

Get A Jump Start On The
Therapy Process

LET'S GET TO WORK

*A Practical Guide To
Starting Therapy For Men*

DENVER MEN'S THERAPY



We are
happy you
are here.
Welcome.

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*“When we are no longer able to change a situation,
we are challenged to change ourselves.”*

— Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

How to use the guide?

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". As cliché as it sounds there is a lot of wisdom in these words. The goal of this book is to help you with the important first step. This book will provide education about the therapy process and some common issues men address in therapy. In addition, there are some great resources and tips to improve your mental wellness. At Denver Men's Therapy one of our mottos is "Get Him In The Door." We have found over and over that once a guy gets his first therapy session under his belt a lot of the worries and misconceptions about therapy melt away. The reality is therapy is a powerful tool to improve your life and the lives of those we love. We hope this book will be useful in starting your therapy journey. So congratulations on taking the first step.

This book is broke up into two sections. Section One explores the therapy process and common mental health issues men experience. Section Two provides exercises and resources to get a jump start on the therapy process.

1.

New to Therapy? Here's What to Expect

By Tad Lusk, LPC

Reaching out for help is not always easy. In fact, it's most often very hard.

It takes courage, determination, fortitude and openness. It can be difficult to summon those if you're going through a rough patch in life.

In this chapter, I'm going to lay out clearly what you can expect at Denver Men's Therapy—on your first visit, and any future appointments (and do some myth-busting along the way).

Ready? Let's get to it.

What is therapy all about?

In a nutshell, therapy is working with a trusted confidant and adviser (i.e. your therapist) to become a better version of yourself. How does that happen? Read on.



What does the process involve? What's a typical appointment like?

Typical therapy appointments are very much like having a conversation. The difference is, your therapist will often ask questions or suggest things to think about that will help you gain more self-awareness and insight. With that, you can change habits that aren't working for you any more, and start doing things that will get you feeling good. Your therapist might suggest techniques you can try during the week.

A couple great things about these conversations are:

It's totally confidential. Nothing leaves the room, so what you discuss will be kept private, and therefore you can feel more comfortable discussing things that might otherwise feel too private.

It's nonjudgmental. Your therapist is one of the few (if only) people in your life who is objective, and will not judge you for anything. In fact, it's a very important code of conduct for therapists to maintain a balanced, open perspective (and trust me, there's pretty much nothing we haven't heard, so you don't need to feel embarrassed or worried about what we'll think).

How Long Will it Take?

Therapy always has an end in sight. We want to help you get to where you're doing so well on your own that don't need therapy anymore. (Similar to if you had to go to physical therapy to rehab an injury: after enough visits, you'd eventually get strong & mobile enough to be done with treatment go enjoy your life).

With that said, the average number of sessions varies depending on the person, symptoms and personal goals. Some people come for just two or three sessions and feel like they got everything they needed. Other people will come for longer if they have more to work through.

After meeting for the first time, your therapist can give you a much better estimate of how many sessions would be best depending on your individual goals.

How Often Should I Go?

We usually recommend an appointment once a week. (Each appointment is an hour). Once weekly therapy has been shown to be the most effective at helping people make more rapid progress, see quicker results, and get done sooner.

Is Therapy Going to Change My Personality?

No—contrary to what you may have seen on TV or movies, we are not hypnotists or magicians who are going to try to make you into someone else. We're people just like you, who've personally worked through a lot of the issues our clients deal with, and have gained years of experience and training to give you good information and advice. We're here to help you become more yourself - the most healthy, happy, confident version of you possible.

What Happens at the First Visit?

You and your therapist will sit down for about an hour to get to know each other, and get an overview of why you're seeking help. Your therapist will likely ask you some follow up questions about your personal history to help make sure the direction of therapy will be tailored to your needs. You are also welcomed and encouraged to ask any questions might have

By the end of your first visit, you'll identify goals to work on, get some action steps to try when you leave, and schedule your next session.

Now, let's clarify what therapy is, and is not.

Therapy IS:

- Goal-oriented
- Action-oriented
- Empowering

Therapy is NOT:

- An open-ended conversation with no end in sight
- A "mysterious" process - your therapist will always be open and honest with you
- Anything to be embarrassed or ashamed of.
- That last one is super important to remember. Therapy is nothing to feel guilty or embarrassed about.

As men, we've been conditioned by society, our dads, our coaches etc. be tough and stoic, and "have it all together."

In reality, all people need help sometimes. By reaching out for help, you're actually showing way more strength and courage than people who just try to go it alone, suffering in silence.

Seriously, you can be really proud for going to therapy. You'll thank yourself later too, when you feel happier, healthier, more confident, and are enjoying your life and relationships fully.

