

1. What is your professional background and experience in working with men's mental health?

I am a counselling psychologist and the founder of a trauma-informed and queer-affirmative mental health organization. My practice focuses on working with individuals across diverse backgrounds, including men struggling with emotional regulation, attachment difficulties, and relationship satisfaction. My work involves helping men navigate societal pressures, process unresolved trauma, and develop healthier emotional expression.

2. How do you define emotional safety in the context of crying and emotional expression?

Emotional safety refers to an environment where individuals feel secure enough to express their emotions without fear of ridicule, shame, or judgment. A safe space—whether within relationships, workplaces, or therapy—validates emotions, encourages vulnerability, and fosters genuine connection. It involves active listening, non-judgmental support, and an understanding that emotions, including tears, are a normal and necessary part of human experience.

3. What are some common misconceptions about men crying?

Some myths surrounding men and crying include:

- "Real men don't cry" – This outdated belief reinforces emotional suppression.
- "Crying is a sign of weakness" – In reality, expressing emotions requires strength and self-awareness.
- "Men should be stoic providers and protectors" – This limits their ability to process emotions, leading to bottled-up distress.
- "Crying is unmasculine" – Crying is a natural human response, not a gendered behavior.
-

4. How do societal norms around masculinity affect men's willingness to cry?

Societal norms often pressure men to embody traditional masculinity, emphasizing toughness and emotional restraint. Cultural expectations, religious beliefs, and even certain festivals reinforce stoicism, discouraging emotional expression. This conditioning starts in childhood, with boys being told to "man up" or "stop acting like a girl," reinforcing shame around vulnerability.

5. What psychological benefits can men gain from allowing themselves to cry?

There are multiple benefits of emotional expressiveness, whether through tears or some other means as highlighted below in brief:

- **Short-term benefits:** Immediate stress relief, emotional release, and a sense of catharsis.
- **Long-term benefits:** Improved mental health, reduced risk of anxiety and depression, stronger emotional intelligence, and deeper interpersonal relationships.

6. How can men identify when they need to cry or express their emotions?

Signs that crying may be necessary include:

- Feeling overwhelmed or emotionally numb
- Experiencing physical tension, like tightness in the chest
- Sudden irritability or anger without a clear cause
- Difficulty concentrating due to suppressed emotions
- Experiencing a deep sense of sadness or grief

7. Multiple Ways on how men can create a safe environment to cry:

We need to build better systems across society to ensure men feel safe everywhere to express vulnerable emotions, not just ones of anger or rage. However, these are some things that can be done at an individual level:

- **Alone:** Find a private space, listen to music that resonates with emotions, or write thoughts in a journal to ease into crying.
- **With others:** Choose trusted friends, family, or a therapist who provides non-judgmental support.
- **Challenging self-oppression:** Recognize and challenge internalized beliefs that crying is a weakness.
- **Reframing crying:** Understand that crying is a natural emotional regulation process, not a failure.

8. What role do friends and family play in supporting men's emotional expression?

Friends and family can try the following in addition to asking men in their lives itself for what they would prefer:

- Encourage open dialogue and validate emotions
 - Avoid making dismissive comments like "Be strong" or "Toughen up"
 - Model emotional expression themselves
 - Offer active listening without rushing to "fix" the issue
- Remember to seek feedback if these strategies are working or if they would like any changes.

9. How can partners help create a safe space for men to express their emotions without fear of judgment?

Some of the following strategies might be useful:

- Avoid ridiculing or invalidating their emotions.
- Encourage open conversations about feelings.
- Reassure them that vulnerability strengthens relationships, not weakens them.
- Be patient and allow them to express themselves at their own pace.

10. What therapeutic techniques do you find effective in helping men process their emotions?

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** Identifies and challenges negative beliefs around emotions.
- **Mindfulness-Based Therapy:** Encourages present-moment awareness to reduce emotional suppression.
- **Narrative Therapy:** Helps men reframe their stories around masculinity and emotional expression.
- **Somatic Therapy:** Assists in recognizing and releasing emotions stored in the body.
- **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT):** Addresses the impact of trauma on emotional regulation.
- **Emotional Freedom technique (EFT):** Helps process past emotional wounds affecting current expression.

