Inspiring Minds, Driving Wellbeing

thrive 4life

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Understanding Mental Health:

The Unseen Assassin



Ross Abbott

Workplace Health & Wellbeing Specialist

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About the Session

This webinar explored mental health, an issue that can affect people personally, professionally or through someone close to them. The session focused on recognising pressure earlier, starting supportive conversations and taking action before things reach crisis point.

Ross Abbott guided attendees through what mental health really means, how pressure can build quietly, and how to recognise signs in yourself and others. He also shared practical advice on how to check in with someone, what to do if they do not want to talk, how to support someone towards appropriate help, and why everyday wellbeing habits can play an important role in protecting mental health.



About the Speaker

Ross Abbott is one of Thrive4Life's lead facilitators in corporate mental health and wellbeing, supporting organisations across the Lloyd's market and wider City.

Known for his practical, candid and engaging approach, Ross brings together professional expertise, lived experience and advocacy work to make conversations around mental health, neurodiversity and inclusion more accessible, relevant and real.

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Why Men's Health Deserves Attention

- 4 — Men live nearly 4 years less than women
- 2 in 5 men don't reach 75
- Many causes – heart disease, suicide, preventable conditions
- Earlier action saves lives



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The Current Picture of Men's Mental Health

52%

52% of men are concerned to take time off work due to mental health

46%

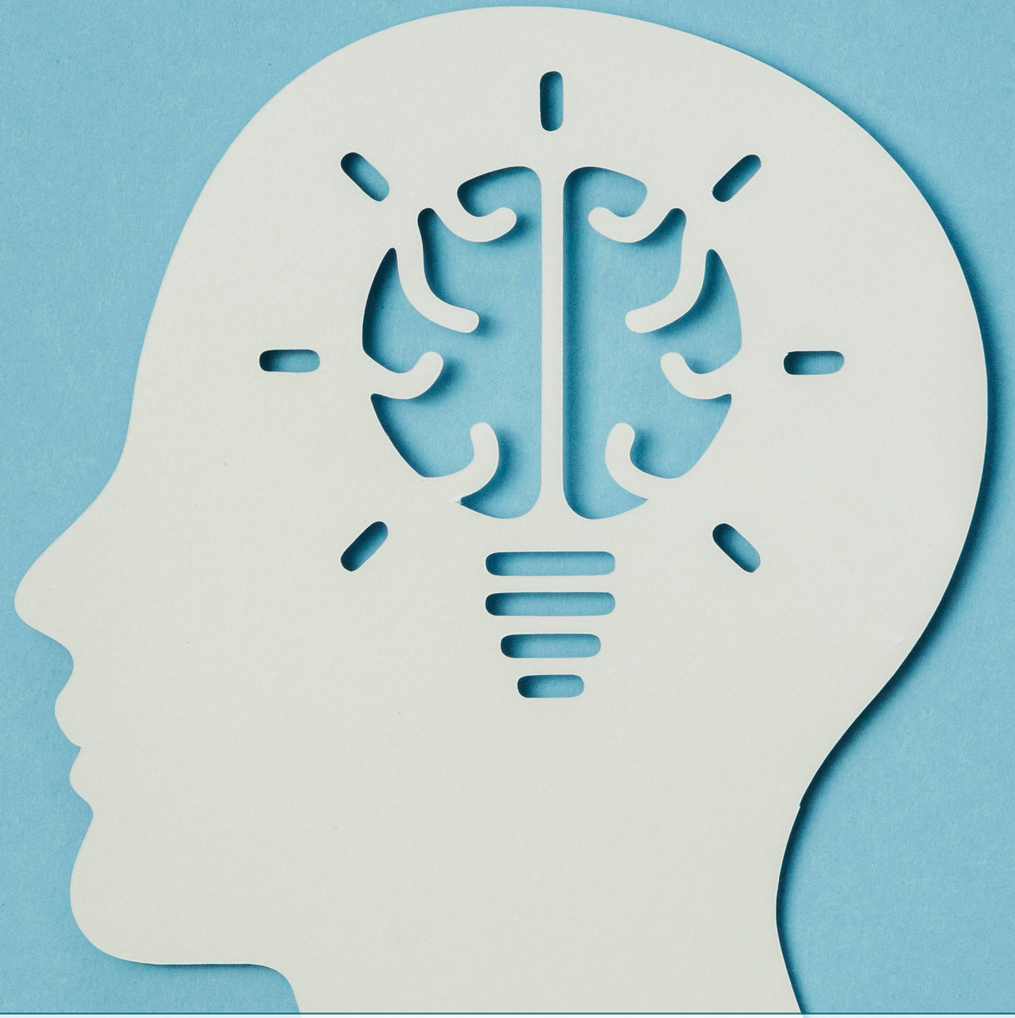
46% of men are embarrassed to tell their work about their mental health

