



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEN'S HEALTH



Why do men react differently to Covid-19 than women?

Women's Sexual and Wellness Health Doctor Alyse Kelly-Jones with Novant Health explained some of the differences doctors have noticed within the last year of the pandemic. She says men may be more likely to experience severe symptoms of COVID-19 but women are more likely to experience long lasting effects from the virus.

Dr. Kelly-Jones says researchers believe men and women may react differently to the virus because of the differences in our biological makeup.

"Women's immune systems are different for a variety of reasons," Dr. Kelly-Jones explained. "We think it boils down to two X chromosomes. The X chromosome has a lot of immune responsive areas on it." "Usually, when you have two Xes, some of those immune responses get inactivated, but in many women they don't. So, their immune response is more robust compared to men's immune response."

Estrogen and a stronger immune system

The female immune system is also more resilient than that of men. The main reason for this is the female sex hormone estrogen. It stimulates the immune system so it acts faster and more aggressively against pathogens. The male hormone testosterone, on the other hand, inhibits the body's own defenses.

Why do more men die from Covid-19?

Men, women and children all become infected with the new coronavirus equally often. However, men tend to suffer more severe cases of COVID-19 and are more likely to die of it. According to a study by the University Medical Center Groningen, these are possible explanations.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many possible reasons have been put forward as to why men tend to suffer more when they become infected with the novel coronavirus: Men pay less attention to their health, smoke more or eat less nutritiously. According to such theories, the older generation in particular has an unhealthy lifestyle. In addition, men generally wait longer before seeing a doctor.

Data gathered in more than 20 countries by the research initiative Global Health 50/50 had already confirmed in June that women are infected with the virus as frequently as men but men are more likely to contract severe forms of COVID-19 and die from the infection. The ratio of mortality according to sex is about one-third to two-thirds.

One factor is certainly the greater prevalence of particular preexisting conditions in men. For example, men suffer much more often from cardiovascular diseases, from which they also die more often than women. Another decisive factor is the age structure. According to Germany's Robert Koch Institute (RKI), at least twice as many men as women have died in all age groups up to the 70 to 79 age group. Even the RKI is unable to name the reasons for this gender difference.

SADAG'S ONLINE SURVEY FINDINGS ON COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH



In an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19, the South African government announced a lockdown which commenced on 26 March 2020. Given this historic and unprecedented occurrence, SADAG wanted to investigate the mental health impact of COVID19 and the lockdown. SADAG launched an online survey which was shared via various online platforms from the 2 – 15 April and received a total of 1214 responses.

BIOLOGICAL SEX

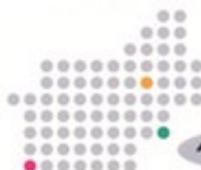


AGE



PROVINCE (TOP 3)

GAUTENG: 60%
WESTERN CAPE: 17%
KWA-ZULU NATAL: 10%



CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS



HOME LIFE

How many people live in your home (including you)?



MENTAL HEALTH BEFORE THE LOCKDOWN

MH challenges diagnosed PRIOR to lockdown



59%

were diagnosed with a MH condition prior to lockdown



DEPRESSION



GENERALISED ANXIETY



BIPOLAR

GENERAL VIEWS ON THE LOCKDOWN

59%

felt stressed/very stressed
before the lockdown

65%

felt stressed/very stressed
during the lockdown

Despite the small increase in stress reported, a massive

92% SUPPORT THE LOCKDOWN



MAIN CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED DURING THE LOCKDOWN

55%

ANXIETY AND PANIC

46%

FINANCIAL STRESS AND PRESSURE

40%

DEPRESSION

30%

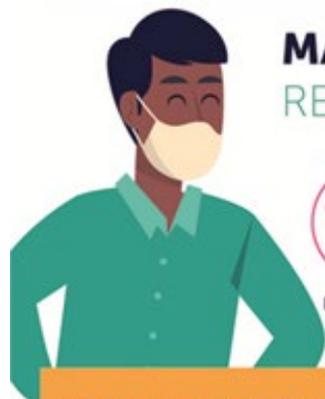
POOR FAMILY RELATIONS

12%

FEELINGS OF SUICIDE

6%

SUBSTANCE ABUSE



MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING COVID-19 DURING LOCKDOWN

72%

PRESS AND MEDIA

60%

SOCIAL MEDIA

41%

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

71%

TELEVISED GOVT. SPEECHES

17%

GOVT. WHATSAPP GROUP

WHAT ACTIVITIES

Help people to feel better during the lockdown

50%

Getting some exercise

44%

Doing housework

50%

Chatting to someone

35%

Sharing a meal with family

48%

Watching a film / tv show

33%

Doing some remote work



Survey Report done by Senior Research Associate, Dr Bronwyn Dworzanowski-Venter and SADAG

The survey sample size, while statistically useful, is not sufficiently large to allow for true national or provincial representation. As such, the survey sample could not be deemed representative of the larger South African population.