2.

Modern Man: Therapy as Part of Your Health Plan

By Stephen Rodgers, LCSW

Modern Man. We're an interesting breed at this point. Living somewhere half in the future with remnants of the past (we use computers for everything except for the main machine we use each day, our cars).

And, some of us have decided that the sky's still the limit. And, we work on ourselves. Each day, we strive to be better than the day before. We're list makers. We're doers. We're organized. We fix things. We work out and we eat healthy.

Some people call us Super Man. We call ourselves still “improvable.”

Therapy is a way to break through any perceived inadequacies or see a previously unseen angle on a situation. It can be the last puzzle piece to your already well thought-out plans.

Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger

If you're still reading, you're the type of guy who seeks to always better himself. It's noble. It shows you care about yourself and others. There are times though, when you feel less sure of yourself than others, just like all of us humans do. And when you have an objective confidant meeting on the calendar (you'll know the feeling when you get to this point), it's so much easier to let the small things be small things and get through your week. Without arguments from those small things, you'll also notice your time free up. Maybe you'll even get to squeeze in a hobby you enjoy. Pick up game anyone? Jog through your neighborhood? Actually got the dog on a walk every day?

Having a mental break where you can just let it all go is such a relief too. If you're the go-getter type, you're always moving and thinking. Why not take a break. When you take a moment to meditate as well, it's easier to approach your problems. Meditation is just one part though (you should add it in anyway). The other part is working through sometimes complex details with someone who is trained and interested in the human mind and behavior. A therapist can help you identify the stem of an issue or a

pattern you might be creating so that you can attempt to purge negativity from your life in order to take you to the next level.

Broken Records and Brick Walls

In a lot of relationships, talking to the other is either like listening to a broken record or talking to a brick wall. I get it. Communication between loved ones of all types of relationships (family, friends, co-workers, bosses) sometimes breaks down. Your communication with your therapist on the other hand, has a much harder time of breaking down. That's because I am experienced and trained to listen. I am here to listen to you. And, I'm here to help you breakthrough by being a sounding board to what's going on in your life.

What types of situations cause a communication breakdown? It can be misunderstandings, dashed expectations, or a loved one just not even thinking about your needs. It can be delicate family situations, an ex-partner, custody or dealing with the aging of a parent. Other times, your career might be the issue. Perhaps you've communicated to HR about an issue you've been having or your boss just won't agree with your proposals on a raise. Therapy can help with ideas on how to approach communication issues, by using communication itself within a session. The therapist has no connection with the people who are bringing stress into your life and therefore can help you work on the different options available to you to communicate with them. It's excellent practice before

talking about a loaded subject, a nagging issue, or to ask a request.

99 Problems and Stress is One

Cortisol. It builds up in your body and causes.... stress. Lots of it at times. Sometimes so much that you're overwhelmed to the point where you're not even functioning properly. You snap at people you normally wouldn't. Everything seems to take longer than normal. You dread your day the moment you wake up. These times happen! Regularly. Sometimes in a cycle, sometimes not for a while, sometimes all at once. You know. Anyway, having an appointment to look forward to to simply organize your mind? It's awesome. And, the goal is that it will make the rest of your life stress easier to deal with, putting you at an even more optimal place of health than you were before regular therapy.

3.

10 Signs of Depression in Men

By Stephen Rodgers, LCSW

Clinical depression affects more than 6 million men in the U.S. Our beloved state of Colorado has a very high rate of suicide among men as compared to the rest of the country.

Clinical depression for women and men is marked by sadness and a loss of interest in once pleasurable activities. But depression can present differently in different people, particularly with men.

Here are 10 signs of depression in men.

Irritability

Many men that I see in my practice either complain of feeling irritable all the time or that their partner or close friend is always telling them they are irritable and easily annoyed. This irritability is usually associated with continued negative thoughts.

Too much or too little sleep

Sleep problems such as insomnia, waking up very early in the morning, or excessive sleeping are common depression symptoms. Sometimes men who struggle with depression have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. This often results in fatigue.

In addition, many of the men I see in my practice are experiencing both chronic pain and depression. Back pain or stomach ache, constipation or diarrhea, as well as headaches and back pain, are common in people who are depressed. It is important to visit your primary care doctor to rule out any other causes of back pain or stomachache.

Difficulty concentrating

A typical complaint I hear in my therapy practice from depressed men is difficulty focusing or concentrating. Psychomotor delay can slow down a man's ability to process information, thereby impairing concentration on

work or other tasks. A depressed man might be preoccupied with negative thoughts, thereby making it difficult to concentrate on important tasks.

