

**FIRST
MAN
STANDING**

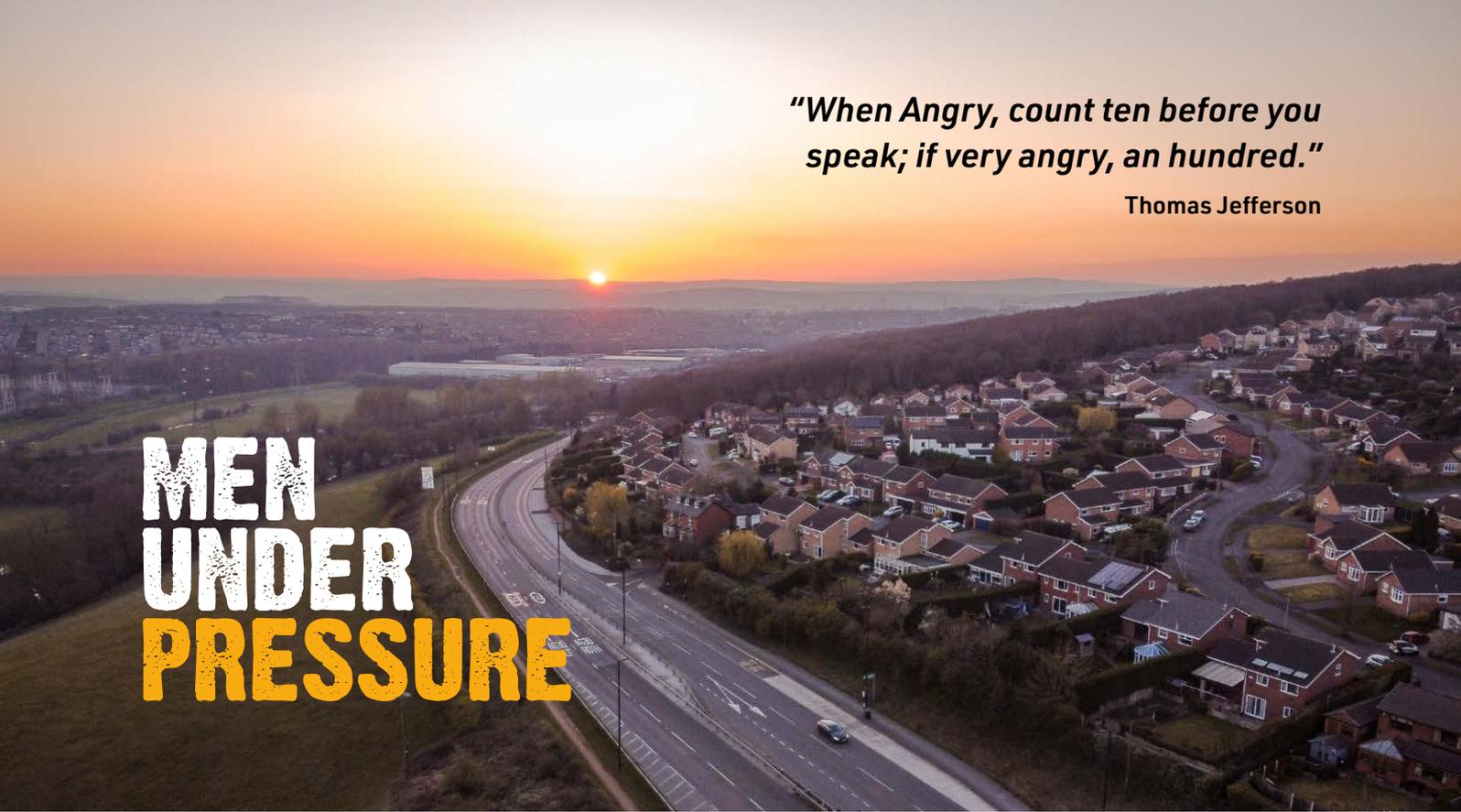


**MEN
UNDER
PRESSURE**

Restored
Ending Violence Against Women

"When Angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, an hundred."

Thomas Jefferson



MEN UNDER PRESSURE

These are clearly extraordinary times. Spending a prolonged period at home due to self-isolation or because the office is closed presents its own challenges of feeling enclosed or restricted and having more contact with a partner or flatmate than you would normally. This general advice leaflet should help you when things get tough and nerves start to fray.

Staying Home: A Survival Guide for Men in Lockdown

Whilst in lockdown it's understandable that everyone will start to feel edgy and fed up. It's important to recognise that negative feelings will come to the front from time to time and anyone can start to;

- feel powerless, insecure and as if they are not in control
- be afraid of the effects of the virus on you or those you love
- worry about health, family or financial and professional future
- feel crowded at home if you are constantly with family or flatmates
- or, if you are alone, to feel isolated without social contact or the one you love

All of this generates stress and may limit your ability to think clearly, care for yourself or empathise with others. Being stressed will narrow your view of life and dull your feelings, at which point it becomes tempting to find a scapegoat and blame others.

