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**vita**  
health group  
Part of Spire Healthcare

# EAP Newsletter

The men's health edition

Issue 35

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Making People Better



In this month's newsletter we talk about how to manage financial stress, how alcohol impacts mood and mental health, managing mental health as a new dad and the basics of acupuncture.

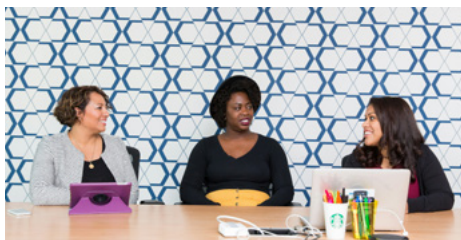
This newsletter includes information about sensitive and potentially triggering topics.

## Worried about money? Here are five steps to help manage financial stress

Every year in November Money Helper runs its Talk Money Week awareness campaign, to encourage people to be more open about money with friends and family, and get advice from experts if needed.

Financial worry is one of the most common stressors in modern life, and just like any source of stress, it can have a big impact on our mental health.

If you're concerned about your finances, these five steps could help you to ease the stress and set you on the right path to financial stability.



### 1/ Talk about your situation

Money has long been a stigmatised topic, which can make having conversations about it feel awkward. Many of us feel judged negatively for having financial problems, which can make it even harder to open up. However, talking about money with friends, family or experts if needed, can help you to feel more confident and put things into perspective. If you feel able, choose to confide in someone you trust and remember - this person does not need to know how to fix your problems, they simply need to listen.



### 2/ Access professional help

Reaching out for professional help is not a sign of weakness, but it does mean you're wise enough to recognise that your financial situation needs addressing. There's plenty of free support available from charities and organisations, whether it's for managing debt, creating and sticking to a budget, communicating with creditors, claiming benefits or getting support with managing the negative impact on your mental health.



### 3/ Take inventory of your finances

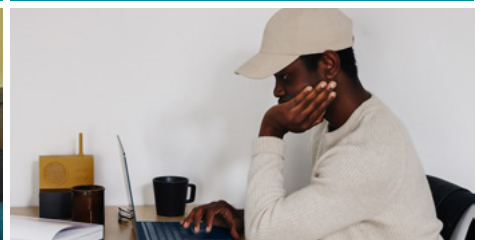
If you're struggling to manage your finances, it can help to have a full overview of where you stand every month - exactly what you have coming in and what you have going out. Writing the figures out - either with a pen and paper or on a spreadsheet - will help give you a better understanding of where you could make cut-backs or budget more effectively. Make sure to include your income, categorise your spending (however small it may be) and list out your debts.

A number of banking apps - including Monzo and Starling - now categorise spending for you, which can also help you to keep better track of your finances.



### 4/ Make a plan—and stick to it

If - once you've taken inventory of your financial situation, eliminated discretionary and impulse spending - your outgoings still exceed your income, there'll likely be three options open to you: increase your income, lower your spending, or both. How you go about achieving any of those goals will always require making a plan and sticking to it. Being consistent is key.



### 5/ Set out a monthly budget

Setting out a monthly budget can really help you to regain a sense of control around your finances. Everyone's budget will be different, but remember to include everyday expenses such as groceries and travel costs, as well as bigger expenses such as rent, mortgage or childcare. It may help for you to set up automatic payments or direct debits to avoid late payment fees for bills or credit cards. Finally, enlist support from your spouse, partner or kids (in an age appropriate way) to ensure your family unit is pulling in the same direction and understands the goals you're working towards.



## How alcohol impacts mood and mental health

Although alcohol may seem like a great pick-me-up or a way to unwind, it can have a significant impact on your mood and mental health.

To help you understand more about how alcohol can affect the mind, our mental health practitioners have shared five key points that are useful to understand:



### 1/ Alcohol is a depressant drug

Alcohol is classified as a depressant drug because it suppresses the central nervous system and slows down the function of your brain, affecting the way you think, feel and behave.



### 3/ Alcohol can trick your body into feeling pleasure

Like many drugs, alcohol also stimulates receptors in the brain that release dopamine, the chemical responsible for pleasure. This tricks your body into feeling pleasure and associating drinking alcohol with positive feelings.



