women and every other human being on the planet. Because certain stereotypically "feminine" emotions like sadness, shame, or vulnerability may be repressed, men will convert these feelings into more socially acceptable "male" emotions like anger, pride or simply by clamming up.

It's well known that parents, friends or other relatives of the person abusing alcohol or drugs have to deal with their own turmoil. Many times their own emotions get in the way of confronting a loved one about addiction. However, the men suffering from an addiction may not realize that their own emotions are hijacking their brain. Their emotions get in the way, too, of seeking a healthier lifestyle.

What ends up happening is that instead of dealing with the deeper emotional issues, some men will respond defensively when confronted about their problem. Others will bury the emotions deeper and refuse to address the truth of the situation. Men conclude that they are "just this way" and that "they can handle their liquor or drug use."

Emotional Repression May Manifest Itself in Physical Ailments for Men

Stuffing all those feelings way down is hard work! Are you the type of guy who gets frequent headaches or backaches? It's

possible that these physical manifestations arise not out of heavy lifting or looking at a computer screen too long. Emotional repression frequently gets “converted” to simply feeling like crap.

The double-whammy for men is that if they do reach out, socially it can mean that others will react adversely—society doesn’t like men to talk about their fears, vulnerabilities or weaknesses.

What does this mean for the guys struggling with an addiction or other mental health issues? They’ll end up reacting with the “most logical” decision that worked for them in the past—they’ll continue to abuse their drug or drink of choice.

And the whole vicious cycle continues. Fortunately, there is a solution.

Emotional Training & Support: Not as Scary as You Might Think

Learning to live in recovery doesn’t mean that all men have to become fuzzy, furry, emotional kitty cats. What it does mean is that men need to see that they are not weak or failures by addressing the deeper emotional realities in their lives.

Asking for help when a heroin or painkiller addiction gets way out of control is not failure; it’s wisdom!

Reaching out for advice from a coach or other professionally-trained addiction expert when your drinking has you spiraling is not weak; it takes incredible strength, in fact.

Finally, realizing also that many, many other men have already had to address their emotional lives is comforting. The way has been paved by heroes and other inspirational guys. You can do this! And your emotions are getting in the way. No, just the opposite—they’re guiding you to become a more authentic, whole human being.

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