

# MCT MATTERS

007

BE INFORMED - GET CONNECTED - STAY ACTIVE

JUN 20

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## BLOKES CLUB

One of our key messages to blokes for social well being is to Get Connected with people and places in your community but with the advent of COVID changing aspects of our daily lives where we would normally be around others this has been a challenge for many over the past few months.

As a way to keep in touch with other men we kicked off our Online Blokes Club in April with a mid morning (2nd Breakfast) session where we offered up a discussion topic and invited men to share their thoughts.

Topics covered in the first round of catch ups included change and perspective along with mates and focus. It was great to hear different views on each topic which also took a largely positive outlook.

**CONTINUED INSIDE ....**



## A DIFFERENT LIFE

The team at Carers Western Australia recently invited Men Care Too founder Greg to share a story with them to mark national Men's Health Week. Here is some of that story ....

If I was to give my younger self advice for life it would be to remember three simple things - be informed, get connected and stay active. This has helped me keep on track and balanced during difficult times, with all three forming a reminder to me that whilst there may be times where I feel alone or lost, there is always somewhere, someone or something to turn to that could help get me through.

A big turning point in my life came a little over ten years ago when my parents separated and I started to spend more time helping mum with things around the home. Light on experience to begin with, I started to get real good at cleaning, washing clothes, preparing meals and keeping an eye on medications.

Mum lives with a number of chronic health challenges. Spinal canal stenosis, a degenerative disorder causes her the most difficulty, limiting her mobili-

ty and causing back and leg pain. With her busy social schedule, and finding it difficult to move around without help, I also started taking mum out for appointments, shopping and to spend time with her friends.

Leading up to my parents separation, the previous ten years had been challenging for our family with what seemed like a continual run of challenges.

When I think back over those ten years now, I didn't understand the things that were happening or how they were changing our family. I didn't talk with mates or anyone else in my life about how things within the family were affecting me and I spent a fair bit of my spare time drinking and making other poor life choices. It was my way of coping with what was going on at that time but in hindsight it was likely my way to avoid the reality of things I didn't understand.

**CONTINUED INSIDE ....**



# BLOKES CLUB



Although well attended during the first six weeks our mid morning timeslot was proving to be a difficult time for many and in response to this the decision was made to move our Online Blokes Club to an 8pm kick off so that more working men and those with other things going on during the day could get involved.

The Online Blokes Club is now running each Wednesday evening and remains a simple, easy way for men to stay connected and have a yarn about whatever

is on their mind.

There is no formal aspect to the discussions, we are not selling anything nor are we offering any advice or programs, it is simply a space open to all men who are looking for someone to have a chat with or just to listen in on whatever the topic of conversation is.

Like many organisations we are using Zoom to host these catch ups and there are options to join in however you are most comfortable. Discussions are private and no re-

cordings are made.

Although we know blokes like to communicate 'Shoulder to Shoulder', COVID has made this tougher to do and not having any contact with others is something that can cause problems, particularly when times get tough, as they are at the moment for so many.

Join our Online Blokes Club and be part of the conversations that are happening, you may pick up some tips or even share some of your own to help someone else.

# A DIFFERENT LIFE

After some time spent trying to juggle work and study along with helping mum as much as I could, it became clear that something had to give and without hesitation I left work and put my studies on hold in an attempt to make mum's life a little easier.

Around this time I thought more about how my drinking and poor behaviors could impact on how I was able to help mum. Looking back I believe that the shift in responsibility I felt to helping mum at that time is what put me on a better path in life.

'What do you do for work?' is one of the most common questions men ask one another when initially meeting and for a long time I struggled with the answer. My 'work' is difficult to explain to someone who hasn't been in the same situation of providing care and support to someone else.

That question also made me think about my worth and place in society. I know mum values what I do, yet even though more than a million Aussie blokes care for a family member or friend it's rare to see the value of this unpaid and largely hidden work recognised in any significant way.

I think one of the main reasons for this is that as a society we focus on the person who is unwell or lives with a disability and rightfully so. A consequence of this way of thinking is that the attention and effort to provide care and support to those in need is so concentrated on them, that family and friends who provide the care and support are overlooked and often end up neglecting their own physical and social needs.

As a bloke my response is usually 'Don't worry about me, I'm fine'. Most of the time that's

true and I'm happy to simply do what I need to do to make mum's life a little happier or easier. Sometimes it does get a bit hard, seeing someone you love in pain and not being able to fix it is a horrible, upsetting feeling and whilst talking about that with someone else won't change things, it does help to know that someone has taken the time to listen.

When I talk about caring for mum with other blokes there is always at least one other guy who has been in similar shoes, who understands what I am saying and that sense of connection and understanding helps remind me that whilst my life is different to many other blokes, I'm not alone in what I'm doing.

If more of us share our stories, maybe the informal, unpaid 'work' carers do will be more highly valued and appreciated by society.



