

MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

It's not often heard of that a group of men meet up and talk mental health, let alone speak about things that have been on their mind for a while. So I contacted a group of fitness professionals from all different walks of life to speak about all things mental health.

My idea was to sit down and have a conversation about real issues. I wanted to know if we had faced similar problems, how they presented themselves and the journey taken to get through. I also wanted to explore why men seem to find it difficult to express emotion and talk through their struggles amongst peers, friends and loved ones. There was a common consensus in the group about general non-awareness of mental health.



THE TEAM:
GARY WARD,
LAWRENCE PRICE,
RICHIE EDWARDS,
RICKEL WHITE,
BEN BIDWELL.

LP Lawrence Price @fafitsake

RE Richie Edwards @newyorkshogun

RW Rickel White @rickelwhite

BB Ben Bidwell @thenakedprofessor

BB I'm 37 and for the first 30 years of my life I didn't know what mental health was, I used to roll my eyes when someone mentioned it. Now, the world has come alive to it. We are all fitness professionals here talking about mental health, which is fundamentally how we feel. I was only concerned with how I looked rather than how I actually felt for a very long time.

RE We don't know what mental health is, we don't even recognise it so how can we treat it? We are always feeling emotions and our minds race 10 steps ahead to the dark places. There was nothing in the past to help get through these feelings.

Once I knew we would be doing this talk, I researched signs and triggers for mental health issues. I was taken back with what I found.

Sleep issues, Eating problems (too much or little), Loss of motivation, Changes in Libido, Problems coping with daily stresses, Indecisiveness, Emotional sensitivity, Withdrawal from social contact.

I realised I had been through almost all of the signs at some point and had felt under pressure, but didn't realise what it was or why I was having these emotions.

For Rickel and Lawrence it was retrospective realisation as well.

RW I was unaware I was going through sleep deprivation and stress until the problems were over. I wasn't able to see while it was there.

LP We can have disproportionate reactions to small day-to-day occurrences. We can manage big life issues but something like a traffic jam or someone saying the wrong thing, can push us to breaking point.

One of the hardest things to do but an essential life skill is to preempt these triggers and build up through self-management. Learn to manage our mind like our bodies.

We manage our body triggers very well. For example if we are sore from training we have a rest day or change our nutrient breakdown. If our joints feel vulnerable we change our training pattern or take vitamins. Our minds are never really given the same consideration.

Richie said he felt stressed and down after a recent professional MMA defeat. I asked him how he managed to see the triggers and how he got through the tough times.

RE I prayed, I listened to positive audio books in the morning. I wrote things down so I could better digest them. I read books on anxiety and how to facilitate it. I also remembered tougher times and knew I could get through it.

RW There is no one dimension to what one should be. What makes me happy is what matters.

To him, its about feeling comfortable in who you are and embracing yourself rather than conforming to what society dictates.

Defining masculinity and exploring the impact it had on our behaviour was fascinating.

BB The toxic masculinity phrases cool, tough, strong, unemotional and the phrase 'Man up'.

Not addressing emotions has a profound impact on controlling the person's self esteem, relationships and attitude towards everyday life.

I realised that for most of my life I felt pretty empty, I was living, but not alive.

Ben confessed to putting on a mask to fit in but his truth and reality was in having his energy directed towards kindness, compassion, love and emotions.

We all agreed that showing vulnerability brings with it a risk of being judged and being singled out but it's only through living it, that you're stronger. There is strength in being transparent and being open. Once you have the ability to do this you can finally breathe. Like the shackles have been let off, it's liberating.

LP We didn't have the same experiences physically in the world; however emotionally there were such similarities.

RE You can't change who you are with squats. You have to change your heart and mind and find what makes you happy.

To Richie silence is a support system, but by finding trust, you can open up and share.

Understanding that dealing with feelings is a process and acknowledging there is work to be done is also strong. It's not a press button, but rather a process. We all found it comforting knowing someone else had been in a similar place and is dealing with it.

Glass Man's fitness editor GARY WARD presents some autumn dishes for optimum nutrition

CHICKPEA SALAD

Ingredients (Serves 1)

- ½ can chickpeas (120g drained weight)
- 8 cashew nuts
- ½ cup black or red grapes
- A generous handful of rocket
- ¼ red onion
- 1 tsp pomegranate seeds
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar
- A pinch pink Himalayan salt to taste
- Some ground fresh black pepper

CHICKEN SALAD

Ingredients (Serves 3/4)

- 1 packet baby leaf spinach
- ½ packet rocket
- 2 cups shredded rotisserie chicken (feta/Tofu for vegetarian/vegan options)
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 225g (8 oz) mushrooms roughly chopped
- 1 avocado, flesh sliced
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes
- Handful of fresh basil, roughly chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard

This vegan-friendly protein-packed salad is not only great tasting but incredibly nutritious too. It's bursting with powerful antioxidants, vitamin C and E, as well as detoxifying phytochemicals.

Method

- Place generous handful of rocket leaves in a large salad bowl
- Rinse and drain chickpeas and place in salad bowl with rocket leaves
- Thinly slice red onion and add to the salad bowl
- Add black or red grapes cut in half and de-seeded
- Toss in the pomegranate seeds
- Add olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Himalayan salt and ground black pepper
- Mix everything together
- Serve onto a plate and sprinkle roughly chopped cashew nuts or pine nuts on top

Macro breakdown

Protein: 19g

Fat: 25g

Carbohydrates: 43g

For the meat-eater this salad has a great combination of flavours and is low in calories. It's packed with vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients, making this a perfect meal whether you're looking to lose weight, gain muscle, or maintain good health.

Method

- Place spinach with the shredded chicken into a bowl
- Warm the oil in a pan over medium heat
- Add in the garlic and let it cook for a few minutes, being careful not to burn
- Stir in the lemon juice, basil and mustard, and finally the mushrooms
- Let the mushrooms cook for about 5 to 7 minutes and adjust the seasoning, adding in freshly ground pepper and a little Pink Himalayan salt
- There should be enough dressing in the pan to fully coat the spinach
- Make sure the temperature of the dressing is hot
- Toss the mushrooms and hot dressing over the spinach ensuring that it wilts
- Add the rocket and tomatoes to the spinach and gently toss
- Serve onto a plate and place the sliced avocado on top
- To finish off, drizzle balsamic vinegar across the salad

Macro breakdown

Protein: 84g

Carbohydrates: 45g

Fat: 50g

Calories: 966

FIVE TOP TIPS FOR DINING OUT

Going out for a meal? All you need is a good game-plan to keep on your fitness track. Our five best tips will help you enjoy the occasion without compromising your healthy eating goals.

READ THE MENU ONLINE



If you know the restaurant you're going to, check out their menu online to work out the healthiest options. Avoid dishes described as creamy, buttery, breaded, stuffed or smothered as these are probably loaded with unhealthy fats and calories. Also sidestep any terms like au gratin, sautéed or scalloped as they are dead giveaways of high fat and calories inside the meal. Look instead for options described as "grilled", "baked", "poached", "roasted", "steamed" or "boiled", which are low-fat ways of preparing foods. Therefore, planning ahead helps you make better choices and avoid temptation.

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