

Male-Type Depression: What is it?

WHAT

This resource summarises the symptoms of male-type depression, captured by the Male Depression Risk Scale (MDRS-22) and other malespecific measures of depression symptoms.

WHY

Often the externalising symptoms of men's distress are minimised as 'men behaving badly' when actually they're signs of a depression shaped by traditional masculinity.

WHEN

Keep an eye out for these symptoms in male clients you suspect are more traditionally masculine than others, and apply the MDRS-22 in session when relevant.

HOW

Emotion suppression and distress

- Mismatch between experience (loss, rejection) and expression (withdrawal, anger) of emotions
- Covering up the experience using emotion suppression, minimisation or distraction (incl. excessive use of video games, pornography or online activity)
- Over-focus and increased concern with productivity and level of functioning at school, university or work

Drug and alcohol use

- Increased reliance on drugs/alcohol to distract, avoid or numb distress
- Requiring access to drugs/alcohol to feel normal

Anger/aggression

- Increased irritability, anger or interpersonal conflict (may include withdrawal or interpersonal violence)
- Reacting to situations with excessive anger

Somatic symptoms

- Sleep problems, complaining of aches and pains
- Declining physical health routines
- Decrease in sexual interest but not necessarily activity

Risk taking

- Increase in recklessness (e.g. dangerous driving)
- Not caring about the consequences of actions

Male Depression Risk Scale Scoring

MRDS-7

Instructions for completion: Please think back over the last month and respond to each item considering how often it applied to you. Please respond where 0 = not at all; 4 = all the time.

	Not at all	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. I bottled up my negative feelings	0	1	2	3	4
2. I had unexplained aches and pains	0	1	2	3	4
3. I needed alcohol to help me unwind	0	1	2	3	4
4. I overreacted to situations with aggressive behaviour	0	1	2	3	4
5. I stopped caring about the consequences of my actions	0	1	2	3	4
6. It was difficult to manage my anger	0	1	2	3	4
7. Using drugs provided temporary relief	0	1	2	3	4

MRDS-7 SCORING

The MDRS-7 provides a Total Score (sum of all 7 items).

MDRS-7 RANGE	MDRS-7 CUTOFF SCORES (total score)
Low	0 – 5
Moderate	6 – 7
Severe	8 – 12
Extremely Severe	13+

Citation for MDRS-7:

Hereen D, Rice SM & Zajac I. Brief assessment of male depression in clinical care: Validation of the Male Depression Risk Scale Short Form in a cross-sectional study of Australian men. BMJ Open. In Press; 2022.

Assessing for Male-type Depression

In addition to using a scale like the MDRS, you can probe for symptoms of male-type depression using strategic questioning. Try to use the prompts below to understand your client's experience of the symptoms of male-type depression.

SYMPTOM	ASSESSMENT PROMPT
Emotion suppression and distress	If someone was looking from the outside in at your current situation, what would they see you do on a given day or week? What wouldn't they see? If you find yourself lost in an activity but not enjoying it for hours at a time, what kinds of things are you doing? The feelings you've spoken to me about, are they something you tend to share with others? Or carry alone? What does a typical work week look like for you at the moment? And is that something that has changed recently?
Drug and alcohol use	When you have a drink, do you feel a sense of relief at all? Or perhaps when you take drugs, does this help you feel more like yourself?
Anger/aggression	How often do you notice feeling really angry or pissed off? Has this increased in the last little while? When you feel angry, what do you feel and where do you feel it in your body? What do you do when you feel really angry?
Somatic symptoms	What do you do to stay physically healthy? Has anything changed recently with how you feel physically? Have you noticed a change in your sex life? Would your partner say the same?
Risk taking	When you feel like doing something, are you prone to weigh up your options before going ahead? Would you say you react to situations more quickly than usual? Tell me about an interaction in the past week or two where you might have reacted too quickly without thinking about the potential consequences (positive or negative).