### 2/ Alcohol depletes chemicals that maintain mental health

Our brains rely on a fine balance of chemicals and processes to regulate mood and emotions. Over time, alcohol use can lead to the depletion of chemicals that have an important role in maintaining our mental health and help to reduce anxiety naturally.



### 4/ Alcohol can lead to low mood

At the end of a stressful day, having an alcoholic drink may feel like a good way to unwind. You may initially feel relaxed and calm, but the more you drink, the less dopamine your body releases, which can lead to prolonged negative feelings and low mood.



## 5/ Alcohol can impact your quality of sleep

Drinking alcohol can impact sleep patterns which disrupts the sleep your body needs to rest and repair itself. Disrupted sleep can leave you feeling tired and that can have a negative impact on the day ahead. Lack of quality sleep is also linked to more serious mental health concerns like depression and anxiety. So cutting down the amount of alcohol you drink doesn't just improve your quality of sleep, it can improve your mental health, too.

### Common signs that alcohol could be affecting your mental health

- Feeling down or having a low mood
- Problems sleeping
- Feeling tired and hungover regularly
- Feeling worried and anxious in places and with people that you wouldn't normally
- Feeling guilt or remorse after drinking
- Lack of energy and motivation to do everyday things
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs

If you are worried about how much alcohol you're drinking or think it's having a negative impact on your mental health, talk to your GP or a healthcare professional.

## Useful contact list for support with alcohol problems

- **Drinkline** is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence. Call 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am to 8pm, weekends 11am to 4pm).
- **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** is a free self-help group. Its "12 step" programme involves getting sober with the help of regular support groups.
- **Al-Anon Family Groups** offer support and understanding to the families and friends of problem drinkers, whether they're still drinking or not. Alateen is part of Al-Anon and can be attended by 12 to 17-year-olds who are affected by another person's drinking, usually a parent.
- **WithYou** is a drug, alcohol and mental health support charity. With over 80 services across England and Scotland, it provides free and confidential support and advice to more than 100,000 people a year.
- **Adfam** is a national charity working with families affected by drugs and alcohol. Adfam operates an online message board and local support groups.
- **The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa)** provides a free, confidential telephone and email helpline for children of alcohol-dependent parents and others concerned about their welfare. Call 0800 358 3456 for the Nacoa helpline.
- **SMART Recovery** groups help people decide whether they have a problem, build up their motivation to change, and offer a set of proven tools and techniques to support recovery.

# 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.

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:

- Know that it's normal to experience emotional distress as fatherhood will likely impact the social, psychological and biological aspects of life
- 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
- Plus, modern fathers are now expected to be more involved in childcare, which can create tension as they navigate traditional roles and modern expectations
- 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
- 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.



### 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)



## Making People Better podcast series

### 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





# A beginner's guide to acupuncture

While it may seem unfamiliar at first, acupuncture has been used for thousands of years to relieve pain, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being.

If acupuncture is new to you, our MSK specialists have shared a quick guide which you may find useful. It will introduce you to the basics of acupuncture, how it works and what conditions it's commonly used to treat.

## What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a treatment derived from ancient Chinese medicine. Fine needles are inserted at certain sites in the body for therapeutic or preventative purposes. It is used in many NHS GP practices, as well as in most pain clinics and hospices in the UK. Acupuncture is often seen as a form of [complementary or alternative medicine \(CAM\)](#).

## How does traditional acupuncture work?

Traditional acupuncture is based on the belief that energy, Qi (pronounced 'chee'), flows through channels (meridians) in the body. If this flow of energy is blocked or moves too quickly it can lead to problems such as pain, stiffness or weakness. The belief is that by inserting needles into specific safe points we can regulate this flow of energy, reducing pain, stiffness or any number of problems.

## How has the West adapted acupuncture?

Western acupuncture is based on the scientific evidence that the insertion of needles into the body can positively affect the nervous system and stimulate a release of your body's own natural pain killers and alter the way you perceive pain, safely blocking it in a number of different ways.

### What conditions is acupuncture used to treat?

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides guidelines for the NHS on the use of treatments and care of patients.