Anger

Many depressed men become angry or hostile. In my practice I often hear men state how they are concerned with how angry they get. They will tell me, “These days I get really angry, like I want to hurt someone. But that’s not like me. I am a peaceful guy.”

Sometimes depressed man isolate themselves because they are concerned that they're out of control anger will result in someone getting hurt.

Stress

As a society we have seen an increase in stress related illnesses. Chronic stress can lead to depression. On the other hand depression can depleted a man’s ability to effectively cope with everyday stress.

What was once a manageable level of stress can become overwhelming for the depressed male.

Anxiety

Research demonstrates a strong link between depression and anxiety. Anxiety can come in many forms including social anxiety, panic attacks, overwhelming fear and avoidance.

Substance abuse

A therapist and mentor of mine once described substance abuse as a misery stabilizer. In other words, substance abuse keeps you miserable. However, most depressed men who abuse substances do so in an attempt to cope with symptoms associated with depression. Alcohol is a depressant, very often depressed men use alcohol to cope, which can cause the depression to get worse.

Isolation

Depressed men often isolate themselves from family and friends. Not only does this mean physically not being around others, it can also mean being preoccupied with using a smart phone or computer. In the case of smart phones, some men can be physically present in a social situation, but in fact also be isolating themselves by using the device.

Suicidal thoughts

As stated earlier, suicide in Colorado is higher than the national average. While men attempt suicide at a lower rate compared to women, they are more likely to die from the attempt. This is because men often chose a more deadly way to kill themselves.

If you or someone you love is experiencing depression, the good news is that there is help. Psychotherapy is a scientifically proven way to treat depression. There are no side effects to psychotherapy. Often times men do not treat their depression due to the stigma of mental illness.

However, this is changing. Here in Colorado we have an excellent campaign to address male depression and male mental illness. Its called Man Therapy. It addresses a serious issue in a hilarious way. Imagine Ron Burgundy talking about depression! mantherapy.com

4.

How Men Experience Anxiety

By Stephen Rodgers, LCSW

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in America, affecting more than 40 million adults. Though men and women experience anxiety, anxiety in men and the way men express it is quite different than their female counterparts.

Anxiety is normal

Everyone gets anxiety. Not all anxiety is “bad” or means we have an anxiety disorder. In fact, anxiety can be very helpful in preparing us for an important project or life

event. We all know that feeling we get in our stomach when we have an upcoming test or work presentation. That anxiety feeling is our body's way of telling us we need to prepare or be ready. That is healthy anxiety. However, anxiety can become unhealthy if we ignore it or allow it to build over time. As we avoid dealing with what's making us anxious, it can become so overwhelming we shut down. Or in the case of many men, that anxiety turns to anger. Because we live in an increasingly stressful and demanding world, it's important that we be aware of our own anxiety levels.

How men experience anxiety

Men are generally less likely to be diagnosed with anxiety, and less likely to get treatment for it. A big reason for this is that men seek treatment less frequently and minimize their symptoms. While women are more comfortable allowing themselves to be more emotionally vulnerable, men often incorrectly see this as a weakness, feeling pressure to handle their emotions in a more masculine way. This old-school view of being a man is extremely unhealthy and may increase our anxiety.

Men don't want to be seen as weak so they attempt to ignore or mask their anxiety. This results in men manifesting their anxiety in these ways:

- Anger and irritability
- Headaches
- Muscle aches and pains
- Sleeping problems
- Strained relationships
- Men attempt to cope with their anxiety by:

- Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- “Bottle it up” and ignore it.
- Attempt to control others and their environment.

Men with anxiety disorders can often be aggressive rather than worrisome or nervous. They avoid emotional expression and refuse to be vulnerable, which then comes out in explosions of anger or rage. When it comes to depression, men often isolate themselves from loved ones. They also refuse to talk about their feelings and feel pressure to appear stoic.

Anxiety Disorders

It’s common that many of us who have an anxiety disorder also have depression and vice versa. And it’s also important to note that there are a number of different kinds of anxiety disorders. Some of the most common are:

GAD or Generalized Anxiety Disorder - GAD is characterized by persistent and excessive worry about a number of different things, with difficulty controlling it and often expecting the worst.

Panic Disorder - People who experience repeated spontaneous, out-of-the-blue panic attacks and are constantly worried about another attack.

Social Anxiety Disorder - Also called social phobia, Social Anxiety Disorder is intense anxiety or fear of being judged or rejected in a social setting.

Specific Phobias - People with phobias like a fear of heights, bugs, and new places suffer from strong, irrational fears of these and many other common (and some not-so-common) things. They will often feel powerless and actively avoid them.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder - More commonly known as PTSD, this disorder is a serious, potentially debilitating condition that can occur in people who have been exposed to traumatic events.