# CREATING FUN

Time to dust off the Lego, plug in a video game or get outside for a treasure hunt.



When was the last time you played a game, did a puzzle or had fun doing something that was perhaps considered as not an appropriate way to behave for your age?

Life can be stressful when you are responsible for the care of someone else, so any type of activity that helps to relax, shift your focus or simply gives you a chance to play can be helpful in the way you look at what's happening.

Playing strategy and puzzle games can help to improve brain function and memory, plus boosts our creativity and problem solving skills that can help in other areas of our day to day lives.

Having fun can come in all shapes and sizes, perhaps talking to your dog, seeing how tall you can build a castle out of playing cards or if you enjoy taking photos, pick a 'thing' you try to spot and snap when you are out and about doing daily tasks.

Lego is another fun activity that many of us enjoyed play-

ing with as kids but the more birthdays we have the less likely we are to build a spaceship. Luckily the people at Lego want everyone to have fun and you can find everything from a camper van to a pirate ship and even a NASA rocket, something to suit everyone's tastes and a whole range of sets designed with adults in mind.

There are some simple ways you can begin to create your own play time to enjoy as an adult beginning with the decision to do just that - set some time aside each day or each week for playing.

Think about what fun means to you, what things did you enjoy most when you were younger that you haven't done in a while? Start to make a list of those things and pretty soon you will have a reference point for some good times.

Another tip for reigniting your desire to play more often is to find people or places that make you feel comfortable enough so that you can relax and enjoy the activity.

If you have children in your life then spend more time with them if you can, kids know how to have fun and can make a game out of almost anything.

Life as a carer can be pretty serious and can get difficult at times so allowing yourself time out, even just a small amount but on a regular basis to have some fun and play can be a positive way to find some balance in your life.



## CUT TO THE POINT

### DON'T DELAY

"The idea of going to hospital to just get a blood test was pretty low on the priority list," Jim Lloyd, former politician and Prostate Cancer survivor.

Uncertainty and worry during the pandemic has seen a decline in screening and check ups for things like cancer, diabetes and asthma.

With GP's taking extra care during patient visits and Telehealth options available in most cases it means there is no excuse to delay medical help.

**ADVICE:** 1800 022 222

### SHED WIRELESS

Delivered weekly to your lounge room, kitchen table or even the backyard shed, a new podcast 'The Shed Wireless' promises to talk about all things Men's Sheds, and other interesting stuff.

Presented by the Australian Men's Shed Association and featuring local and international guests, episodes will focus on the highlights of Men's Sheds development in Australia and include chats with 'Shedders' from around the country.

Visit [mensshed.org](http://mensshed.org) to listen.

**INFO:** 1300 550 009

# GET COUNTED

In order for blokes to be more widely recognised and supported by carer organisations it's important for us to have our say in the national survey.

**W**hat is life like for unpaid, informal carers in Australia? Carers NSW are taking their survey national for the first time in 2020 to explore carers experiences from around the country.

Accessing services and supports along with questions on paid work, community life and social relationships will help carer groups and services better advocate for carers, influence policy makers, and plan for service delivery into the future.

Women have typically made

up the majority of participants from past carer surveys and as such there is more evidence available for services and groups to design supports based on what carers who respond to the surveys say is needed.

This means that although more than a million Aussie blokes are caring for someone the survey reports don't really indicate how blokes are doing in their caring roles and what could make things better.

MCT encourages blokes to get counted, do the survey online or contact 1800 242 636



## KEY DATES IN 2020 ...

**JUN 15-21** | Men's Health Week

**JULY 5-12** | NAIDOC Week

**SEP 6** | Fathers Day

**SEP 10** | Suicide Prevention Day

**SEP 12** | RUOK? Day

**OCT 5-11** | Mental Health Week

**OCT 11-17** | Carers Week

**OCT 28** | Blue Knot Day

**NOV 19** | International Men's Day



**THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF CHANGE IS TO PLUNGE INTO IT, MOVE WITH IT, AND JOIN THE DANCE.**



**- Alan W. Watts**

**MensLine Australia** - 1300 78 99 78 (24/7)

**Lifeline** - 13 11 14 (24/7)

**Carer Gateway** - 1800 422 737 (8am-6pm, Mon-Fri)

**National Carerline** - 1800 242 636 (9am-5pm, Mon-Fri)

**QLife (GBTI)** - 1800 184 527 (3pm-12am 7 days)

**Suicide Call Back Service** - 1300 659 467 (24/7)

**Open Arms (Veterans and Families)** - 1800 011 046 (24/7)

**GriefLine** - 1300 845 745 (midday to 3am)



Visit [www.mencaretoo.org](http://www.mencaretoo.org) for more information

All photos from **MCT** and [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)

**Men Care Too** is auspiced by **The Iris Foundation**

