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Society needs to change its attitude to 'the blues'

MEN'S Health Week this week is the prime time to focus on mental health.

Pat Mesiti explains why "the blues" are killing far too many of our men.

Pat is a mindset expert and bestselling author and passionate supporter for increased awareness of men's health issues. He also worked for years as the executive director of Teen Challenge helping rehabilitate 400 young men with addiction issues.

"One of the biggest tragedies in our western world is the pain of men's health, there are several reasons why men suffer from depression but it needs to be more recognised that while women cry, men die," Pat said.

"Male suicide rates in Australia are far too high."

Of all deaths classified as suicide in 2010, over three-quarters (77%) were males, he said, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death for men. Male suicide occurs at a much higher rate than that for females. In

2010, the age standardised male suicide rate was 16.4 deaths per 100,000 males compared to the female rate of 4.8 deaths per 100,000 females.

But why this disparity between gender?

"When women have something pressing on their mind, more often or not it comes out over the phone or a walk with their girlfriends and can be processed with the help of others. In a man's world, unfortunately it often ends up bottled up and they feel they are

weak if they expose themselves as vulnerable. It's a very unfortunate part of our culture here in Australia," Pat said.

So what can we do as a society to help our boys and men not to become another statistic?

- Realise that tough guys do talk — weak men don't.

- We need to recognise the signs that someone needs help and get them that help sooner rather than later. That help can be the difference between life and death.

- Our culture needs to stop "male bashing" and highlighting the inadequacies of men.

- We need to encourage more high profile people and celebrities to come out about their depression.

- We all need to work to change the stigma still attached to male depression.

- Work with our young boys from the time they can speak is key to it all. Teach them to cope with adversity themselves and make sure they know it's okay and natural to cry.

"Another huge problem is that we don't teach our boys how to cope with problems when they arise.

– PAT MESITI