Men's Mental Health: Proposal of a Needs-Based Approach to Working with Men

Psychische Gesundheit von Männern: Vorschlag für einen bedürfnisorientierten Ansatz in der Arbeit mit Männern

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Abstract

Much is written about the differences between men and women regarding mental health. There are known and widely accepted differences in prevalence and symptom expression. Research has also demonstrated physiological differences in neurological, biological, and molecular responses between men and women experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression. However, despite these widely accepted and well-documented fundamental differences in the sexes, most therapeutic approaches treat men and women the same, with an emphasis on emotional expression, vulnerability, and processing. This article explores the documented differences between men and women and suggests a more nuanced approach to effectively working with men in therapy, one that is based more on the fundamental psychological needs of men rather than on emotional exploration and vulnerability.

Zusammenfassung

Über die Unterschiede zwischen Männern und Frauen im Hinblick auf psychische Gesundheit wird umfangreich berichtet. Unterschiede in der Häufigkeit des Auftretens psychischer Erkrankungen sowie in der Ausprägung von Symptomen sind bekannt und weithin anerkannt. Forschungsergebnisse zeigen zudem physiologische Unterschiede in neurologischen, biologischen und molekularen Stress-, Angst- und Depressionsreaktionen zwischen Männern und Frauen. Trotz dieser gut dokumentierten und weitgehend anerkannten grundlegenden Unterschiede zwischen den Geschlechtern behandeln die meisten therapeutischen Ansätze Männer und Frauen jedoch weitgehend gleich und legen dabei einen Schwerpunkt auf emotionalen Ausdruck, Verletzlichkeit und die Verarbeitung innerer Erfahrungen. Dieser Artikel untersucht die dokumentierten Unterschiede zwischen Männern und Frauen und schlägt einen differenzierteren Ansatz für die therapeutische Arbeit mit Männern vor. Dieser Ansatz orientiert sich stärker an den grundlegenden psychologischen Bedürfnissen von Männern und weniger ausschließlich an emotionaler Exploration und dem Ausdruck von Verletzlichkeit.

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Men's mental health is a public health crisis. According to the CDC (2025), men die by suicide four times more than women in the United States. Men are much more likely than women to have substance use problems. Failure to adequately meet the mental health needs of men has profound societal issues. For example, in the United States, 87.1% of incarcerated individuals are men (U.S. Department of Justice, 2025) and 98% of mass shootings are perpetrated by men (Statista, 2026).

Additionally, men are less likely than women to present for mental health treatment. When they do report emotional or mental health struggles, health care providers often underestimate the extent of their emotional distress (Griffith et al., 2024). If the men's concerns are taken seriously, they are much less likely than women to be accurately diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder (ADAA.org). Clearly, more must be done to accurately address the mental health crisis in men. In order to accurately address this crisis, it is vital to understand the differences between men and women with regard to mental health. This article will review the literature on differences in symptom presentation and physiological differences in men and women. Then, a