Currently, NICE only recommends considering acupuncture as a treatment option for:

- Chronic (long-term) pain
- Chronic tension-type headaches
- Migraines
- Prostatitis symptoms
- Hiccups

Acupuncture is also often used to treat other conditions and symptoms, including:

- Joint and muscle pain
- Jaw pain
- Cancer symptoms such as pain
- Side effects of cancer treatment such as feeling or being sick from chemotherapy
- Feeling sick or being sick after surgery.

### What do we use acupuncture for?

Physiotherapists primarily use acupuncture for pain relief and also for returning muscle function back to normal. Acupuncture could be helpful in resolving your pain and assisting you physically, mentally, and emotionally.

### Do you have to be qualified to practise acupuncture?

The physiotherapists at Vita Health Group who deliver acupuncture are qualified through certified professional bodies in order to deliver acupuncture safely and effectively in our clinics. If you choose to have acupuncture, it is recommended that you check that the acupuncture practitioner is either a regulated healthcare professional such as a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist or a member of a national acupuncture organisation.



Many of Vita Health Group's physiotherapists are trained in physiotherapy – if you're in pain or have an injury and are not sure what to do, then call us or book an appointment online – we usually have same day availability if you need urgent assistance.

[Click here](#) to find a clinic.



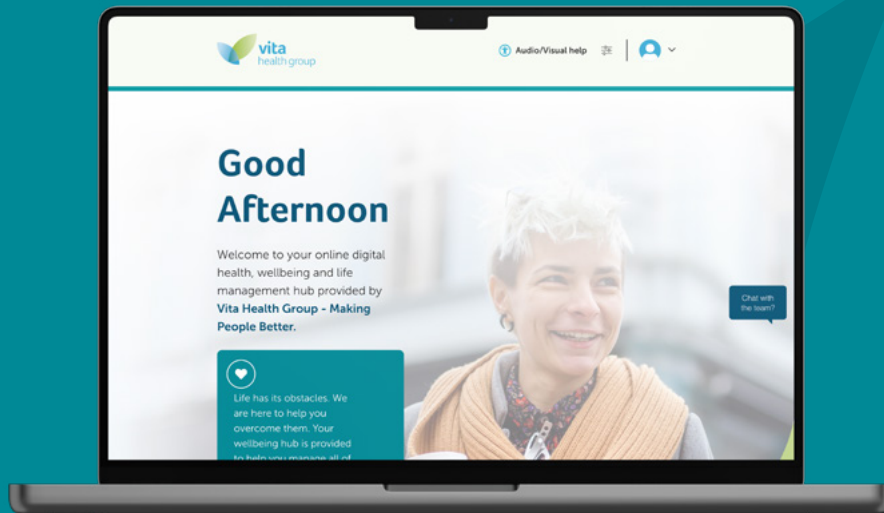
### Challenge of the month: Set aside 15 minutes in your day to move your body

Time can seem to go by in a flash when you're working and many of us can sit at a desk for hours before realising we haven't moved. But regular movement is really important for our mind and body - it helps to improve circulation, reduces stiffness, and boosts energy levels, making it easier to stay focused and productive. It also supports mental wellbeing by reducing stress and enhancing mood through the release of endorphins.

# On-Demand Digital Wellbeing Programmes

included in your Wellbeing Hub

Our digital wellbeing programmes provide the skills necessary to better manage everyday issues that affect your emotional and overall wellbeing.



## Interactive, Practical, Wellbeing Programmes

These programmes provide participants with tools and strategies to create small behavioural changes that allow them to reduce stress and increase resilience and emotional health through various techniques.

- Stress programme
- Positive Body Image programme
- Mindfulness programme
- Resilience programme
- Sleep programme
- Money Worries programme
- Parinatal Wellbeing programme
- Alcohol programme
- Breast Cancer programme – Depression & Anxiety

Programmes are easy to use, on your computer, table or phone. Start your free programme today.

[www.my-eap.com/hub/new-digital-wellbeing/overview-digital-wellbeing-programmes](http://www.my-eap.com/hub/new-digital-wellbeing/overview-digital-wellbeing-programmes)

## Clinically Verified

Up to  
**80%**

of participants show improvement in depression and anxiety symptoms.

Up to  
**93%**

users satisfaction.

Up to  
**65%**

of users achieve clinically significant improvement.

Helped over  
**1m+**

users think and feel better.

## Contact us

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