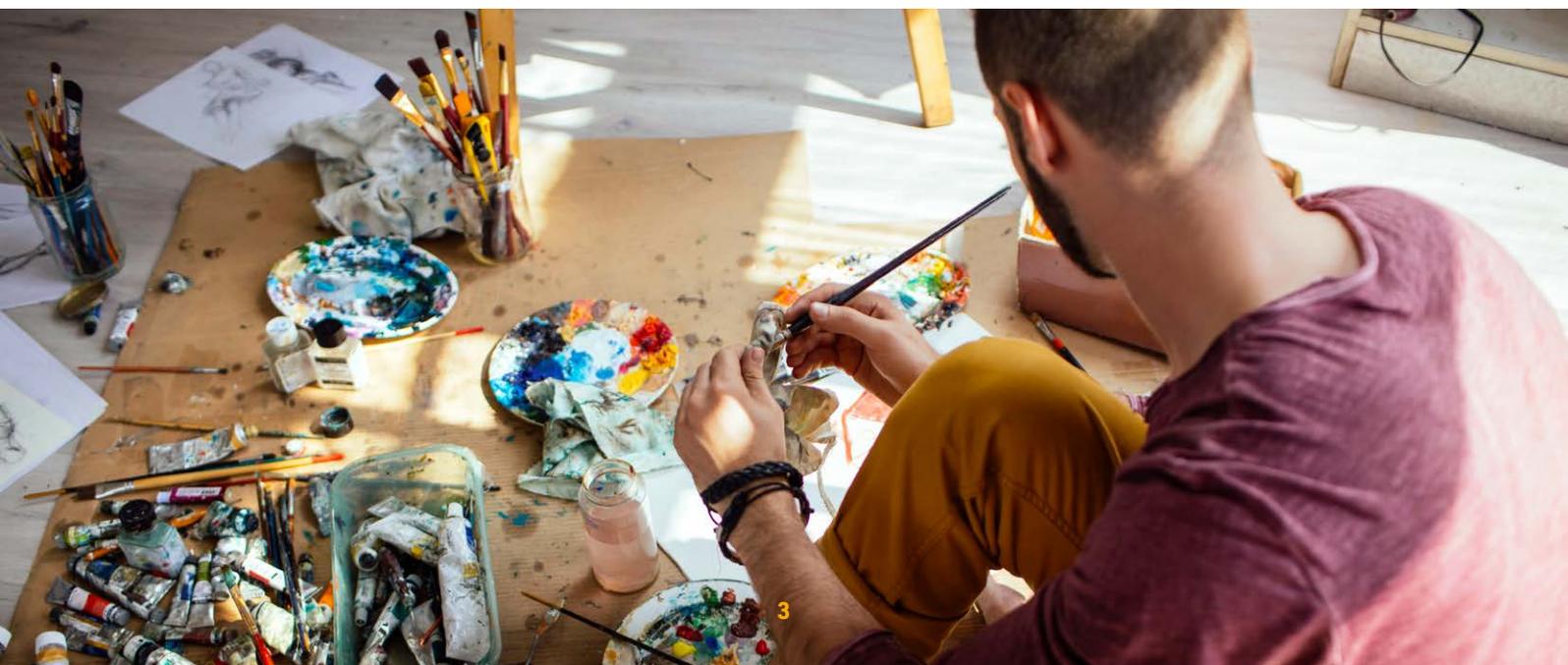
But these emotions are not a reason or excuse for taking frustrations out on those around you. We remain responsible for our own reactions to feeling overwhelmed, insecure or angry. Anger and violence of any kind (physical, verbal, sexual, emotional) is never a solution. When these feelings creep in – just say “NO” to anger and violence.

Defeating Stress

Accept what you can't change. Trying to rebel against the Coronavirus and the fact you are in lockdown doesn't make sense. It will increase your stress levels and cost you energy that you could use on more constructive activities. Instead, try to fill your time with meaning: treat it as a new experience or an adventure.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with stress. Read them through and start with the one that you feel will best work for you. There is plenty online that will support all the activities listed below if you search for it.

