



## David Fairlamb

# THE FIT FACTOR

### FITNESS TIP

Boost your mental health through exercise – the positive endorphins will give you that feel-good factor you crave.

### LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Make time to check on your family, friends and work colleagues – you may never know how important your call is.

Don't miss David's tips every Saturday in your Journal

**T**HIS year has been tough for everyone and although the full impact of the pandemic on our mental health is still unknown, research shows it has hit many men hard.

More than four in 10 men are struggling with their mental health during the coronavirus pandemic and a similar proportion feel they have no-one to talk to, a survey suggests.

Some 45% of men struggled with their mental health in the last six months, according to research by the anti-stigma campaign Time to Change.

The survey, of 1,500 UK men, also found that lack of face-to-face contact with friends has left 44% of men feeling they do not have anyone to talk to.

And 44% of men surveyed said they are missing out on chances to support their male friends' due to restrictions and lack of contact.

Despite opportunities for connection through technology, 53% of men said they feel uncomfortable about discussing mental health on virtual calls and 45% feel more iso-

lated than ever. On average, men have three fewer people in their support network – people they would call upon for support with their mental health – since the pandemic hit.

With other outlets and regular social interactions such as gyms and classes also stopping, the real impact has yet to be fully seen.

It is therefore more important than ever to keep in contact with your friends, family or work colleagues if you suspect they may be struggling; Even if they say they are fine they might not be. Do not underestimate how tough a time it is for many people, therefore regular contact is important.

The study also found that rates of mental distress among employees were 60% higher in April than before

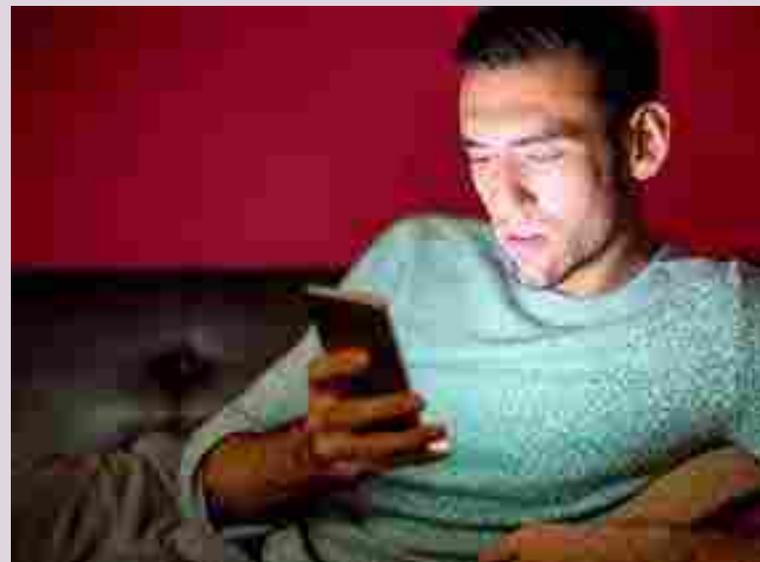
the pandemic, and 50% higher in May, with significant increases among both those who were furloughed and those who continued working.

Furloughed employees in insecure jobs were less likely to experience significant mental distress than their counterparts who continued at work. One in four employees on furlough (27%) and 10% of those who carried on working said they were in an insecure job in May, compared with 5% of employees before the pandemic.

The analysis concludes that, while furlough may have offered short-term respite from the immediate economic shocks, mental distress appears to have increased for most people regardless of this help.

Mental distress appears to have increased for most workers regardless of this help, but people in insecure jobs who continued at work experienced the greatest increase.

I have spent a great deal of time helping clients with their mental health, motivating them to return to regular routines/exercise and directing them to focus on a positive



mindset. No one is immune to feeling low, it's taking steps to help yourself that's important.

Whoever you are, whatever your situation, there is help out there for you, therefore seek it. Speak to your GP or the Samaritans to get the mental health support you may

need. Anyone experiencing a common mental health problem, there is support out there for self-referral:

■ North Tyneside Talking therapies 0191 2952775

■ Northumberland Talking Matters 0300 3030700

Make that call to help yourself.

*Self-care is how  
you get your  
power back*

**Motivational quote  
of the day**