36%

Only 36% of referrals to the NHS are from men

75%

75% of all deaths by suicide are male



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Men Can Talk: Debunking the Myth

- The idea that “men can’t talk” is outdated
- Most men want to open up but face barriers
- Societal messages like “man up” discourage vulnerability
- True strength includes honesty and self-care



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The Barriers Men Can Face



Fear of judgement or stigma



Internalised masculinity and pressure to “hold it together”



Difficulty identifying and expressing emotions



Lack of safe spaces, role models, and supportive environments



Workplace and cultural norms discouraging openness

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What is Mental Health?



Mental health is a state of wellbeing where a person can recognise their strengths, handle everyday stress, work productively, and contribute to their community.

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Good, Poor and Ill Mental Health



GOOD MENTAL HEALTH?

- Motivated
- Interacting positively with others
- Productive
- Good concentration and focus



POOR MENTAL HEALTH?

- Low mood & motivation
- Distracted or preoccupied
- Lack of energy or tired
- Irritable or short-tempered

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Definition of Stress: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly



What is Stress?

Stress is the body's natural response to change or challenge.



Positive Stress

Positive stress (also known as eustress) can help motivate, improve focus, and boost performance.



Poor Stress

Poor stress occurs when demands exceed our resources and ability to cope.



Ugly Stress

Ugly stress is chronic, overwhelming, and damaging to both physical and mental health.



Everyone has a different capacity for stress. Recognising and managing your own stress is essential.

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Spotting the Signs

Mental health challenges can manifest differently in men compared to how they might be typically portrayed or understood.
Look out for changes such as:



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Spotting the Signs in Yourself

Ask yourself:

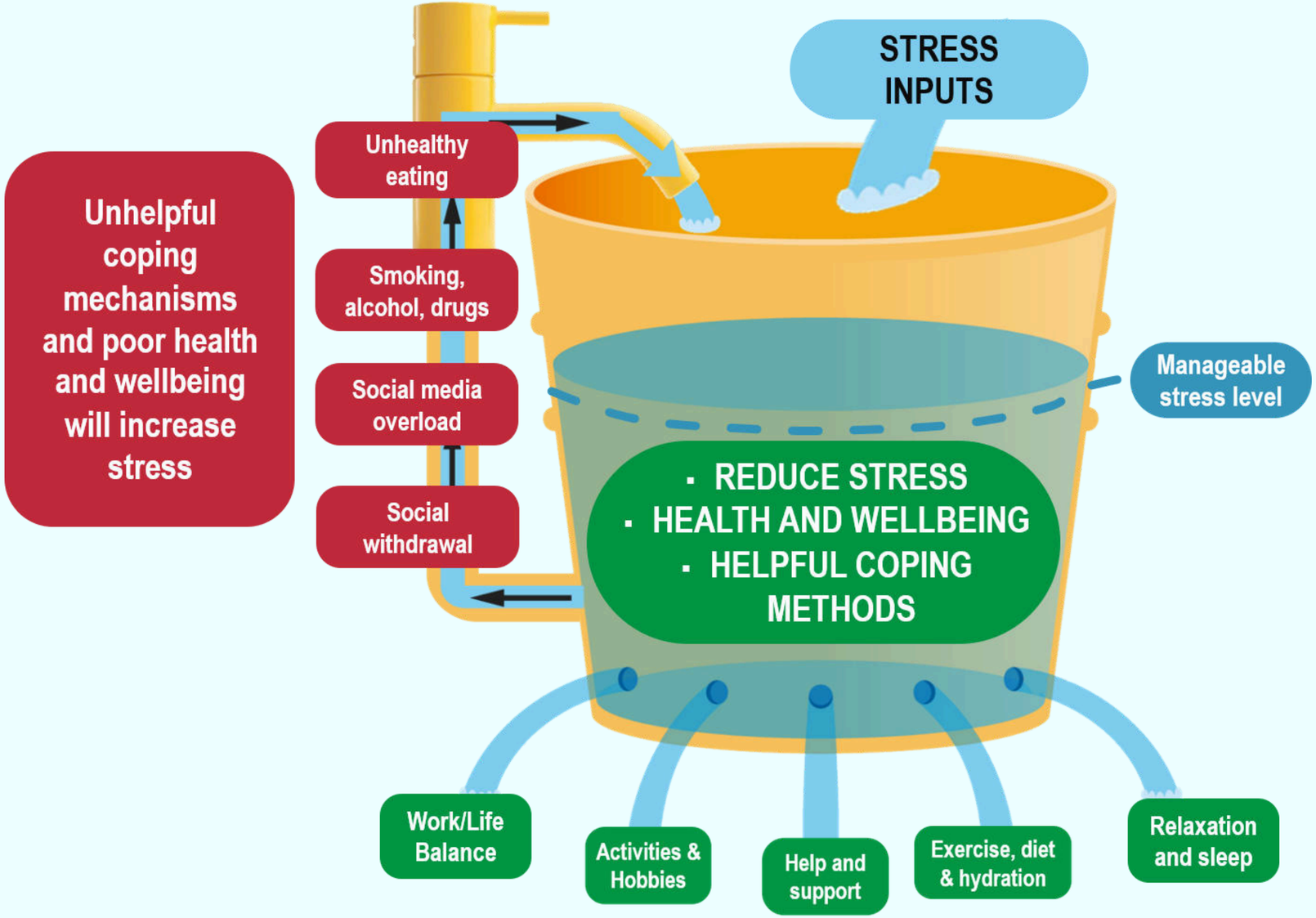
- What has changed in me recently?
- Am I sleeping differently?
- Am I more irritable or withdrawn?
- Am I using unhealthy coping habits?
- What am I avoiding?
- Who knows how I really am?