- a) Give yourself what you need. Treat yourself and give yourself something to look forward to every day.
- b) Listen to music, read a book, watch a movie.
- c) Practice or learn a new hobby. Try drawing, painting or photography. Write or record a blog / vlog.
- d) Keep a journal or diary and make a note of how you feel, what bothers you and new things you have experienced, heard or seen.
- e) Remember the good times you had in your life by reviewing your photo collection and make photo albums.
- f) Use the one hour a day for exercise to go outside, cycle or take a walk locally and spend time in nature, whilst maintaining social distance.
- g) Work off your energy with exercise. Simple activities can be effective and achieved even in a small room. Become creative about what you can use to lift weights. Use online exercise groups or YouTube videos to encourage and support your endeavours. Record your achievements to look back on at the end of the week.
- h) Talk to friends and colleagues by phone, text or video conferencing. Let them know how you are getting on and what you are doing. Let them do the same. Plan in a virtual coffee break or lunch with a friend or loved one.
- i) Relax. Practice mindfulness with meditation or breathing exercises. If you have a faith take time to read and pray.
- j) Consciously limit your access to news and media to certain times of the day. Do it only to catch up and don't get caught in hysteria or misery.
- k) Make time to talk to your partner and children. Be open with them about how you are feeling and let them do the same with you. Respect what they say about how they are feeling.



Make a plan

Making daily and weekly plans will help you focus and give you targets and goals. A simple written 'To Do' list works for many although there are plenty of digital apps that can help.

Achieving those targets and ticking them off will give you a sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Mix up your tasks. Don't limit things to work and what you know you can do. Challenge yourself to different tasks. Perhaps something you have put off doing for lack of time or a new hobby. Support yourself and others in what you decide to do.

Share your thoughts and feelings

Have the courage to share your feelings and needs with your partner.

Schedule time to talk and times when you can be close, tender and intimate.

But also create space for yourself when you can focus on the goals and targets you have set.

Set and respect boundaries

When you feel pressured, cornered or annoyed, let your partner know and give them space to do the same. Allow yourselves to set boundaries on time and space if either of you are feeling under pressure. If either of you need some "me time", say so and respect that place.

If you are short on space an idea is to designate a comfortable chair or area of a room that everyone knows and respects is a quiet place where whoever is using it cannot be disturbed



"Your love is like a shadow on me all of the time, I don't know what to do, I'm always in the dark, we're living in a powder keg and giving off sparks"

A Total Eclipse of the Heart
Sung by Bonnie Tyler, 1983
Words: James Steinman

Acknowledge your feelings and tensions

If you feel under stress or tension; they are your stress and tension. Take control of them for yourself, own them and be aware of them. Try not to bottle them up by ignoring how you feel or taking it out on someone else.

Excessive alcohol, drugs and porn are a risk. Avoid them or at worst limit them. If you don't, you will only harm yourself, your relationship and increase your chances of losing control.

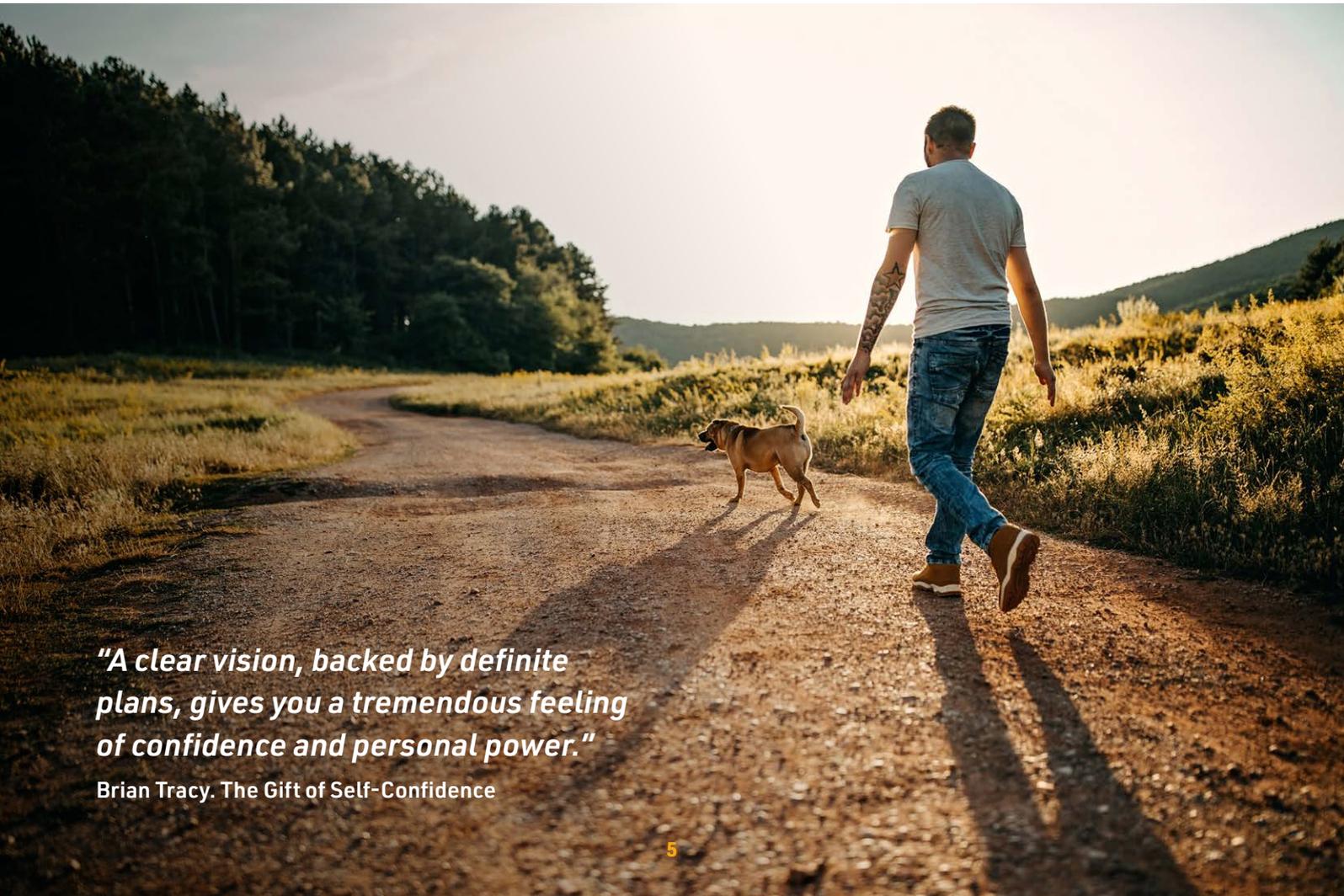
If you can't limit them, you need help. Find it.

