22 June 2015

‘Blue-collar’ men’s mental health targeted in revamped campaign

Nearly a third of men who are ‘blue-collar’ workers wouldn’t know what to do if they were struggling with depression or anxiety, more than a quarter believe that men with these conditions are seen as soft and many think seeking help is a sign of weakness.

These troubling findings are contained in a new survey snapshot by global marketing company TNS and reveal that harmful concepts of masculinity are affecting the mental health of these men.

Now, beyondblue will tackle these attitudes with a revamped campaign that brings humour to a serious issue and shows ‘blue-collar’ men that feeling down is nothing to be ashamed of and that support is readily available.

Davo’s Man Therapy will introduce Australia to a new mental health champion “Davo”, a larrikin tradie who doesn’t beat around the bush when it comes to mental health.

Starting today, Davo will star in television, radio and digital ads for six months to direct men to www.mantherapy.org.au/davo where they can measure their distress levels, get answers to frequently asked questions and advice on how to tackle depression or anxiety. The campaign follows the launch two years ago of beyondblue’s successful Man Therapy, which used another fictional character, Dr Brian Ironwood, to promote good mental health to men.

The TNS survey engaged 300 ‘blue-collar’ men and is downloadable here. It also found that while 86% of respondents believe talking about mental health is important, and 85% believe others should speak to a GP if they’re struggling, only 49% would do this themselves, indicating a gap between what men know should be done and what they would actually do. Other survey findings include:

- only 54% of respondents agree that men with depression or anxiety are “just like the rest of us” and only a third believe these men are seen as trustworthy
- around a third don’t feel well-informed about the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- 28% would turn to alcohol if they started experiencing the signs and symptoms of depression or anxiety while 54% felt that less stigma in the community would make it easier to seek help
- 31% don’t feel that they have people in their life they can talk to about their mental health issues.

beyondblue Chairman The Hon. Jeff Kennett AC said: “We’ve created Davo to help tradies and other men who don’t work in offices recognise the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, and to guide them to support. Men owe it to themselves and their loved ones to be as healthy as they can be, and Davo will help them do that. This is a funny, cheeky and attention-grabbing campaign that will have a big impact.”

beyondblue CEO Georgie Harman said: “Man Therapy has been very successful. Nearly half of Australian men were exposed to it and a third of those visited a GP soon after seeing it. But our evaluation of its impact showed more could be done to target ‘blue-collar’ men, so we’ve adopted a fresh approach and created Davo.

“Nearly 2000 men die by suicide each year in Australia, triple the number of women and almost double the amount of men killed on our roads. This is fuelled by men’s reluctance to get help. The TNS report shows most men understand the importance of talking about mental health. Now we must encourage men to take action for themselves, and Davo is just the man to help us do that. I would also like to thank the Australian Government’s Department of Health for funding this campaign.”

To view TV clips from the campaign click here.

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