

## Mental Health Monday: Men's Mental Health

Host

We're back on Show Me Today, the Voice of Missouri. And we're here again on this Mental Health Monday to talk about, Show-Me Hope, the Crisis Counseling Program and focus on men's mental health. Beckie Gierer, the Director of the Office of Disaster Services with the Missouri Department of Mental Health, joins us. Beckie, nice to talk with you again.

Beckie Gierer

Yeah, it's nice to be here again.

Host

Well, as always, first, a tell me about Show-Me Hope and what it's all about.

Beckie Gierer

Absolutely, so the Show-Me Hope is a FEMA crisis counseling program that the state of Missouri was able to get in response to the pandemic. We get a crisis counseling program anytime there's a federally declared disaster. We can apply for special funds to be able to assist the people, be able to help folks, the citizens of Missouri, just recover and really rebuild their lives after disaster by helping them understand what the situation is, the reactions they may be experiencing, the stress that comes with a disaster, even providing emotional support.

Host

You know, Beckie, when it comes to us dudes, talking about mental health or how we're feeling or what we're going through, we kind of clam up, how can Show-Me Hope help us?

Beckie Gierer

Yeah. That's a great question because sometimes it's really hard to talk about what it is we are experiencing, whether we are, you know, a male or maybe just based on what's happening in our lives.

So the Show Me Hope crisis counseling program is really tried to partner with a lot of different sports teams that are across Missouri to try to get the word out there in hopes that that might reach some individuals, like men, who enjoy sports and may be able to relate a little bit to what is being shared through these sports channels.

So, for example, we partnered with the Saint Louis Blues, the MU Tigers, the Saint Louis Cardinals and the Kansas City Royals. And if you've been listening to baseball games on the radio, you've likely heard the announcers talk about Show-Me Hope. We also have In-Stadium advertising and we're going to be in person at some of the games that are happening around the state, at both Royals and Cardinals Stadium, to give out information about Show-Me Hope,

and I share that because one of the things that we've done is just really try to spread awareness, of course, to everyone, but we know there are individuals that are less likely to reach out for help, as you mentioned. Sometimes it's hard to talk about it. And so we want to try to partner with these larger organizations, like sports teams, to try to reach people who may be a little hesitant to ask for help.

So, back in the fall, we were able to sponsor a medical night at the Saint Louis Blues game, and we were able to talk to people in person about their experiences with the pandemic and overall mental health. And we had several men who stopped and talked with us and said things like, "yeah I know some friends who really need this help", and then even some of them would follow up and say, "you know, I think I probably could use some of this help." The help that the CCP offers is really just all about providing that outreach and education to help with stress and understanding someone maybe having trouble after some sort of event, like a disaster. And while it's not treatment, we can help provide referrals to behavioral health or substance use services if they are needed. And so, one of the great things I love about partnering with the sports teams is that it helps continue to normalize these conversations with everyone, including folks who may not be as likely to talk about what it is that they are experiencing.

## Host

It's funny you mention that because I have heard it, listening to sports, and I've also seen the signage at the events, and I know that we've had, different representatives from Show-Me Hope here on Show Me Today. And I said, "hey, hey, I know them, I know them", so that's good. Well, so you're getting immediate feedback, at the sporting events, Beckie Gierer is the Director of the Office of Disaster Services with the Missouri Department of Mental Health. And I understand that you're not in the medical field to diagnose, but in terms of male depression, are there signs maybe that we could be self-aware of or for those around us? Can you talk about that a little bit?

## Beckie Gierer

Yeah, you bet. So, male depression can look very different than. And we call it male depression because it does look very different than what a female may experience. So, some signs of depression in men are things like fatigue and trouble sleeping, headaches and body aches, and irritability, anger, difficulty concentrating and stress, and even suicidal thoughts. And so, you know, oftentimes I hear folks say things like, oh, they'll just snap out of it or get over it. And with depression, that just doesn't work like that.

So what we want to do is our Show-Me Hope staff can make a referral for an individual to get further assistance, while continuing to work with them to provide resources and make connections to the services and the community. And, you know, it's important to note that when we talk about depression, depression has nothing to do with one's character or strengths, and the causes can vary from person to person. There's a lot of things that come into play, like genetics and stress exposure, body chemistry, life events. And, you know, we all experience stress in our life but there's some things that can really impact how we experience things. And so, when we find that we've had a death in the family or there's a disaster, or maybe we have unemployment and financial issues or other health concerns, all of this starts to compound how we may be feeling. And if this lasts for several weeks, it starts interfering in your ability to do your everyday activities, and it starts causing distress or pain. You know, if things are left untreated, your symptoms can actually get worse and can cause some physical health issues

as well. In addition, it can damage your relationships and affect your finances. So it's really important that we, try to get the help that that is out there.

And when someone experiences clinical depression, it doesn't just go away on its own. You can't just snap out of it, if you will. So, we really encourage everyone, and that includes men to seek out support.

Host

And Beckie, I want to be clear too. This isn't just, for people that have been dealing with the pandemic or Covid. This is for anything they can reach out to you.

Beckie Gierer

Absolutely, absolutely. We can help get you to the right place. You know, if we don't have the ability to provide those immediate services, we will get you to a place where they can.

Host

And I bet that's more than half the battle is just figuring out where to go. So, where can people go? Who can they reach out to? Do you have, contact information?

Beckie Gierer

Yeah, yeah. And, you know, when we talk about depression there is medical treatment out there for depression. And that does go beyond what our Show-Me Hope staff can offer. But it requires working with a doctor or behavioral health professional to find the right medication or therapy that fits best for that individual. And while sometimes men don't feel real comfortable talking to a counselor about how they're feeling, you know or don't feel comfortable going to the doctor, it's just important that we really normalize this for folks to remind folks it is okay to feel uncomfortable. None of us like going to the doctor, but we do it to get better, and we want folks to do that.

So if it's you that's experiencing this, or maybe it's a loved one that you're concerned about, we can share resources. We can have conversations about what those resources and support is. And you can call the National Suicide Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Or you can call DMH, to help you find a professional in your area. The DMH number is 1-800-364-9687, and you can also contact the Disaster Distress helpline at (800) 985-5990. All of these numbers will work together to get you to the right place. So, if you call, you know, the Disaster Distress Helpline and you're talking to them about getting services or maybe somebody that you love that needs services, they're going to help get you to the right place for those resources.

Host

And there's something in just about every county of the state?

Beckie Gierer

Absolutely. We have a Community Mental Health Center that provides services in every single county of the state of Missouri.

Host

Beckie Gierer, the Director of the Office of Disaster Services with the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Thank you so much for your input and your help as we focus on men's mental health this morning and Show Me Today.

Beckie Gierer

Appreciate it. Thanks for having me.

Host

We'll be back with more on Show Me Today, The Voice of Missouri.