Emergency planning

Fix a plan in of how you can calm yourself down when everything feels like it's too much. Fix it in your mind or if necessary, write it down and share it with your partner;

Here are some ideas:

- Go outside – to the street, the park, the garden or yard, onto your balcony or at least another room and look out the window.
- Breathe consciously, slowly and evenly – 5 seconds in, 5 seconds out. Repeat until you feel calmer.
- Move or exercise. If you can't go outside, do push-ups, sit ups, jumps, run on the spot, along the hallway or up and down the stairs.
- Sit down with a glass of water or something to eat.
- Lie down, close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing.

A man with a tattoo on his left arm, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans, is walking a light-colored dog on a dirt path. The path is surrounded by tall grass and trees, and the scene is lit by the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise. The man is walking away from the camera, and the dog is running ahead of him.

"A clear vision, backed by definite plans, gives you a tremendous feeling of confidence and personal power."

Brian Tracy. The Gift of Self-Confidence



Be aware of warning signs and use your emergency plan in time

Be aware of warning signs that indicate that stress is building up. These include swearing, being snappy, shaking, sweating, raising your voice. The list is not exhaustive

Take these signs seriously. If you feel them, you need to act now.

It's important to inform your partner that you are noticing warning signs and need to have a few minutes to yourself.

Allow yourself to ask for help

None of us can be an island for long, nor should we be. If you are struggling with the stress of feeling confined in your home, either by yourself or with partner and family give yourself permission to talk to someone about it. This is not failure but common sense to avoid feelings spilling over into anger. Take the first step.

Have a list of trusted friends you can talk to in confidence and call them to talk things through.

Respect is an organisation that can give confidential advice and help to men who recognise that they have an issue with anger, violence and abuse. They can be found at www.respect.uk.net and you can get advice on 0808 801 0327.

If you are the abused take your injuries and hurts seriously

If you are the victim of violence, whether physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or financial, don't accept it or bear it alone.

Get the support you need if you are experiencing psychological or physical violence.

If your life is in danger call 999.

If it is not the UK domestic abuse helpline is a good place to start. Telephone 0808 2000 247. Its free and confidential. Or online at www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

You can get help from Respect at www.respect.uk.net, the Men's Advice Line www.mensadviceline.org.uk or the ManKind Initiative at www.mankind.org.uk.

Although Restored deals principally with male on female violence we can help to point you in the right direction: Email us on info@restoredrelationships.org or look at our website www.restoredrelationships.org.

Faith

Restored is a Christian team who can all speak of how they have help and strength in knowing that there is someone beyond ourselves. A God who is caring and supportive of those who need help and who is ultimately in control. A God who has given us all hope at times of crisis and tension. A God who will provide help to those who need it, whatever the need.

That God can be found in Jesus Christ who said the following:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John's Gospel. Ch 16, verse 33





Peter Willson
For First Man Standing
April 2020

Restored

Ending Violence Against Women

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With Thanks to Men care Switzerland (www.maenner.ch) and Men Engage Europe for allowing us to use their original material.

Bible verse taken from the NIV, published by Hodder and Stoughton.