What can you do about your anxiety?

There are a number of things you can do to help with anxiety. Things like eating healthier and exercising on a regular basis. Learning to open up and talk about what's bothering you can also help you feel more grounded and present. We suggest engaging in healthy activities that you love. Being outside, yoga, working out or hanging out with loved ones are all research-supported ways to reduce anxiety.

If you're a man feeling like you might have an anxiety disorder or even just struggle with your anxiety, you should seek help in the form of therapy. Seeing a therapist is not a sign of weakness. Getting support is difficult to ask for, it takes strength to ask for help. In therapy, you'll learn tools you can use to help identify the cause of your anxiety. You can also learn how to cope with anxiety, so you can live a happier and healthier life.

5.

Why it's hard for men to talk about their mental health

by Jim Woods

Have you thought about why it's hard for men to talk about their mental health still in modern times? We all face different challenges in our lives. Whether these struggles are big or small, many men need to address the toll these struggles have on their mental health. All too often, men simply hold in their emotions and do not let anyone else

know how they really feel. But why do men have such a hard time talking about mental health?

“Be Like Mike”

First, most men were taught by our culture to be the strong, silent type that focuses on winning at all costs. Think about it: when growing up, we often idolize movie stars like Clint Eastwood, athletes like Michael Jordan, and superheroes like Batman and Superman. These men are all larger than life. While there is nothing wrong with movies, sports or comic books, these are not necessarily good examples of how men should act. Clint Eastwood is very different in real life than how he appears on a movie screen. Very few people know Michael Jordan in real life versus Michael Jordan the athlete. Batman and Superman are both fictional characters that were created by writers. When men fail to live up to these unachievable expectations, they often internalize their disappointment and never address it. Men can aspire for greatness, but they need to make sure they are focusing on reality rather than what is shown on screen.

“Don’t Be a Crybaby”

In many cases, men have been told directly (or indirectly) that “real men don’t cry.” This approach often leads to compartmentalization or stuffing emotions inside. However, at some point, internalized emotions start to overflow. These unaddressed feelings may come out as random bursts of anger like road rage, breaking things or screaming at someone. Whatever the case, emotions will

find an outlet. That's why it is so important to express how we truly feel and not numb ourselves with short-term fixes.

“Nothing’s Wrong”

Many men have mental health issues like depression and don't even know it. As a result, the mental health issue goes untreated. Alcohol or other drugs become ways to cope. Over time, a tolerance to the drug builds. In many cases, it becomes difficult to know the symptoms of the mental health issue versus the symptoms of substance abuse. This is a serious problem because untreated mental illness can lead to other problems. A staggering 75 percent to 80 percent of those who commit suicide are men. The great news is that effective treatment is available.

What You Can Do Next

The best first step is to talk to your doctor. Just mention that you are not feeling well emotionally. Don't make assumptions like you will need to take medication or go to therapy from now on. Just go in with an open mind, and be honest with your doctor. He will not think less of you. No one – including your spouse or partner – will think less of you for seeking help.

In addition to talking with your doctor, simply exercising can make a big difference. When you exercise, you give your entire body a boost. It is completely healthy, unlike the pleasurable feelings you get from having a few too many beers or using drugs. Exercise has many health benefits: it helps you lose weight, sleep better and can even boost your sexual performance. You'll likely also find that exercise boosts your mood and overall wellbeing. Just like

you exercise your physical body, meditation and self-awareness are exercises for your mind. Start a journaling habit where you express on paper what you're feeling, giving yourself a daily check-in time to empty out your thoughts.

Another important step you can take is to simply talk with a close friend about how you feel and how you're doing. I know it's hard for men to talk about their mental health, I know. Yet, when you have others around you, lifting you up, you have hope. Every time you talk to your doctor, a friend or loved one about your mental health, you help to get rid of the stigma that keeps so many men in pain.

5.

Six Important Boundaries in Romantic Relationships

Okay! You've recently developed a steady relationship with the women of your dreams! Or, maybe you are in a relationship that could use some revamping for both you and them to keep the romance brewing. One thing that should always be considered is the need for boundaries in relationships.

It is important that a relationship have healthy and consistent boundaries for both parties to continue to develop personally, as well as a couple. And, boundaries

help the relationship to be free of any unnecessary conflicts.

Here are six topics that you might want to consider to make sure that both parties maintain healthy boundaries in romantic relationships.

Lack of Boundaries

Have you ever been in a relationship that started off steamy, but quickly dwindled once your personal investments became, not so personal anymore? Your choices, your actions, your interests suddenly became one of scrutiny and finally disinterest that left you bearing the brunt of a broken relationship.

