



SOAR

A Mental Health Workbook For Young Men

THIS WORKBOOK BELONGS TO



**THE EAGLE DOES NOT ESCAPE THE STORM;
IT SIMPLY USES THE STORM TO SOAR HIGHER**

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admin@writelifekenya.org
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Edited by Maryfridah Kiaira
Cover and Layout Design by Write Esse
admin@writeesse.com

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The proceeds from this workbook will support Write Life Kenya ,
which promotes mental health awareness and advocacy to
empower people to live in wholeness.

WHY MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

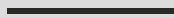
SOAR

Every voice matters and that includes the voices of men. For generations, men have been taught to be strong, to provide, to protect, and to persevere. We expect men to be strong, to be leaders, to be pillars in our homes and society.

Yet behind that strength, many men carry invisible battles, many times in silence: pressure, loneliness, fear, and unspoken pain. When these emotions remain buried, they can bring negatively affect a man's mental health.

We created this workbook to offer young men a safe space to pause, reflect, and reconnect, not only with their strength, but also with their emotions and humanity. It's okay to feel, to ask for help, and to grow.

Mental health is part of being whole. Taking care of your mind and emotions allows you to show up better for yourself, your family, your work, and your community. When men heal, families thrive, communities grow stronger, and generations change.



WRITE LIFE KENYA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH
- 2** SELF AWARENESS
- 3** COPING WITH STRESS
- 4** STAYING FOCUSED
- 5** THE PROVIDER PRESSURE
- 6** SOCIAL MEDIA
- 7** BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS
- 8** FORGIVENESS
- 9** MENTORSHIP
- 10** GIVING BACK
- 11** MENTAL HEALTH DISTRESS SIGNS
- 12** GETTING HELP
- 13** VISION BOARD



UNDERSTANDING



"Mental Health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" World Health Organization (WHO)



What That Means for You

Good mental health doesn't mean you're happy all the time or that everything is perfect. It means you're learning to:



Know yourself

Understand your strengths, weaknesses, and emotions



Cope with stress

Find healthy ways to deal with pressure from school, friends, or family



Stay focused

Be able to study, work, & chase your goals with a clear mind



Build good relationships

Build connections with others & communicate openly



Give back

Use your gifts & ideas to make a difference in your school, home, or community

Know Yourself

What are three things you're really good at?

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What areas do you struggle with or want to improve?

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How do you usually express your emotions; do you talk, stay silent, or act out?

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"SOMETIMES THE GREATEST ACT OF COURAGE IS TO ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT."

FINDING HIS VOICE



From the outside, Kirema looked like any other young man in his class, but inside, he always felt...off. His voice was soft, not deep like the other young men. He wasn't broad-shouldered or muscular. Everywhere he looked, men were portrayed as strong, loud, commanding, and he wasn't any of that.

In class, he struggled to speak up. Questions went unanswered, ideas unshared, because he felt small, invisible even among friends. Yet, strangely, people liked him. Friends came easily, Kirema had a quiet charm. He laughed softly at jokes, listened more than he spoke, and somehow, that was enough for others to gravitate toward him.

But Kirema had a secret. When no one was watching, he liked to sing and write songs, alone in his room. It was yet another thing that made him feel less masculine. However, when he sang, he felt free. Music became his escape.

One evening, after weeks of toying with the idea, Kirema did something bold. He recorded a song and uploaded it online. His hands shook, "What if no one liked it?" "What if people ridiculed him?"... but he pressed "post." It was the best moment in his life, something about gathering the courage to truly share himself made him realize that everyone was unique in their own way.



*be
yourself*

**"TO BE YOURSELF IN A WORLD THAT IS CONSTANTLY TRYING TO MAKE YOU
SOMETHING ELSE IS THE GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT."
RALPH WALDO EMERSON**

SELF AWARENESS

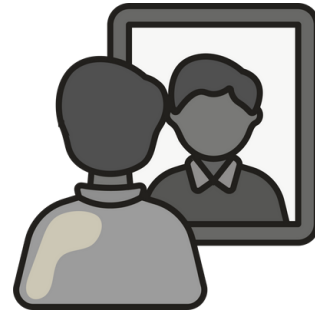
A young lion was once raised among sheep. He bleated instead of roaring, ate grass instead of hunting, and ran whenever danger came. He thought he was one of them, until an older lion found him. The old lion led him to a river and said, "Look."