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What's In Your Stress Bucket?

- Stress can build gradually when several pressures add up at once.
- Workload, financial stress, poor sleep, conflict, family pressure and health concerns can all fill the bucket.
- Recognising what is filling your bucket can help you take small steps to release pressure before it overflows.



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Checking In: How to Start the Conversation

1. **Start casual:** Ask about their day or hobbies to build trust and rapport.
2. **Be gentle but direct:** Notice changes and offer a listening ear.
3. **Listen actively:** Focus on hearing them without judgment or advice.
4. **Validate feelings:** Acknowledge their emotions and experiences.
5. **Offer support and space:** Help practically if needed and respect boundaries.



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Offering Support If Someone Doesn't Want to Talk

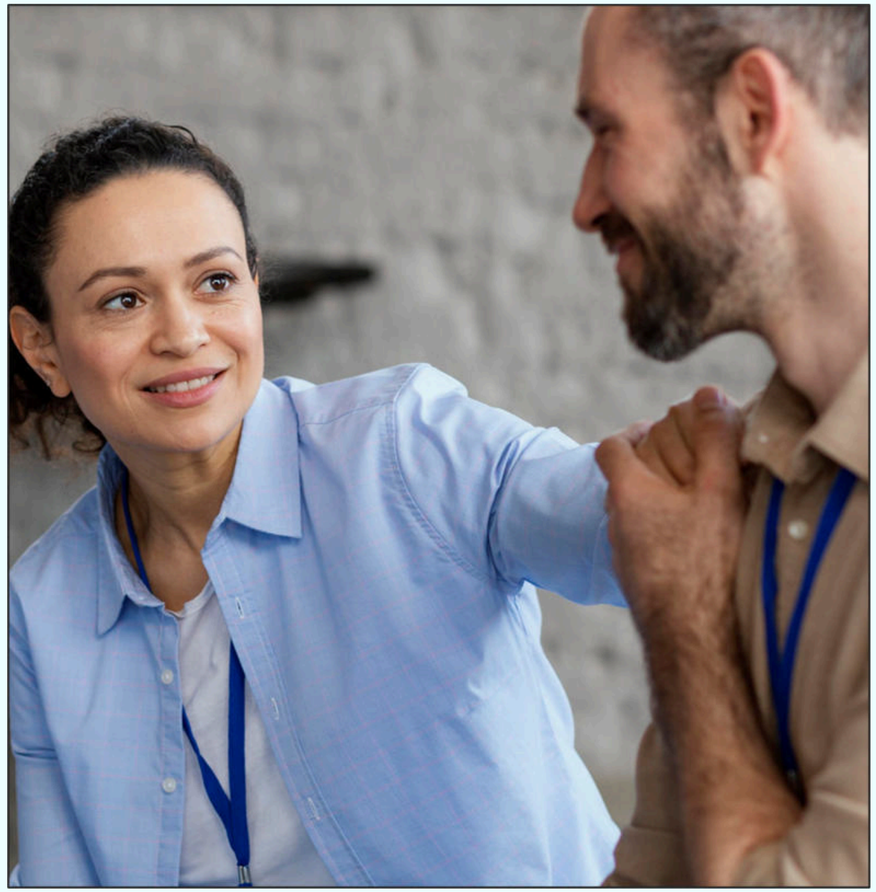
- Respect boundaries – don't push for a conversation
- Offer small, practical coping strategies if appropriate
- Show support without expectations or demands
- Check in periodically - presence matters more than words