Well this, my friend, can be the result of lack of firmly set boundaries from the get-go. Lack of boundaries can lead your partner in expecting your full attention, constant shared interest and friends. It can also result in you denying your own personal choices and needs. You might also start to bend over backwards to make your partner happy, agreeing to their every demand. However, this view of what is expected in a relationship is unrealistic and unsustainable. Eventually, the relationship that started out hot and exciting will burn out as you become more resentful because you didn't set firm boundaries in your romantic relationships at the start.

Keep your Social Life

Do you remember when you had that group of friends before the relationship? The ones that you went out with, worked out, had lunch, and went to events with? Well those

same friends are still important and needed in your life. Although you may have developed a difference in lifestyle, and the freedom of going out to a concert or party every weekend is no longer a realistic for you in lieu of your relationship, it is important to keep in contact. You need a social outlet in your relationship!

Set the boundary with your partner of what situations are approved and unapproved and make it fair for both of you. If a night out with the boys is what you can responsibly achieve, then let your partner know how important it is for you to blow off steam with the guys alone. In fact, your partner should be doing the same with their select group of friends.

Taking time to immerse yourself in a social outlet, whether it be friends or family members. Doing so can give you some tips on how to improve and maintain a health romantic relationship, reality checks on what you may be doing wrong, and gives you the freedom to be yourself in moments when you may not be able to present that side to your partner. Which brings us to our next topic.

Be yourself!

Don't set yourself up for failure by taking on the personality traits and actions of your partner. If this happens to be the case, then you may want to reconsider your compatibility with the one you have chosen to 'settle down with'.

You don't want to allow yourself to be over-involved in a relationship with someone that you eventually find is not sharing the same views that you once had. It is important to sacrifice a little self-interest every now in then. Not only will this show respect of the uniqueness of your partner,

dabbling in their interests which may ultimately lead to the development of new and healthy interests of your own. However, being over-involved in EVERYTHING that your partner does out of their own self interest can not only leave you feeling drained and at risk of burn-out but cause you to lose your own self-identity in the process.

Prevent Co-Dependency

Another important fact that needs to be taken into consideration is the possibility of relying too much of your partner. Or vice-versa. If you start to feel that you must deny yourself your basic needs and wants in order to make your partner happy and want to be with you or you feel responsible for your partners feelings, then you are risk of developing a codependent relationship.

Not only is codependency a popular problem in relationship, but it is considered a maladaptive personality stemming from a history of abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment. The last thing that you want to surface in your relationship is the feeling that your unmet needs are only satisfied by your partner, leaving your powerless to fend for yourself.

Codependency leads to unhappy relationships as your thoughts and behaviors are always at jeopardy to the one that you hold dear, even against the logic or preference of your own.

Keep Conflicts Fair

Finally, every couple has conflict. We all get into disagreements with our partners. In fact how you resolve them is often more important than the actual

problem. Regardless if the conflict is about your friend's behaviors, your behaviors, finances, personal struggles, it is important to remember boundaries in the heat of the moment.

Although our impulses and strong beliefs may lead us to want to say exactly what it is on our mind, the way you approach both you and your partners boundaries can make the biggest difference in how this conflict plays out. Set rules for both yourself and your partner. Share these rules with your partner and highlight what happens if these rules are crossed.

Never allow yourself or your partner to violate that line of respect with thoughtless or impulsive attacks of words or behaviors that may be done out of anger. Communicating (there is that word again) and compromising while respecting each other's boundaries can quickly diffuse a situation, although both partners still may not agree on the issue at hand. Most importantly, never say anything that you can't take back.

While this focus may not encompass all aspects of boundaries in a relationship, they can definitely get you on the right path to making sure that both you and your partner develop or maintain a healthy and successful relationship. If you find yourself in a relationship that involves continuing boundary violation, despite you making your boundaries known, you may have to consider if you are in a healthy relationship.

Knowing these key areas can help you grow as a person, despite any break-ups or failed relationships. It is important that these boundaries be shared equally. You and your partner can work together to see the product of success.

7.

Jealous of My Girlfriend's Past

Many men have come to us wondering, “why am I jealous of my girlfriend’s past, and what can I do about it?” Jealousy is a difficult emotion to manage. If you aren’t careful, it can take over your thoughts and cause issues in relationships and everyday life. Feelings of jealousy can be hard to ignore however, and often go hand in hand with personal feelings of inadequacy.

Dealing with jealousy over your spouse’s past relationships in an important part of building trust and security in your new relationship.

If you don’t, these feelings will just fester beneath the surface and continue to cause problems for you both. But how to do you handle these feelings? They often come on very strong and tend to be something shared across the

spectrum of men in relationships. Going so far as to become normalized, many men see it as justified in feeling this way about their spouse's past.