For the first time, the young lion saw his reflection; strong, fierce, and nothing like a sheep. That day, he discovered who he truly was.

Many men live like that young lion:

- Trying to fit in
- Suppressing their strength
- Living under labels the world gave them

They carry expectations that drown their real identity. Knowing yourself is strength.



Self-awareness is the ability to notice your thoughts, emotions, and actions and understand how they affect you and others. It's about being honest with yourself: knowing what drives you, what drains you, and what you can do to grow.

When you're self-aware, you can manage your emotions better, make wiser decisions, and build stronger relationships. It's the first step toward mental health and personal growth.

The **MORE** you **REFLECT**
the **MORE** you **LEARN**



Pause and Reflect

What am I feeling, and why?



Journal

Write wins, worries, or lessons from the day.



Seek Honest Feedback

Ask a trusted friend or mentor, what they notice about you.



Check Your Triggers

Notice what make you angry, defensive, or anxious.



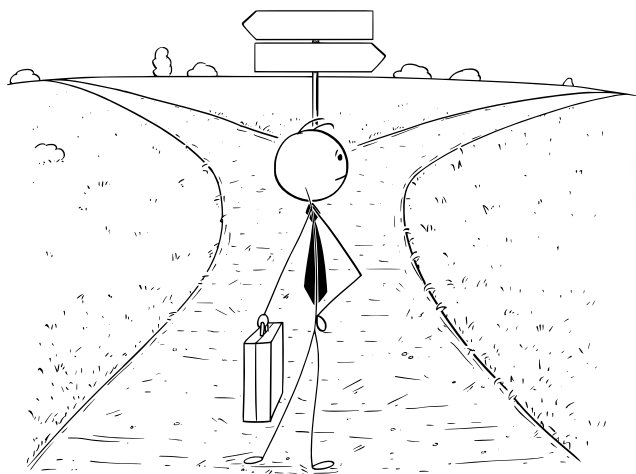
Practice Mindfulness

Be present instead of rushing through moments.

do it for you

WALKING YOUR UNIQUE PATH

Every day, we make decisions; some small, some life-changing. Sometimes we choose the path everyone else is taking because it feels safe. Other times, we take the route that pleases others, hoping for approval or acceptance. But true self-awareness means asking: *What do I really want?*



The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

By Robert Frost



Think of a time you had to choose between two paths, big or small. What guided your decision?

Following your own path means being honest with yourself. It's choosing what aligns with your values, your strengths, and your peace of mind, even if it's not the easiest or most admired option.

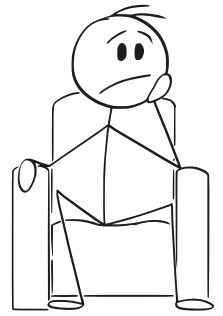
The road that's right for you may not always be the most popular or most understood, but it's the one that leads you closer to who you truly are.

Robert Frost's poem reminds us that self-awareness begins with reflection. The traveler stands before two paths, taking time to notice, think, and choose. In the same way, we grow when we understand why we make the choices we do: whether driven by fear, desire, or purpose. The poem teaches us to own our journey, knowing that each decision shapes who we become.

True self-awareness is learning to walk your path with intention, not comparison, and to look back with honesty, knowing every step has "made all the difference."

COPING WITH

Stress is a natural response when you face challenges, like exams, family pressure, relationships, or big changes. Stress is normal but it becomes a problem when it builds up and makes it difficult for you to concentrate, sleep, or enjoy life.



Healthy Ways to Cope



Stress can make it hard to relax, affecting your body and mind. It can cause headaches, poor sleep, irritability, and strain your studies and relationships. Since stress can't always be avoided, it's important to learn healthy ways to cope with it.



Keep a daily routine : Set time for study, rest, meals, social time and self-care



Get enough sleep: Go to bed and wake up at consistent times. Make your sleeping space dark, quiet and comfortable. Limit screens right before bed.



