



Hong Kong can be a stressful place to live: work pressures, financial worries and a lack of sleep in this 24-hour city can deplete all of us, while family issues are exacerbated by an expat life that is lived away from our usual support networks. Men are, of course, not immune to this, so we chatted with Counselling Psychologist SEBASTIAN DROESLER about how they can go about tackling stress in the city.



“Men will often try to compartmentalise stress and keep it away from other areas of their lives.”

While we all suffer from occasional bouts of stress, Sebastian believes the issue is endemic in men in Hong Kong. “Stress is the number one driver of men’s health issues here.”

Why is this so? Many factors can contribute, according to Sebastian. “Work, relocation, relationships, injuries and finances can all trigger depression, anxiety and phobias.”

But it’s the way that men typically tackle stress that can actually cause more issues. “Men often try to contain their stress in one area; for example, if they feel pressured at work, they may believe that they can compartmentalise it and keep it away from other areas of their lives.” This, in turn, is likely to encourage unhealthy habits, such as heavy drinking or excessive exercising, which are carried out in an attempt to “fix” things. Such habits can then lead to more stress, eventually affecting relationships, family life and even physical health.

So what can be done? The simplest solution may be one of the most effective: get more sleep. “Our bodies can cope with a lot of stress as long as we get enough sleep – around seven to nine hours on average per night. Shorter sleep over longer periods of time leads to low mood, irritability, loss of concentration and decreased cognitive performance.”

Another tip is to keep any extreme tendencies in check. “The guiding principle of moderation allows us to do a little of everything, as long as we stay away from extremes.” So, while a post-work tippie with friends is fine, a Friday-night binge-drinking session is unlikely to improve your mood far beyond the morning after. *EL*

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