

EIP



Time to Talk Day 2022: Why talking about mental health matters

Time to Talk Day this year falls on 3rd February and it's the nation's biggest mental health conversation. It's the day that friends, families, communities, and workplaces come together to talk, listen and change lives.

I have suffered with anxiety and depression for many years now, and I have tried a variety of different ways to manage it. There used to be such a stigma surrounded by this topic, however, I'm so pleased that this is slowly changing and people are starting to realise that it is nothing to be ashamed of. There is still a long way to go, especially when it comes to men talking about their feelings. Men have been raised for years being told that they need to be tough and that men shouldn't show weakness, which of course has meant that many men have been suffering in silence, causing the male suicide rate to be much higher than the female suicide rate. Males aged between 45-49 continue to have the highest suicide rate (23.8 per 100,000).

It is so encouraging to see male footballers, actors and politicians coming forward and openly talking about their mental health, and this trend needs to continue. This will hopefully show other men that it's ok to talk about their own mental health challenges. Depression, Anxiety and Personality Disorders are no more or less difficult whether you are a man or a woman.

The first step of seeking help is always the hardest, you will always find reasons not to. As I mentioned I have suffered with poor mental health for years now, but it took for me to get to an all time low and contemplating suicide for me to realise I needed to talk to someone. I didn't want to die really, I know this now, I just felt completely overwhelmed and out of control. That day I contacted my GP surgery who arranged for a doctor to

urgently call me back.

p2

You may be wondering what brought me to this point. I had been in a relationship for 12 years and married for 2 of those years. After getting married the relationship seemed to change and we started to lead very separate lives. I spoke to my husband at the time telling him that things couldn't continue the way they were. He promised me things would change, but they didn't. A few months later he went on holiday and when he came home he told me he didn't want to be with me anymore, and although we'd been having problems this was totally unexpected and as you can imagine, devastating. The thought of having to start my life over again at 30 was daunting and overwhelming.

I moved back in with my parents for a couple of weeks hoping he would change his mind but he didn't. I couldn't stay with my parents or afford to pay rent somewhere as well as my mortgage so I had to move back into our marital home and live together, which was extremely difficult. Shortly after this we started divorce proceedings, which is hard enough to go through when you are living separately from each other, let alone living in the same house and seeing each other every day.

I felt so overwhelmed and trapped. My doctor prescribed me anti-depressants which I was reluctant to take as there has always been such a bad stigma associated with taking anti-depressants, but at this point I knew I needed to do something. I also started weekly sessions with a counsellor. Talking to someone that knew nothing about me and that was totally unbiased was really refreshing. I felt like I could really open up to her and we delved much deeper into why I was feeling the way I was, and tried to combat these deeper issues.

These weekly sessions were extremely helpful and I always felt more positive after speaking with her, which showed me just how powerful talking to someone about your mental health can be, whether it's with a counsellor, friends, family or colleagues.

This is one of the reasons I became a Mental Health First Aider. I want my colleagues to know I am here to talk and support them, with no judgement, as this is what helped me through one of the darkest times in my life.

Please also remember there are many other support charities that are here to help and listen:

- [Samaritans](#)
- [MANUP](#)
- [Supportline](#)

Click [here](#) for or more information on Time to Talk.

Written by Paula Camp, Records Team Manager & Mental Health First Aider

p3

EIP's Mental Health First Aiders are a group of skilled individuals who can identify the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and provide help on a first aid basis. The group regularly publishes supportive content on our internal communications channels, helping to empower employees to take care of themselves and others.