Stay connected: Talk with friends, family or someone you trust. Sharing what's on your mind can help you feel less alone



Eat healthy and Exercise: A balanced diet and regular exercise reduce stress and boost your mood



Limit Media Overload: Limit news, social-media use and the amount of negative content you consume

What situations tend to stress you the most?

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How do you usually deal with stress?

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What healthy ways could you try next time you feel overwhelmed?

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Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms

When stress leads you the wrong way...

Sometimes men try to escape from stress in ways that seem harmless at first but end up causing more harm than good, such as:



Excessive Screen Time or Gaming



Isolation



Gambling or Impulsive Spending



Negative Self-Talk



Aggression



Emotional or Binge Eating



Avoidance



Self-harm



Workaholism



Unhealthy Sexual Behaviour



Procastination



Alcohol & Substance Abuse



Bottling Up Emotions

Some habits start off helpful but become unhealthy when we overdo them. For example, exercise can relieve stress, but if it becomes an obsession, it can drain you. Relaxing with your phone can seem fine, until it starts interfering with daily tasks.

Breaking free takes self-awareness and discipline, replacing these with healthy coping mechanisms.

However, if you find this hard to do on your own:

- Talk to someone you trust like a friend, mentor, pastor, or counselor.
- If a habit has become too heavy or addictive, seek professional help from a trained counsellor

STAYING FOCUSED

Sometimes, goals and expectations can feel impossible to keep up with. But instead of stressing about what you have not done, pause and ask yourself, **"What really matters to me?"**



Tips For Staying Focused

When your goals match what you truly value, they give you hope, direction, and motivation, all of which strengthen your mental health. When you achieve even small goals, it builds confidence and reminds you that progress is possible.



Be SMART: Set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound



Know Your Aim and End Goals: Have a big-picture and smaller steps that get you there



Take Small Daily Steps: Big goals happen through small actions.



Stay Focused and Accountable: Distractions will come. Find an accountability friend, mentor, or group that keeps you on track.



Celebrate Small Wins: Don't wait for perfection. Celebrate progress. Each step forward builds confidence and keeps your mind motivated.

Self-check

What goals are most important to you right now?

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What distractions keep you from focusing on them?

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How can you take care of your mind to stay clear and motivated?.....

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THE ‘PROVIDER’ PRESSURE

Many men feel pressure to “have it all together” financially; to provide, succeed, and stay in control. When money becomes tight or goals feel out of reach, that pressure can quickly turn into anxiety, shame, or secrecy.



Journeying Toward Financial Wellness

Everyone's financial journey is unique, but wherever you are, start there and stay consistent:



50/30/20 Rule: Spend 50% on needs, 30% on wants, 20% on savings or debt repayment.



Set SMART financial Goals: Have a big-picture and smaller steps that get you there



Track Your Money: Use simple apps or a notebook to know where it goes



Make Smart Choices: Compare prices, live within your means, and avoid comparison.



Invest in Learning: Alternative ways to earn income or invest, budgeting, and responsible spending are life skills.

“

“Wealth is more often the result of hard work, perseverance, and most of all self-discipline.”

Thomas J. Stanley, Ph.D

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Know Yourself

What money beliefs did you grow up with?

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How does financial stress affect your emotions or confidence?

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What one step can you take this month to improve your financial health?

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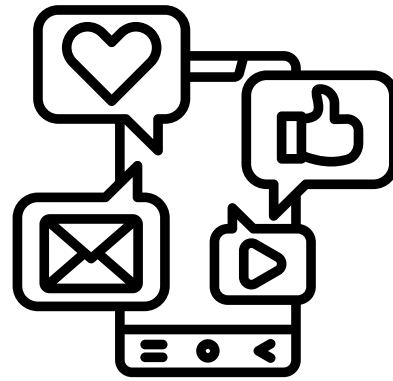
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SOCIAL MEDIA

In a world of constant connection, it's easy for a man to lose himself in endless scrolling, chasing validation, comparing lifestyles, or numbing real struggles. Real Strength is not found in likes or comments. It is found in discipline, focus, and meaningful connection.