But we can't expect that every person we meet in our adult years has just been existing in an empty box waiting for us to come along.

When you are in the dating world in your twenties, thirties and beyond it is normal to assume a new partner has a sexual past. They may even have children or a previous marriage.

The first and most important thing in any aspect of a relationship is open communication. Be willing to talk to your spouse and for her to talk to you. This means being open to the things you know might come up in conversations about her past, such as old boyfriends.

Right off the bat, if you exhibit jealous tendencies it is going to be harder for her to open up to you. If she is worried about upsetting you or hurting your feelings, she'll be reluctant to tell you anything. Which may sound preferable since if you don't have to hear about it you can't get upset right? But if your partner feels like she can't talk to you that in turn is going to cause its own set of problems.

It doesn't necessarily have to be a situation where you sit down together and list off old partners.

However, stories and anecdotes about her past are going to eventually include other people. It's important that she feels like she can share these things with you. It's important to remember that she wants to share these stories with you as a means to get closer to you.

A good way to try and get a handle on your feelings of jealousy is to practice some introspection. The first step is to find a quiet place and get comfortable. Next, take some slow deep breaths. Try to clear your mind and body of

tension and stress while you breath deeply. Now ask yourself the reasons behind your feelings. Are you comparing yourself to your partner's previous experiences? Are you worried that she is comparing you to other men? Be honest with yourself. Does your partners worth diminish based on the number of partners she has had? This is a common feeling among men, but one that should be dealt with and moved past in a healthy way.

Modern men know that how many partners a woman has had in bed has no bearing on who she is as a person.

Yet this idea has persisted in pop culture and our collective social consciousness for so long it's hard to move past it. It is so important that we erase this from our vernacular and way of thinking so that the next generation of women can be raised as empowered and comfortable in their sexuality.

As far as the comparison between yourself and previous partners is concerned—whether it's you, making a subconscious comparison or fear that your partner is making a comparison—this comes down to confidence and trust.

Trust that your partner is with you because she wants to be with you. Her previous relationships are over for any number of reasons. Regardless of anything else, this is the relationship she is in now.

The more you both can focus on that together the better your relationship will become. Self-confidence is a harder thing to address as low self-confidence can stem from any number of places; even going back to childhood issues and insecurities. However, it is important for your mental health to recognize yourself for your strengths and not

compare yourself to others. Remember the old saying “compare and despair.” If this is something you struggle within other aspects of your life, it may be worth seeking help from a qualified counselor or therapist to help you work through these issues and feel better about yourself as a whole.

Another cause of jealousy or envy when thinking of your partner’s past lovers can be fear.

Fear of losing someone is a powerful motivator and can cause people to act in ways they wouldn’t normally act. This fear is easily assuaged by discussing the relationship with your partner head on. Explain what you are feeling and ask for validation.

Define the parameters of the relationship together and ask for assurance that you have no reason to fear. If the fear stems from leftover feelings from your previous relationship—being the victim of infidelity for example—it’s important to remind yourself that this is a new relationship.

If you can’t move past those fearful feelings and it starts to negatively impact your life and relationship with your partner then it’s time to confront those issues with a counselor, therapist, or in a group session. There are lots of places to get help available as well as online forums to discuss your feelings and insecurities or fears with other people who have experienced similar things.

Overall, jealousy is a feeling that will come and go throughout relationships. Fear of losing someone we love coupled with feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem can exacerbate normal feelings. Feelings that would otherwise simply run their course and disappear quickly. Passion and deeply affecting personal feelings are one of the things that make us human. It’s important to feel and accept these feelings, processing them instead of dwelling on them.

Maintaining a healthy and respectful relationship with your significant other takes effort.

Recognizing that these feelings and any behaviors that stem from them can be harmful to that relationship is the first step to healing and moving forward in a way that benefits both you and your spouse. Be honest with each other and yourself. Talk through things that are bothering you and don't dismiss the idea of getting outside help.

If you are still struggling with feelings of jealousy, we can help you work through it with or without your partner. If this is something that is affecting you both, couples therapy might be exactly what you need to work together and move past this issue. If you are silently struggling with your jealousy, working through those feelings on your own can be beneficial to helping you get to where you want to be. Let us help you work through these emotions and move forward with your relationship.

8.

While We Are Outwardly Successful We Are Inwardly Miserable

As a man, what do you think defines success? What does it take to be successful in life?

A lot of men have similar answers: hard work, a good job, working your way up the corporate ladder, fame, and/or recognition. What is often left out of the answer to this question are things like the love of family, deep connections, self-respect, and/or a healthy sense of being.