0800 456 789 | SMS 31393 | www.sadag.org

STRESS AND COPING

How to Recognize Stress Symptoms in Men?

Stress impacts each individual in a unique way. However, there is evidence that, in general, men and women have different psychological and biological responses to stress. In comparison to women, men have a stronger stress response and may react with higher levels of aggression and more unhealthy coping behaviors, all of which can negatively impact their physical stress.

Physical Stress Symptoms in Men

In general, stress can be experienced physically and psychologically, with both expressions of stress having an interrelated relationship.

For example, research has shown that chronic stress can lead to decreased immune function and an increased risk of infection. One study found that stress not only slowed wound healing, but it also led to unhealthy behaviors such as heavy alcohol use and poor self-care.

Physical symptoms of stress may include:

- Chest pain
- Pounding heart
- High blood pressure
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches, such as back and neck pain
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Clenched jaws and teeth grinding
- Tightness, dryness, or a feeling of a lump in your throat
- Indigestion
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Increased perspiration
- Stomach cramps
- Weight gain or loss
- Skin problems

Do not ignore physical issues even if you believe they are solely stress-related. It's always best to check in with your doctor to make sure you are not experiencing any underlying medical conditions and/or mental health disorders.

‘COWBOYS DON’T CRY’ Mental Illness in Men

Our society continues to perpetuate the myth of male strength and invincibility. Although the times are changing, many South African men still feel that it is “unmanly” to admit to weakness or vulnerability. So, what happens when a man finds himself battling with a mental illness? How does he explain to his colleagues and friends that he can’t cope anymore? And what is the best approach that he can take in order to regain control of his life?

Statistics show that most mental illnesses are more frequent in the female population. Major depression is twice as common in women as it is in men, and women dominate in nearly all the anxiety disorders. There are a number of theories that have been postulated to explain this uneven distribution. Some experts believe it is connected to the hormonal imbalances in women, whilst others believe that men are merely underreporting their experiences. “Females do tend to come into contact with health professionals more often than men do,” says Dr. Wynchank, a Johannesburg psychiatrist, “and women are socialised into seeking help more readily. Both of these factors could influence the gender differences reflected in the statistics.”

One psychiatric disorder in which men dominate easily is that of substance abuse. “Often men are self-medicating with illicit drugs and alcohol in order to treat an underlying depression, anxiety or personality disorder which has not yet received adequate treatment,” explains Dr. Westmore, a Bloemfontein psychiatrist.

Although half as many men as women are reported to suffer from depression the rate of suicide in men is three times more prevalent than that in women. Men aged 18 to 24 form the highest suicide group in many countries. Once again, experts point back to the fact that fear and shame often keep men with mental problems from seeking help. If left untreated, depression can result in poor work performance, substance abuse and broken families. Sometimes, suicide appears to be the only solution left for desperate men. Men frequently commit suicide by more violent means, such as hanging themselves or the use of firearms.

Male employees are often particularly worried about the personal stigma associated with mental illness in at work. Even at the most progressive firms, the stigma surrounding mental illness can remain a barrier to effective medical care. Dr. Westmore agrees that, if left untreated, a psychiatric disorder can affect an individual’s ability to function properly in the workplace. However, if treated timeously with the correct programme, many sufferers can continue to perform as effective employees.

So, what kind of help is available for men that decide to confront their mental problems? Most mental illnesses are best treated by a three-pronged approach that involves medication, therapy and self-help. The best solution is to find a skilled psychologist and psychiatrist that can work in conjunction to ensure that you are receiving the best possible treatment for your illness. “More often than not, patients feel immense relief when they finally receive a proper diagnosis from a professional,”

says Dr. Wynchank. Often men with underlying psychiatric problems present to their GP's with superfluous physical complaints. GP's need to be aware of these kinds of scenarios and be able to tactfully refer men to mental health professionals.

Stress Management

While it may seem like there's nothing you can do about stress at work and home, there are steps you can take to relieve the pressure and regain control.

The importance of managing stress

If you are living with high levels of stress, you are putting your entire well-being at risk. Stress wreaks havoc on your emotional equilibrium, as well as your physical health. It narrows your ability to think clearly, function effectively, and enjoy life. It may seem like there is nothing you can do about stress. The bills will not stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your work and family responsibilities will always be demanding but you have a lot more control than you might think.