Studies have found a strong link between heavy social media use and increased risks for loneliness, anxiety, depression, and thoughts of self-harm. It also increases passivity and sitting which can lead to issues like weight gain, back problems and unfitness which generally harm one's health.

Scrolling endlessly on social media can quietly steal your focus and mess with your sleep, leaving you stressed and anxious. Comparing yourself to others can knock your confidence, and feeling like you're missing out (FOMO) can make you feel like you always have to be "on," even when you're tired. When that happens, step back and take a break.

However, social media isn't all bad. When you use it with purpose, it can help you level up, connect with others, and create cool stuff, whether it's starting a side hustle, learning a new skill, or sharing ideas that inspire your friends.

Three Things that Shape Healthy Social Media Use

Competence:

"Do I learn something or feel capable after using social media, or overwhelmed?"

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Autonomy:

"Do I decide when and how to engage, or am I reacting to every ping and post?"

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Relatedness:

"Does social media help me feel truly connected or more alone?"

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WHEN SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORTS THESE THREE NEEDS; COMPETENCE, AUTONOMY, AND CONNECTION, IT CAN BUILD YOUR WELLBEING INSTEAD OF BREAKING IT.

Social Media Self Evaluation Quiz

Do you stop to check social media in the middle of a conversation, meeting, class or church service?.....

Do you spend more than 6 hours a day each day using social media?

.....

Do you lie about the time you spend on social media?.....

Has social media negatively affected your closeness with family and friends?

.....

Have you ever tried to cut back on social media use and failed?.....

Have you neglected school, work and hobbies in favor of being on social media?

Do you experience anxiety or withdrawal symptoms when not able to check social media?.....

Do you have an overwhelming desire to share on social media feeds?

.....

**IF YOUR ANSWER TO MOST OF THESE QUESTIONS IS YES, THEN YOU NEED TO IMPROVE
HOW YOU CONSUME SOCIAL MEDIA**

Personal Boundaries Plan Example

- I will spend a maximum of.....hours per day on social media
- I will take one "digital Sabbath" day each week
- I will unfollow pages that make me feel inferior or angry
- I will follow accounts that educate, inspire, and draw me closer to my goals
- I will replace online time with: _____ (for example exercise, a hobby, prayer, reading, real conversations)

BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy relationships, including the one you have with yourself are key to good mental health. People who build supportive, respectful, and honest relationships tend to be happier, less stressed, and more confident.



Tips for Building Connections



Self assessment



Start with You: How you treat yourself affects how you treat others. Start with self-awareness and self-respect. Do something each day that lifts your confidence



Connect with Others: Good relationships take effort. Respect, honesty, and communication matter most. Listen actively, check in, and be honest



Manage Relational Stress: Tough times can bring tension. Set boundaries, take time for yourself or talking to someone you trust



Conflict Resolution: Arguments happen, but they don't have to destroy relationships. Walk away if emotions are high, and talk again when everyone's calm.



Know When to Walk Away: It's okay to leave a relationship that hurts your peace or self-worth. If there's emotional, physical, or verbal abuse, seek help immediately.

Who do you feel safe talking to about your thoughts or struggles?

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How do you show respect and care in your relationships?

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What can you do to communicate more openly?

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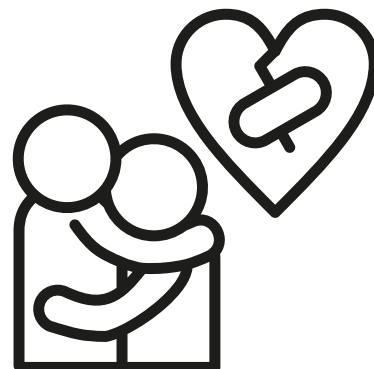
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FORGIVENESS

Forgiving someone who has wronged you takes strength. It's not pretending what happened didn't hurt, it's choosing to let go of anger so it no longer controls you. Psychologists define forgiveness as intentionally deciding to release resentment and offer empathy and compassion, even when the pain is real.



Forgiveness
HEALS.

**“FORGIVENESS IS NOT
ABOUT THEM. IT'S
ABOUT FREEING
YOURSELF”**

You can forgive:

- Another person for betrayal, harsh words, or neglect.
- Yourself for mistakes, regrets, or things you wish you did differently.
- A situation like loss, illness, or circumstances beyond your control.

