

# IS IT ANGER, OR SOMETHING MORE? UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION IN OLDER MEN



It can be easy to miss or misinterpret the signs of depression in an older man when they show up as anger or phrases like:

**“People get on my nerves.”**      **“I’m just tired.”**      **“I don’t need to talk about it.”**

These can all be signs that something deeper is going on. The National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute on Aging both note that depression can include irritability, sleep changes, withdrawal, and increased alcohol use, and NIA specifically notes that sadness is not always the main symptom in older adults.

## **SIGNS OF DEPRESSION IN OLDER MEN**

Every person is different, but here are a few common examples of changes families and loved ones may recognize:

### **The "short fuse" change**

A man who used to be patient now gets irritated quickly. He may seem angry over everyday things, but underneath that anger may be stress, hopelessness, or emotional pain.

### **The "checking out" change**

He spends more time alone, stops going places, or loses interest in activities he used to enjoy. He may say he is "fine," but he is less engaged and harder to connect with.

### **The "physical symptoms first" change**

He talks more about body aches, headaches, poor sleep, or low energy than emotions. That does not mean the symptoms are "all in his head." Depression and physical health are closely connected, and many people notice physical symptoms first.

### **The "coping" change**

He starts using alcohol more often, works constantly, or distracts himself all day to avoid talking or feeling. These behaviors can look like coping, but they may also be signs of depression.

If this sounds like a family member or loved one, a good first step is to open the door to an honest, respectful conversation about mental health.

Our hospital-based outpatient program meets the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

**Call us today at**

## IS IT ANGER, OR SOMETHING MORE? UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION IN OLDER MEN



When people picture depression, they often think of sadness. But in older men, depression does not always look like sadness on the outside.

Sometimes it looks like anger. It can sound like a short temper, constant frustration, or snapping over small things. It can look like shutting down, withdrawing from family, or seeming "hard to reach." It may even show up as restlessness, sleep problems, or physical complaints like headaches or stomach issues. National mental health organizations note that irritability, anger, and physical symptoms can all be part of depression, including in men. Unfortunately, these signs are easy to miss or misinterpret.

Family members may think, "He is just grumpy," or "That is just how he is getting older." But depression is not a normal part of aging, and it is treatable.

### WHY THIS GETS MISSED IN OLDER MEN

Many older men grew up in a time when emotional struggles were not talked about openly. Some were taught to stay busy, stay strong, and handle problems on their own. Because of that, depression may come out sideways instead of sounding like "I feel depressed."

An older man may say:

**"I don't need to talk about it."**

**"People get on my nerves."**

**"I'm just tired."**

**"I don't sleep anymore."**

**"My stomach has been off."**

At the same time, he may be:

- Pulling away from family or friends
- Losing interest in hobbies
- Drinking more than usual
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling restless, edgy, or frustrated most days

***Check out the next page for more.***

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## **WHAT FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES CAN DO**

If you are concerned about an older man in your life, a good first goal is just to open the door for a conversation. Try these tips:

- Try:
- Choose a calm moment to talk
  - Share your concerns, not criticisms
  - Name what you have noticed
  - Keep the conversation simple and respectful

### **You might say:**

- "I have noticed you seem more frustrated lately, and I care about you."
- "You have not seemed like yourself. How are you doing, really?"
- "I know you have been dealing with a lot. You do not have to handle it alone."
- "Would you be open to talking with your doctor about sleep, stress, or mood?"

CDC and NIA both encourage loved ones to support older adults by helping them connect with care and even offering to go with them to an appointment.

## **WE CAN HELP.**

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

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# PLANTING RESILIENCE: SMALL DAILY HABITS THAT HELP FARMERS MANAGE STRESS



Summer on the farm is busy. Long days, changing weather, and a to-do list that grows faster than the corn can wear on anyone.

If you have worked the land for years, you already know this. Farm work asks a lot from your body and your mind. During busy season, small routines can help take some of the edge off and make hard days a little easier.

The ideas below are simple and practical. Most take five to ten minutes or less, and they fit into chores, field time, and shop work.

## **Before the day gets rolling, take 30 seconds to check in**

Before you grab your boots, pause for a minute.

- **Ask yourself:** “How am I doing today?”
- **Notice one thing:** tight shoulders, poor sleep, a short fuse, low energy, or maybe a clear head
- **Pick one habit from the list below** to try today. You only need to choose one.

## **1. Sip steady, not just when you get thirsty**

**When to fit it in:** Keep a water bottle or jug in the cab and one on the workbench. Take a few sips at each gate, load, or field pass.

