

**Mental Health Awareness Week** in the UK (13-19 May 2019) is a good opportunity to spread awareness of the huge increase in poor mental health and suicide, especially among males.



- Nearly 6,000 suicides occurred in the UK in 2017
- Three times as many men die as a result of suicide compared to women.
- It is the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK.
- One in four people in the UK have mental problems

**This means that**, even if you are not aware of it, one in four of your friends or family may be suffering... and maybe not getting help. I lost family members in 2007 and 2018, but that, even though the statistic is not exceptional, is enough to trigger the desire in me to help.

#### **What can you do to help today**

- 1) Share this message by social media and by email to everyone you know... you are helping to let silent sufferers know that help is available and effective
- 2) Organise and host a social event in the next couple of weeks at which an expert could come to talk for a few minutes
- 3) Raise funds, however modest, for the Samaritans and/or Mind, the two most effective support charities, by launching your own campaign or by getting contributions to mine

**The problem:** men do not chat with each other about personal issues in the way women do and therefore have no regular forum for seeking health help if they need it. At the same time a macho attitude can make a man feel that he should not be reaching out for help on something as intangible as mental health. As a result, the proportion of males committing suicide without having reached out for help is much higher than in women.

**It's worse for men:** One reason that men are more likely to complete suicide may be because they are less likely than women to ask for help or talk about depressive or suicidal feelings. Recent statistics show that only 27% of people who died by suicide between 2005 and 2015 had been in contact with mental health services in the year before they died.

#### **What can you do to help with someone who might be suffering?**

1. **You** can do much for someone with depression just by talking with them or chatting online.
2. The first professional port of call should be the **GP**, but you might notice that the individual thinks it's not important enough, or would be ill-at-ease talking about mental health to their doctor, so...
3. The **NHS** web site lists support organisations at [www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/).
4. I have also established that the most effective organisation for early onset mental health is **Mind** which offers face-to-face counselling. (Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm) 01494 463364 Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk))
5. The **Samaritans** offer confidential support, free-of-charge, for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, but do not give advice or counselling. Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline). Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

You can read more of Marcus's campaign at:

[http://hodgemoor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/mental\\_health\\_awareness\\_marcus\\_campaign\\_may2019.pdf](http://hodgemoor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/mental_health_awareness_marcus_campaign_may2019.pdf)

... and details of the tragedies in his own family, triggers for his support for the cause:

[http://hodgemoor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/suicide\\_case\\_histories\\_marcus\\_may2019.pdf](http://hodgemoor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/suicide_case_histories_marcus_may2019.pdf)