11. How can mindfulness or other grounding techniques assist men in feeling more comfortable with their emotions?

- **Deep Breathing Exercises:** Regulates the nervous system, making emotional expression less overwhelming.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Helps release emotional tension.
- **Mindful Journaling:** Encourages self-reflection and emotional acknowledgment.
- **Guided Visualization:** This creates a mental space where emotions can be explored safely.

12. What advice would you give to men who want to embrace their emotional side but feel hesitant to cry?

- Start by acknowledging that emotions are normal and healthy.
- Challenge societal messages that equate masculinity with emotional suppression.
- Find supportive people who encourage emotional expression.
- Recognize that emotional vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness.
- Practice small steps, such as talking about emotions before moving toward crying.

13. Are there any resources (books, articles, workshops) you recommend for men looking to explore their emotions more deeply?

- **Books:**
 - *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* – bell hooks
 - *Daring Greatly* – Brené Brown
 - *Cry Like a Man* – Jason Wilson
 - *No More Mr. Nice Guy* – Robert Glover
- **Articles:**
 - Psychology Today articles on men's emotional health
 - Research on emotional suppression and masculinity
- **Workshops & Therapy:**
 - Men's emotional intelligence workshops
 - Group therapy sessions focusing on masculinity and vulnerability

1. What is your professional background and experience in working with men's mental health? (*optional)

Mental health professional (Registered clinical psychologist, Gestalt therapist)
Founder of Samatha Psychosocial Care
Working in MH since 2010, in a clinical setting since 2015. Areas of work-
Counseling/psychotherapy, psychological assessments, training,
Working with men mental health since 2015

2. How do you define emotional safety in the context of crying and emotional expression?

Emotional safety is a space that we experience in the presence of someone. Being emotionally vulnerable needs courage....courage to open up, to let other people know my flaws, traumas and the real me. When someone is able to experience acceptance, non judgement, unbiased perception, trust and confidentiality only then a space of emotional safety opens up.

Crying can be different for different people depending on gender, sexuality, power, self-image and role of responsibility. Norms, societal expectation highly influence crying. For animals including humans, crying is a normal phenomenon to release pain.

3. What are some common misconceptions about men crying?

We still hear people saying "Men don't cry". A male child from his innocent childhood need to carry this societal expectation that a male child should not cry..a crying male child is teased saying "Are you a girl to cry like this?, only girls cry, Strong Boys don't cry" ..these statements start to work as a input of belief that boys should be emotionally strong, which lead to repression of emotion. Emotions don't just disappear if not expressed..it changes its form..like energy changing its form. Unshared, unreleased painful emotions can turn to anger if the person can externalize the emotion or turn to sadness or anxiety if the person internalizes the emotion which becomes more powerful that harms the person. Anger is often a form of sadness. If men are not taught to experience emotions, anger starts to become go-to expression emotion.

4. In your experience, how do societal norms around masculinity affect men's willingness to cry? (*optional)

.....answer in 3

5. What psychological benefits can men gain from allowing themselves to cry?

Individual psychological benefit can be- the person feels safe to feel the emotion the way it is, feels ok/normal to express the emotion leading to a healthy wellbeing. In social context, a society can be built where there are improved interpersonal relationships, less violence, and less crime. If males are allowed to cry or express their emotions, more females will feel safe to be vulnerable. Each individual will feel listened to, understood and can share without carrying the fear to be judged, not seen and not heard. When we talk about the emotions of men, we need to reflect on ourselves, construction of society as well. Are we providing a safe space to let a man be vulnerable expressing his core emotions, do we have that patience to listen and accept their feelings? Because we are also in a way or other influenced by societal norms created for boys and men. Let's be careful how we respond to them, how we give them space, how we understand them.

6. How can men identify when they need to cry or express their emotions?

Most men are observed holding back their tears, brushing off emotions where they need to

be vulnerable. It is shameful that men need permission to share their emotions which is basic human. Men are often treated as protectors so we rarely hold a space for them to accept their vulnerability and insecurities. So just being human, following awareness of emotions and experiencing it, share it where needed. Taking support, asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

7. Multiple Ways on how can men create a safe environment for themselves to cry, whether alone or in the presence of others (or simply ways to cry safely as man)? (important)

Men from a young age are defined more from their achievements than being by themselves.

