



香港城市精神健康聯盟

City Mental Health
Alliance HK

#EndtheStigma – Men’s Mental Health in the Workplace

Moderator



Gilbert Li

Partner at Linklaters
and Board Member of
CMHA HK

To mark Men’s Health Week (14-20 June), **City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong (CMHA HK)** and **The American Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong (AmCham HK)** hosted a panel to delve into the topic of men’s mental health in the workplace. The event gathered corporate leaders and wellbeing experts to share their perspectives on the specific challenges that men face in the work environment, the importance of cultivating mental wellbeing and what more can be done to #EndtheStigma in support of men’s mental health. **Gilbert Li, Partner at Linklaters and Board Member of CMHA HK**, moderated the panel.

Panellists



Hiren Khemlani

Performance
Psychologist, Corporate
Wellness Trainer and
Founder of Peak of Mind

What do we mean when we talk about men’s mental health?

Hiren Khemlani, Performance Psychologist, describes men’s mental health as a “silent crisis”, with men being significantly less likely to report mental health problems than women despite having double the suicide rates. The unreported cases mean that many men are not getting the treatment and support that they need. Khemlani noted that this may be down to traditional gender stereotypes, as men are often expected to uphold a stoic, strong and self-reliant image - especially in the workplace. Additionally, there is a literacy gap issue with men generally being less informed about mental health symptoms than women. The symptoms of depression in men are also more likely to manifest themselves differently, including increased irritability, aggression, risk-taking and escape behaviours such as overindulgence in drugs or alcohol.



Brian Henderson

Former C-Suite Leader
and Founder of Whole
Business Wellness Limited

There is an expectation for men “to be macho and strong and lead from the front, especially in Asian culture”, said **Brian Henderson, Former C-Suite Leader and Founder of Whole Business Wellness Limited**, Henderson shared that, as a leader, he felt the need to hide his mental health struggles and maintain a calm facade for the team. He added that many men may want to be vulnerable and open up but are afraid of how that may be perceived or received by colleagues.

David Butts, President Asia Pacific & Group EVP at Techtronic Industries Co Ltd., also added that despite having sought help from mental health professionals on several



David Butts

President Asia Pacific &
Group EVP at Techtronic
Industries Co Ltd

occasions throughout his career, he decided not to share the information with colleagues in case it would disrupt their image of him. Butts also added that men tend to form most of their relationships in the workplace, so when they have a problem at work, they often don't have anyone else to turn to.

What can companies do to support men's mental health?



Gianni Melwani

Lululemon Ambassador & Co-
Founder IKIGAI

- **BE A ROLE MODEL:** start to role model behaviours that you want to see in your employees - demonstrate that it's OK to be vulnerable
- **SPEAK UP:** share your personal stories and challenges, and express the reason why you are sharing to encourage employees to also open up when the time is right
- **BOOST EDUCATION AND AWARENESS:** many people may be struggling with mental health symptoms but may be unaware of where to seek help - make support resources available and easily accessible
- **TAKE PART IN ASSESSMENTS:** encourage employees to use an app (for example a resilience assessment app) to track their mood and catch symptoms early on
- **CULTIVATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT:** corporates should consider and address any workplace factors that may be causing their staff to struggle instead of to thrive - is it the workload, a specific project or a toxic work culture?

Spotlight on wellbeing

Butts shared that for a long time he prioritised performance and results and neglected the development of wellbeing at a more holistic level. "It's about the whole person, including your mindset and spiritual and emotional side, not just about how smart you are. You cannot break that up and hide it from the workplace", said Butts.

Gianni Melwani, Lululemon Ambassador & Co-Founder IKIGAI, noted the importance of other key components of mental wellbeing, including proper exercise, quality sleep, good nutrition and

a strong support network. Melwani highlighted the benefits of a mindfulness practice and that increasingly, men are more receptive to taking up yoga as part of their wellness routine. Henderson also shared that practising mindfulness has enabled him to be more aware of his emotions, which in turn allows him to manage them more constructively.

Panellists' top tips for men's mental health

"Meditate every morning and practise being in the present moment. This helps with concentration and focus - skills that can be applied in all aspects of life." – Hiren Khemlani, Performance Psychologist, Corporate Wellness Trainer and Founder of Peak of Mind

"Life is a journey; continue to grow, learn and get out of your comfort zone. Don't just focus on professional and business development, but also emotional, spiritual and physical growth." – David Butts, President Asia Pacific & Group EVP at Techtronic Industries Co Ltd

"Learn the power of 'no' and demonstrate this to your team – try to find balance by setting boundaries." – Gilbert Li – Partner at Linklaters and Board Member of CMHA HK

"Think about your connections and who you can talk to openly about your mental health concerns. Joining a mental health support group is a great way to seek support in a safe environment and to learn from others going through similar issues." – Brian Henderson, Former C-Suite Leader and Founder of Whole Business Wellness Limited

"Dedicate a few minutes each day to spend time with yourself. No phone, no music, not even walking around in nature - just learn to be with yourself with no distractions." – Gianni Melwani – Lululemon Ambassador & Co-Founder IKIGAI



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The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong is a collaborative venture founded by city businesses. Championed by senior leaders, the Alliance is business led and expert guided and aims to create a culture of good mental health for workers in Hong Kong, share best practice and increase mental health understanding.