What if they are not sorry?

Hanging on to a grudge imprisons you, putting you at risk of being mentally unhealthy, having migraines, ulcers and other effects of stress. Forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation. You can forgive quietly, by yourself, without ever rebuilding the relationship.

Research shows that forgiveness improves mental and physical health by:

- Reducing stress
- Improving mood
- Preventing toxic anger
- Rebuilding self-esteem

**“FORGIVENESS IS THE FRAGRANCE
THAT THE VIOLET SHEDS ON THE
HEEL THAT HAS CRUSHED IT”**

Know Yourself

Who (or what) do you still need to forgive

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What emotions surface when you think about it?

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What step could you take toward letting go?

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The Let-Go Letter: Write a private letter to the person, situation, or version of yourself you need to forgive. Say what hurt. Say what you're releasing. Then destroy it, safely.

MENTORSHIP

People often link mentorship to career progression. However, it's about having someone further down the road to offer guidance, accountability, and perspective. For younger men, a mentor can model emotional steadiness, resilience, and integrity. For older men, mentoring others offers a sense of legacy and fulfilment.



Reflection

Mentorship and mental health

From a mental health perspective, mentorship meets a deep human need, the need to feel that you matter. Studies show that men who have meaningful mentor relationships tend to experience higher life satisfaction and fewer symptoms of depression. Having someone to guide you, or someone who looks up to you for guidance, strengthens your sense of purpose, value, and direction.



**IF YOU WANT TO WALK
FAST, WALK ALONE. BUT IF
YOU WANT TO WALK FAR,
WALK TOGETHER**

Mentorship doesn't have to be formal. It could be a seasoned colleague, an older friend, or even a neighbour whose wisdom you respect. It's about stepping outside your own head and allowing someone else to influence or be influenced by you.

Who in your life do you admire?

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What kind of man do you want to become and who can help you get there?

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In which area of your life do you feel you would benefit from mentorship?

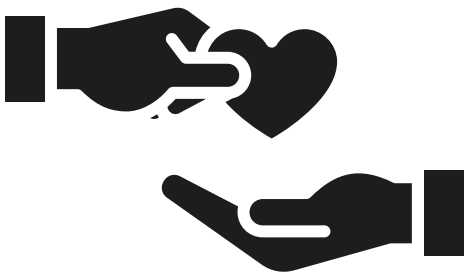
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GIVING BACK



Giving is a noble act, but beyond helping others, research shows that people who give, whether through donations, volunteering, or simple acts of kindness, experience positive psychological changes that support a healthier, more balanced life.



Ways to Give Back

No one has nothing to give; every person carries something the world needs. Here are a few ways you can get creative with your giving:



Volunteer your time: Help with school events, community cleanups, or mentoring younger students.



Share what you know: Teach a skill, encourage a friend, or help someone with their studies



Be kind:: A kind word or gesture can change someone's day.



Support someone struggling: Listen, pray with them, or guide them to seek help



Be responsible: Take care of your environment, your school, your home

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*Everyone can be great because everyone can serve.”
Martin Luther King Jr.*

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What’s one thing you can start doing to help others around you?

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How do your talents make a difference in your community?

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How does helping others make you feel about yourself?

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MENTAL HEALTH DISTRESS



Many men still ignore early warning signs of mental distress, brushing them off as stress, fatigue, or just a bad day. This silence can allow struggles to grow until they reach a crisis point. Recognizing the signs early and seeking help can save lives.

According to mental health experts, men often express emotional pain through behavioral and physical changes rather than words.

Signs to Look Out For

- **Withdrawal or unusual quietness:** Pulling away from friends, family, or conversations
- **Loss of interest:** Things you once enjoyed no longer excite you
- **Avoiding emotional or physical intimacy:** Distancing yourself instead of connecting
- **Defensiveness, sarcasm, or explosive reactions:** Anger masking sadness, fear, or shame
- **Physical symptoms:** Chest tightness, racing heartbeat, stomach issues, or constant tension
- **Changes in sleep:** Trouble falling asleep, waking often, or sleeping too much yet feeling tired.
- **Irritability:** Snapping at loved ones, road rage, or being constantly on edge
- **Social withdrawal:** Saying "I'm just busy" while gradually cutting off social contact
- **Telling remarks:** "This life is short..." or "Anything can happen..." sometimes hint at deeper hopelessness or even suicidal thoughts

 *Your Are*
Not Alone
Reach Out, Seek Support

What Not To Say When A Man Reaches Out



"Be a man."