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Supporting Men to Seek Help

- Know where to signpost: GP, EAP, NHS, helplines
- Peer groups: Andy's Man Club, CALM, Walk and Talk for Men
- Therapy is a strength - not weakness



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The Importance of Holistic Wellbeing



Social Connection

Strong social connections help reduce isolation, regulate stress and create a sense of belonging and support



Nutrition

Balanced nutrition supports energy, concentration and mood, while alcohol, caffeine and skipped meals can affect resilience



Exercise

Movement helps the body process stress, reduce tension and support mood, sleep and overall mental wellbeing



Sleep

Good sleep helps regulate emotion, concentration and decision-making, giving the brain and body time to recover

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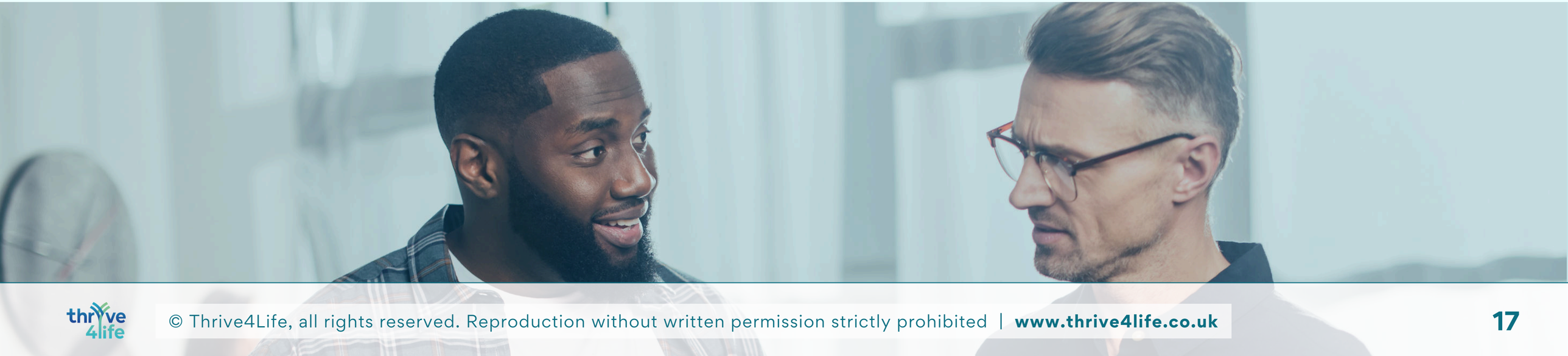
Changing the Culture

Replace “man up” with “speak up”

Normalise conversations in everyday life

Positive role models make a difference

Workplaces can lead by example



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Key Takeaways



Mental health can be unseen, but it should not be unsupported



A simple, kind check-in can make it easier for someone to open up



Distress may show as changes in mood, sleep, behaviour or coping habits



If someone does not want to talk, keep the door open and check in again



Noticing changes early can help someone feel seen before crisis point



Holistic wellbeing habits help release pressure before it builds too far



You do not need proof to check in with someone you are worried about



Earlier conversations can change outcomes

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National Signposting Options

For men's mental health information and awareness
Movember | MANUP?

For peer support and connection
Andy's Man Club | Walk & Talk for Men

For suicide prevention and emotional support
CALM | Samaritans

For 24/7 text-based crisis support
Text SHOUT to 85258

If someone is in immediate danger
Call 999 or go to A&E



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