

Men's mental health matters more than ever



DEO KALIKUMUTIMA

June is designated as Men's Mental Health Awareness Month 2026.

There is a question that appears simple, yet has the power to save a life: "How are you really doing?"

As Uganda joins the rest of the world in observing Men's Mental Health Awareness Month this June, the theme for 2026, *Breaking the Silence, Building Resilience*, calls upon us to confront a reality that has remained hidden for far too long. It challenges societies, families, workplaces, and communities to acknowledge that mental wellbeing is not a luxury, nor is it a sign of weakness; it is a fundamental human necessity.

For generations, men have been taught to be strong, resilient, and dependable. These qualities are admirable. However, somewhere along the way, strength became confused with silence. Many men learned that vulnerability was weakness, that emotional pain should be endured privately, and that asking for help was somehow a failure of character.

A SILENT CRISIS

Across the world, millions of men struggle with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, substance abuse, loneliness, and emotional trauma. Yet many suffer quietly, often reaching a breaking point before seeking support. Mental health challenges frequently manifest not through words, but through anger, withdrawal, addiction, relationship difficulties, declining physical health, and, tragically, suicide.

The modern Ugandan man carries immense expectations. He is expected to provide for his family, lead his household, support relatives, navigate economic uncertainty, and remain emotionally composed regardless of the circumstances he faces. Whether he is a young graduate searching for employment, a father struggling with financial responsibilities, an entrepreneur battling business uncertainty, or a professional navigating workplace pressures, the burden can be overwhelming.

Phrases such as "be strong," "man up," and "men do not cry" may be culturally familiar, but they often discourage honest conversations about emotional wellbeing. While intended to build resilience, they can unintentionally create isolation.

True resilience is built through connection, support, self-awareness, and the courage to seek help when needed. The strongest men are not those who carry every burden alone; they are those who recognize when they need support and have the courage to ask for it.

This year's observance invites us to rethink what strength truly means.

It means creating homes where fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons can speak openly without fear of judgment. It means building workplaces that recognize mental wellbeing as an essential component of productivity and performance. It means encouraging friendships where conversations go beyond work, finances, and daily routines to include genuine emotional check-ins.

Most importantly, it means listening.

Sometimes the most powerful act of support is not offering solutions but offering presence. A phone call, a conversation, a moment of sincere concern, or simply asking, "How are you really doing?" can make a profound difference.

Mental health is not merely a personal issue. It is a family issue, a workplace issue, a public health issue, and a national development issue. When men thrive mentally and emotionally, families become stronger, workplaces become healthier, communities become safer, and nations become more resilient.

As we commemorate Men's Mental Health Awareness Month 2026, let us challenge the culture of silence. Let us normalize conversations about mental wellbeing. Let us encourage help-seeking without stigma. And let us remind every man that strength is not measured by how much pain he can hide, but by the courage he demonstrates in confronting it.

This June, call a man in your life.

Ask him a simple question:
"How are you really doing?"

Then listen.

The conversation may be more important than you realize.

The writer is a Rotarian and a wellbeing consultant