**Why it helps:** When it gets hot and the day runs long, hydration helps with energy, focus, and mood.

*See the next page for more.*

**Make it easier:** Refill your water at lunch and again midafternoon. If your clinician says it is safe for you, keep a snack on hand too.

**Try this:** If routines help, tie drinking water to something you already do every time, like opening a gate or stopping the tractor.

## **2. Do a quick stretch while equipment warms up**

**When to fit it in:** While equipment warms up, before climbing in, or after you park.

**Why it helps:** A little movement can ease stiffness in your back, hips, and hands, and help you feel less wound up.

**Try this quick set:**

- Shoulder rolls, 10 each direction
- Gentle hamstring stretch with one foot on the step, 20 seconds each side
- Open and close your hands, 10 times

If something hurts, back off. If you deal with regular pain, ask your clinician what stretches are safe for you.

## **3. Do one neighbor check each day**

**When to fit it in:** During coffee, while fueling up, or at the end of the day.

**Why it helps:** Busy season can get isolating. A quick call or text can help more than people realize.

**What to say:** Keep it simple.

“Thinking of you. How’s your day going?” No big conversation required.

## **4. Take a shade-and-reset break**

**When to fit it in:** Midday, or any time you catch yourself getting irritable or foggy.

**Why it helps:** A short break in the shade can help your body cool down and your mind reset.

**Try this:** Park in the shade, drink some water, stretch, and take a few slow breaths. Set a timer for five minutes, then get back to it.

## **5. Use the “next right step” rule**

**When to fit it in:** Any time the list starts feeling too long.

**Why it helps:** Stress gets heavier when everything feels urgent at once. Breaking things down helps you keep moving.

**How to do it:** Ask yourself, “What is the next right step for the next 15 minutes?” Do that one thing, then reassess.

**Farming teaches people to push through. That strength is important, but it also means a lot of folks carry stress longer than they need to.**

**If stress, low mood, or irritability starts affecting your sleep, your relationships, or your day-to-day life, it may help to talk with someone.**

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# MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS AT ANY AGE

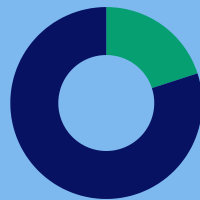


## GRIEF, RETIREMENT, AND HEALTH CHANGES ARE SERIOUS STRESSORS

Life transitions such as losing a spouse, managing chronic illness, or stepping away from a career can increase the risk of depression, especially for men, who are often less likely to talk about their emotional struggles.

## MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS INDEPENDENCE

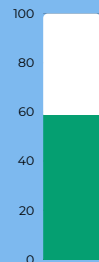
Depression and anxiety can impact energy, memory, motivation, and physical health. When left untreated, they can make it harder for older adults to stay active, engaged, and independent.



**80%**  
OF SUICIDE DEATHS  
IN THE UNITED  
STATES ARE MEN



OLDER ADULTS  
AGED 75 AND OLDER  
HAVE SUICIDE RATES  
FAR ABOVE THE  
NATIONAL AVERAGE



**ONLY 59%**  
OF MEN WITH SERIOUS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
CHALLENGES RECEIVE  
TREATMENT IN A YEAR



OLDER MEN ARE  
SIGNIFICANTLY LESS  
LIKELY THAN WOMEN  
TO SEEK MENTAL  
HEALTH TREATMENT.

## COMMON SIGNS OF DEPRESSION IN OLDER MEN

- Irritability or anger
- Loss of interest in activities
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Increased use of alcohol
- Talking about feeling hopeless or like a burden



**Talk about mental health with the older men in your community.**

Support from family, friends, and local programs can help break stigma and improve outcomes.

Sources:  
National Institute of Mental Health  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Mayo Clinic

# Sudoku

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 6 |   |   |   |   |   | 5 | 2 |
| 5 |   | 2 | 1 | 4 |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   | 2 |   | 4 |   | 9 |
| 2 | 1 |   | 9 |   |   |   |   | 8 |
|   | 8 | 7 |   | 3 |   | 2 | 4 |   |
| 6 |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |
|   |   |   | 8 |   | 3 |   | 9 |   |
| 8 | 3 | 9 |   |   |   | 5 | 2 | 1 |

## How to Solve Sudoku

Sudoku is a number puzzle made up of a 9×9 grid.

Fill in the grid so each row, each column, and each 3×3 box contains the numbers 1-9 exactly once.

Sudoku is all about logic, no math required. Take your time and have fun!