Effective stress management helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun—and the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. However, stress management is not one-size-fits-all. That is why it is important to experiment and find out what works best for you. The following stress management tips can help you do that.

Tip 1: Identify the sources of stress in your life

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn't as straightforward as it sounds. While it's easy to identify major stressors such as changing jobs, moving, or going through a divorce, pinpointing the sources of chronic stress can be more complicated. It's all too easy to overlook how your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours contribute to your everyday stress levels.

Sure, you may know that you're constantly worried about work deadlines, but maybe it's your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that is causing the stress.

To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

- Do you explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?

Learn to forgive. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

Share your feelings. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation. Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist.

- Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I have a lot of nervous energy, that’s all”)?
- Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

The four A’s – Avoid, Alter, Adapt & Accept

Tip 2: Practice the 4 A’s of stress management

While stress is an automatic response from your nervous system, some stressors arise at predictable times: your commute to work, a meeting with your boss, or family gatherings, for example. When handling such predictable stressors, you can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose in any given scenario, it’s helpful to think of the four A’s: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

Tip 3: Get moving

When you’re stressed, the last thing you probably feel like doing is getting up and exercising. But physical activity is a huge stress reliever—and you don’t have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Exercise releases endorphins that make you feel good, and it can also serve as a valuable distraction from your daily worries.

While you’ll get the most benefit from regularly exercising for 30 minutes or more, it’s okay to build up your fitness level gradually. Even very small activities can add up over the course of a day. The first step is to get yourself up and moving.

Tip 4: Connect to others

There is nothing more calming than spending quality time with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. In fact, face-to-face interaction triggers a cascade of hormones that counteracts the body’s defensive “fight-or-flight” response. It’s nature’s natural stress reliever (as an added bonus, it also helps stave off depression and anxiety). So make it a point to connect regularly—and in person—with family and friends.

Keep in mind that the people you talk to don’t have to be able to fix your stress. They simply need to be good listeners. And try not to let worries about looking weak or being a burden keep you from opening up. The people who care about you will be flattered by your trust. It will only strengthen your bond.

Of course, it’s not always realistic to have a pal close by to lean on when you feel overwhelmed by stress, but by building and maintaining a network of close friends you can improve your resiliency to life’s stressors.

Tip 5: Make time for fun and relaxation

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by carving out “me” time. Don’t get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you’ll be in a better place to handle life’s stressors.

Set aside leisure time. Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.

Do something you enjoy every day. Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.

Keep your sense of humour. This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

Take up a relaxation practice. Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the fight or flight or mobilization stress response. As you learn and practice these techniques, your stress levels will decrease and your mind and body will become calm and centred.

Tip 6: Manage your time better

Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. Plus, you'll be tempted to avoid or cut back on all the healthy things you should be doing to keep stress in check, like socializing and getting enough sleep. The good news: there are things you can do to achieve a healthier work-life balance. Don't over-commit yourself. Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take.

Prioritize tasks. Make a list of tasks you

have to do, and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high-priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant or stressful to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.

Break projects into small steps. If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.

Delegate responsibility. You don't have to do it all yourself, whether at home, school, or on the job. If other people can take care of the task, why not let them? Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step. You'll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.

Tip 7: Maintain balance with a healthy lifestyle

In addition to regular exercise, there are other healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your resistance to stress.

Eat a healthy diet. Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.

Reduce caffeine and sugar. The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.

Get enough sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Tip 8: Learn to relieve stress in the moment. When you're frazzled by your morning commute, stuck in a stressful meeting at work, or fried from another argument with your spouse, you need a way to manage your stress levels right now. That's where quick stress relief comes in.

The fastest way to reduce stress is by taking a deep breath and using your senses—what you see, hear, taste, and touch or through a soothing movement. By viewing a favorite photo, smelling a specific scent, listening to a favourite piece of music, tasting a piece of gum, or hugging a pet, for example, you can quickly relax and focus yourself.

Of course, not everyone responds to each sensory experience in the same way. The key to quick stress relief is to experiment and discover the unique sensory experiences that work best for you.

Quick stress relief at home

Entertaining. Prevent pre-party jitters by playing lively music. Light candles. The flicker and scent will stimulate your senses. Wear clothes that make you feel relaxed and confident.

Kitchen. Ease kitchen stress by breathing in the scent of every ingredient. Delight in the delicate texture of an eggshell. Appreciate the weight of an onion.

Children and relationships. