



## How to manage mental health as a new dad

To mark this year's Movember campaign, our mental health experts have delved into the topic of paternal mental health.

Although many new dads struggle to cope with the transition to fatherhood, paternal mental health is still widely stigmatised and often overlooked. Struggling with the transition to fatherhood is not a sign of weakness.





## 5 practical strategies and exercises for managing paternal mental health

Accepting the challenges of fatherhood and taking proactive steps to manage mental health is a vital act of self-care during this time of huge change. We hope these practical strategies and exercises for managing paternal mental health are helpful to you or a family member

### 1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT can help you to reframe negative thoughts that may be contributing to feelings of anxiety or depression. By identifying and challenging these thoughts, you can learn to respond to them in healthier ways.

### 2. Responding to thoughts with compassion

When difficult emotions arise, take a moment to reflect on the thoughts behind them. Write down what you're thinking and ask yourself if these thoughts would hold up under scrutiny. Approach this process with self-compassion, understanding that you're doing your best in a challenging situation.

### 3. Living in line with your values

Identify the values that are most important to you and use them as a guide when making decisions. When faced with strong emotions, ask yourself how you can respond in a way that aligns with your values - "how can I respond as the person I want to be rather than how my emotions, thoughts or conditioning are telling me to?"

### 4. Explore your social world

Recognise that your mood is influenced by your social environment. Take stock of the people in your life and consider how they contribute to your wellbeing. Write down:

- What type of support these people provide (this could be emotional, practical, companionship, motivational)
- How close they are to you (do you need to move some people closer and others further away?)
- How available they are to you (can you make them more available and how?)
- Whether you think you need to identify new sources of social support (where can you get this from). Strengthening supportive relationships can help you manage stress.

### 5. Pros and cons of old and new life

We can (particularly when feeling distressed or overwhelmed) idealise our pre-parental life and forget the benefits of our new role as a father. Taking some time to objectively review this can help you to regain perspective. There will be things you have lost and things you have gained.

You could start by looking at your losses along with your values:

- What was it about the things you lost that you valued?
- Is there a new way you can regain this value that fits into your new life as a dad?
- Was it sitting in the pub you valued or was it the opportunity to connect with friends?
- How could you connect with friends in a new way?





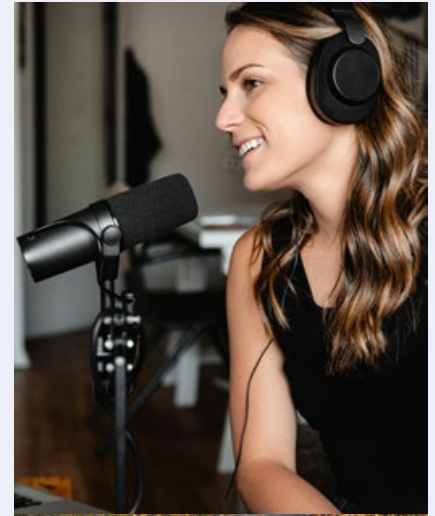


## Why can the transition to fatherhood be so challenging?

Becoming a father is a life-changing journey, which can be filled with joy and love. But the transition to fatherhood can also bring significant stress and challenges into life.

Here are five important points that may be helpful to understand:

- 1 Know that it's normal to experience emotional distress as fatherhood will likely impact the social, psychological and biological aspects of life
- 2 The challenges that come with parenting such as lack of sleep, hormonal changes (yes, men experience this too), and shifting relationship dynamics can contribute to low mood and anxiety
- 3 Plus, modern fathers are now expected to be more involved in childcare, which can create tension as they navigate traditional roles and modern expectations
- 4 Feeling overwhelmed is common for new fathers. The feeling of uncertainty may be particularly heightened for those who do not have a positive role model in their own family. It's likely that generations before us took on more traditional gender roles, so opportunities to learn how to be a dad with current expectations were likely to be limited
- 5 Societal stereotypes of masculinity may also discourage dads from seeking the support they need, which can have a significant effect on a dad's wellbeing.



## Making People Better podcast

### Men's mental health

An informative discussion exploring the stigmas and challenges facing men when talking about mental health with Dr Omar Kowlessar, clinical lead with Vita Health Group and James Aukett, a representative of [Andy's Man club](#), a suicide prevention charity offering peer-to-peer support groups.

[Listen here](#)

## What is Movember?



**Movember** is an annual event involving the growing of moustaches during the month of November to raise awareness of men's health issues such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and men's mental health and suicide.

Movember looks at mental health through a male lens, focusing on prevention, early intervention and health promotion. The charity is working towards a world where men take action to be mentally well, and are supported by those around them.

To find out more about the Movember movement and to find out how you can get involved, visit: [www.uk.movember.com](http://www.uk.movember.com)