They are conditioned for their performance, achievement so it may be difficult to understand themselves, outside of what they do. They fear that their emotions will make them unwanted or judged. Many men believe that expressing their emotions of sadness, fear, worry, and tears is a burden. They individually need to first understand that like any other emotions, crying is just a way to experience sadness and painful emotions. Learning to express vulnerability without guilt and shame is a radical act. Crying in a group can be more about group members. It can be the responsibility of group members to create a safe space and the responsibility to take care of the expressed vulnerability. Maintaining confidentiality, connecting with the emotions, supporting the person in the way he feels, validating the emotions, active listening can help to create a safe space by the group where a man can feel safe to cry.

8. What role do friends and family play in supporting men's emotional expression?

Family and friends play an important part in supporting men's emotional expression.

But I see family and friends as just parts of a whole. Other important parts can be much more as- culture, rearing up style, family dynamic, language used to boys, expectations from boys, how peers react etc. If we see the behavior of man not crying even when needed, there are lots of experiences, stories behind it. Basic understanding of human emotion and accepting a man as human who has lots of simple and complex emotions and understanding that it is always ok if a man wants to express his emotion by crying. Understanding of these basics by family and friends can help a man to be emotionally as he is.

9. How can partners help create a safe space for men to express their emotions without fear of judgment?

Partners play an important role in creating a safe space and supporting a man to express their emotions without holding fear or any assumption or judgement. As a child, we believe that our parents and adult partner play an important role depending on how they treat us regarding our self-image and identity. It won't be easy for a partner nor for the man in supporting the journey of delearning and learning of experiencing emotions in a new way. Novelty can be most of the time not willing to go there, threatening so falling back and again in the same old pattern of holding emotions.

Active listening, understanding the partner from the point where he stands, responding not reacting, clarifying about own understanding rather than making assumptions, not taking everything personally what the partner says, trying to separate person and problem because person is not the problem.

10. What therapeutic techniques do you find effective in helping men process their emotions?

Being a Certified Gestalt therapist and trainer, and also a practitioner of other therapies as well, I believe in the process of Gestalt specially when working with emotions. Gestalt has a beautiful phenomenon of understanding emotions, exploring the function of emotional pattern, standing still in that emotion, bringing it into awareness and making a choice. Its therapy process stands on 'I thou' relation, work on field relation, bringing into dialogue and believing in phenomenology. These processes really work beautifully in understanding the experience of emotions, accepting and expressing.

11. How can mindfulness or other grounding techniques assist men in feeling more comfortable with their emotions?

Mindfulness and grounding techniques help one to stay in connection with self, staying connected with senses not losing it. Being mindful in emotion leads to mindful response. Mindful and grounding give a way to stay connected with sensation and body rather than rushing to thoughts. This awareness helps you to be with your emotion, recognize it, accept it and process it. Mindfulness with compassion can open the need of physical and emotional tenderness which are basic needs.

12. What advice would you give to men who want to embrace their emotional side but feel hesitant to cry?

Be comfortable with who you are. There is no such norm that men should feel like this or shouldn't feel like that. Mental health is equally important to all humans. Believe the process of your emotion, give it whatever it needs but be aware about your emotions. Crying is not a sign of weakness as boys are made to be believed. Being vulnerable also needs courage. If you can break this cycle, your future generation won't feel hesitant, guilty or ashamed of sharing their emotions.

13. Are there any resources (books, articles, workshops) you recommend for men looking to explore their emotions deeply?

Gestalt Institute Nepal has a course of 5 year program. In the first year of 120 hours, we provide a safe space, which we call 'Process group'. This can be a safe, nonjudgmental space where men can also come to explore, bring awareness and learn to unfold their layers of emotions. Also please check in facebook and website of the Institute because we will soon be conducting a workshop on men's emotions.

I highly recommend men to go for therapy sessions as well to have self-exploration and develop a new perspective. It is a myth that counseling or psychotherapy sessions are only for those who have problems.

Books that can be helpful-

Exploring Masculinity, Sexuality, and Culture in Gestalt Therapy (Adam Kincl)

<https://gestaltinstitutenepal.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/people/Gestalt-Nepal/100095539054659/>