"You're weak."

"Other men are handling it."

If you or someone you know experiences these feelings for more than two weeks, or if they seem to be getting worse, don't ignore them. Seek help early; talk to a counselor, a trusted friend, or mental health professional

ASK FOR HELP

Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or stuck is part of being human. Even strong, capable men need support sometimes. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, it's a step toward strength.

Practical Ways to Seek For Help

- **Talk to someone you trust:** A parent, mentor, friend, or sibling.
- **Professional support:** Counselors in schools, hospitals, or online therapy platforms.
- **Community support:** Churches, youth groups, or local organizations often have resources.
- **Faith & reflection:** Prayer, meditation, or spiritual guidance can provide comfort and clarity.



Thank you for journeying through SOAR. Just like the name suggests, this is your time to rise, to explore your purpose, and to take small, intentional steps toward the life you envision. May this journey lead you to wholeness, wellness, and a stronger understanding of yourself. Keep dreaming boldly, and use the vision board on the last page to map out your goals and aspirations; let it guide your path and remind you of the heights you can reach. Your story is yours to write; start today, keep moving forward, and soar into the life you were meant to live.

WRITE LIFE KENYA

Silent Weight

In shadows thick with whispered dread,
A burden rests upon your head.
You wear a mask, a steel façade,
Yet cracks run deep beneath the guard.

They told you, "Men don't cry or break;
You stand, endure, for honor's sake."
So silence holds your wounded soul,
A beast of burden taking its toll.

Each breath is heavy, laced with fear,
A voice inside you screaming near.
You bite your tongue, you bear the strain,
And drown the weight in quiet pain.

The world expects you hard as stone,
To bear your scars and walk alone.
But even stone erodes with time,
And silence breeds a darker crime.

For every hurt, unspoken ache,
Another soul begins to break.
In silence, violence grows unseen,
A shadowed flood where pain has been.

It's not weak to break the chain,
To speak your hurt, to shed the pain.
The strongest hearts are those that mend,
Not those that fracture to the end.

You fear you'll crumble if you speak,
That asking help will make you weak.
But strength resides in honest cries,
In truth unmasked, no more disguise.

Before you fall, before despair,
Reach out, break free, and know repair.
For asking help will not betray,
It's how you shed the silent weight.

Speak now, before the shadows rise,
And steal the light from weary eyes.
You'll find the strength in every word,
In being seen, in being heard

Poetry by Rowan Evans

MY VISION BOARD

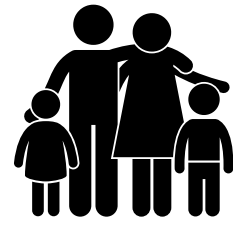
"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Eleanor Roosevelt



Career



Mental health



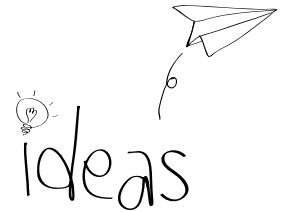
Family



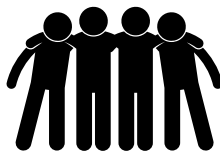
Exercise



Traveling



Creativity



Friends



Education



Nutrition

**YOUR EXISTENCE IS EVIDENCE THAT THIS
GENERATION NEEDS SOMETHING THAT YOUR LIFE
CONTAINS**



"THE COURAGE TO SOAR TO GREAT HEIGHTS IS INSIDE ALL OF US"

This workbook invites every young man to take a journey of self-discovery, purpose, and healing. Through guided reflections and practical tools, write life's kenya soar workbook guides young men to Seek support, Own their journey, Align with their purpose, and build Resilience ...SOAR.



ENGAGE. EMPOWER. EMBRACE

Championing Mental Health For All

REACH OUT TO US VIA +254715428427

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