There is an outdated belief that a man's success depends on his money, power, and/or professional achievements. While there's nothing wrong with these aspects of life, there is an emptiness to them. They don't necessarily guarantee that we will be emotionally fulfilled or happy.

This emptiness is a reflection of what many men feel inside, an emptiness that stems from deep-seated feelings of sadness and shame, anger and rage, embarrassment and loneliness directed inward. To be clear, there is nothing wrong with wanting success professionally, fame, wealth and recognition. The problem lies when we attempt to use these things as a substitute for self-worth or to validate ourselves; when professional success overshadows or overcompensates for your own emotional well-being.

To use an old cliché, we wear our professional success as a mask to cover the pain we feel inside. We use power, fame and professional success as a way to prove our worth. So, why do we do this?

Back To Where It All Begins

As adult men, we carry a lot of negative beliefs, feelings, and dysfunction from our childhoods. These ways of thinking can stem from a wide range of childhood experiences. These can be dysfunctional experiences such as a verbally or physically abusive parent, or being the child of a drug addict or alcoholic. In addition, these feelings can also come from a wide range of other experiences such as an overly-critical parent, a depressed mother, a workaholic father, divorce, and bullying. As children, we had to learn coping skills or defenses to survive this challenging time in our lives.

While a dysfunctional childhood may teach us to overcome adversity and become go-getters, it also hinders us in a variety of long-lasting and damaging ways. Left unresolved, these negative experiences cause us to internalize the belief that we are bad, not good enough, weak, less than a man or broken; in other words, they lead to shame.

Shame=I am bad

Guilt= What I did was wrong, it's not in line with who I am because I am good.

We are driven to succeed because we're trying to fill a void.

As we become adult men, we carry the shame we were made to feel growing up, the feeling of worthlessness, that we are bad or broken, with us. Without proper therapy to address and resolve these wounds head-on, we search for ways to remedy them, to fill the void.

Many times, we decide the best way to prove to ourselves and those who hurt us growing up that we are worthy, to cover that shame, is to make ourselves feel better through external things like money, power, women, sex, expensive new cars, and lavish homes. The more material things we have, the better we should feel, right? The more successful we look on the outside, the better we should feel on the inside.

Unfortunately, this is wrong. Shame is a bottomless pit that will never be filled by external material things. Once the high you get from the new car you just bought wears off, we start to feel miserable about yourself again. This

might lead you to buy a boat or plane. We drive ourselves to top that last high we had, just like a drug addict. However, in this case, it's the high of success that's the addiction.

Because our culture values these things, it can be difficult to get away from this mindset. The only cure is to gain a healthy sense of self-worth, to truly believe and feel we are worthy and good enough, but at the same time not better than everyone else.

Self Respect, Hard Work

Redefine what success means to you

There are plenty of highly successful professionals who are healthy people. Their success, however, isn't defined by their power, fame, or money. It's defined by doing what they love, the self-worth and personal confidence they feel, and the healthy relationships and deep connections they maintain.

To resolve the insecurities we have from the trauma we experienced as children, the best approach is through psychotherapy. With EMDR therapy, we can learn to love our whole selves, the good and the work-in-progress parts. At the same time, we do not lose our drive for success.

The motivation for that success, however, is different. Instead of trying to fill an emotional void, we are motivated to succeed because of intellectual curiosity, self-respect, hard work ethic, and value high-quality work.

Besides, now that we love ourselves, why would we do anything else but our best?

Once we respect ourselves, we are more capable of accepting the times we don't succeed in a healthy way. In

turn, we learn from our mistakes while still believing we are good people.

It's time we as men redefine what success means to us. To be truly successful, we must be happy and emotionally fulfilled. We must strike a balance between professional and emotional success.

9.

Mindfulness Meditation for Men

Meditation is Part of Mindfulness.

It's a notion that is possibly as foreign to an average Western guy as is yoga, if not even more. (Lotus flower what?) Yet, meditation has always been traditionally practiced by men in the Eastern Hemisphere where it originates from. In our previous post, we spoke about yoga for men. We discussed why it is so difficult for men to initiate interest in practicing it, and once they've overcome that hurdle, how to get past the social, physical, and psychological barriers that are prominent in Western society. Most classes are still a majority women.

Yoga is becoming more and more widely known, and accepted by men however. It's been long known that football teams have used other balance-oriented physical activity such as ballet to improve strength. Thus, mindful, wellness oriented men are aware of the good benefits of

yoga. Empirically, meditation has also been proven repeatedly to increase mental and physical wellness. Yet, even so, it's still difficult to overcome those societal "barriers."

Mindfulness meditation is a practice in which a person exercises voluntary attention in order to bring their mind into a state of greater clarity, calmness, and balance. You've probably heard about mindfulness here or there and you might even know that it supposedly brings a lot of good to those who practice it. While this is definitely true, let's dig deeper into the effects it has on your mind and body.

Why Mindfulness Meditation?

- Mindfulness reduces rumination.
- Intrusive repetitive thoughts are associated with depression and other emotional disorders. Even novices report ruminating less after as little as ten days of mindful meditation.
- Mindfulness reduces stress.
- This is among the most researched and solidly established effects of mindfulness meditation.
- Mindfulness boosts working memory.
- Mindfulness boosts our cognitive functioning and our working memory efficacy. Such effects of mindful meditation increase our overall productivity and clarity of mind.
- Mindfulness increases focus.

Those who practice mindful meditation have a greater ability to focus one's attention and ignore distracting stimuli.

- Mindfulness leads to a reduction in emotional reactivity.
- Mindfulness makes us the rulers of our own emotions. You can better control your anger, jealousy, bitterness, or any other negative feeling.
- Mindfulness brings greater cognitive flexibility.
- By being less emotionally reactive (and having greater focus as well as a more efficiently operating working memory), our minds become more flexible. Some would describe it as being more creative in work, relationships, or thinking in general.
- Mindfulness helps our relationships.
- Many studies show that mindfulness increases our self-awareness and empathy by reducing impulsive reactions. Meditation also helps to decrease rumination and holding on to past (negative) events or conflicts.
- Mindfulness brings health benefits.
- In addition to these psychological effects, mindfulness is closely associated with a range of health benefits. Meditation helps increase immune system functionality, reduces in the strain put on cardiovascular system, improves cortisol levels and provides a neurological system “reset.”

There are Many Forms of Meditation

In essence, this is a wide term that can encompass many practices, some of which you might already be exercising in some way even if you're not aware of it. Meditation, in a sense, is any form of conscious and deliberate effort to focus your mind or influence the state of consciousness for the sake of greater balance, concentration, empathy and understanding, and gain control over your thoughts, emotions and actions. Therefore, whenever you, for example, tried to count to ten before reacting, attempted to stop ruminating, reminded yourself to be in the present instead of thinking of past ills, you performed a kind of meditation without knowing it. So, there's no good reason why not to try a more structured and guided mode of those efforts in a form of mindfulness meditation.

What is interesting is that many interventions in psychotherapy incorporate mindfulness and meditative techniques. So, if you feel that you need a gradual introduction to meditation, visiting a psychotherapist who will help you with your focus, stress, emotions, balance... This could be a little closer to our Western way of thinking and an opening to the benefits of Eastern practices at the same time. Speaking of, that's how I also operate my practice.

4-7-8 Breathing Technique For Anxiety

Follow these simple steps:

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale gently through your nose to a count of 4.
- Hold your breath for a count of 7.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of 8.
- This is considered one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of 4 breaths.

**Get a Jump
Start on
Therapy:
Exercises
and
Resources**

Daily Journal

We know what you're thinking.... “Isn't a journal for a 13 year old to write about they're crushes?” While that may be true this is not what we are talking about. A journal practice involves writing about your day or whatever is on your mind. You can hand write it, type it into your phone, even dictate it. The length of time should be between 10-20 minutes. A large body of research suggests that journaling reduces stress, depression, anxiety and increases happiness.

Suggest Journal topics:

- Simply write out what happened during your day and how you are feeling.
- Pick an emotion you experienced and write about it.
- Write about what is causing you stress or anxiety.
- Write what you liked about your day or what worked.
- Write about a frustration.

Daily Gratitude Exercise

Research supports that gratitude can also improve our mental health. But you might already know that. We have all had the experienced that good feeling we get when we simply acknowledge our gratitude for something.

The exercise is simple and powerful. Each day identify 2-3 things you have gratitude for. These can be relationships, experiences, places, really anything. But it must be meaningful to you. You can write these down or simply bring you attention to them each day.

My goals for therapy

At the start of therapy you and your therapist will discuss your goals for therapy. Use this section to start brainstorming what your goals might be for therapy. The following can be helpful prompts;

- What is motivating you to start therapy?
- What changes do you want to make?
- What are some unhealthy patterns you are noticing in your life that are causing you to feel stuck?

Resources We Love

Tech

- Heart Math's Inner Balance. Great for stress reduction. <https://store.heartmath.com/innerbalance>
- Muse Mediation.
<https://choosemuse.com/>

Apps for Mindfulness

- Calm App <https://www.calm.com/>
- Insight Timer <https://insighttimer.com/>

Books

- [Stillness Is The Key](#) by Ryan Holiday
- [Man's Search For Meaning](#) by Viktor E. Frankl

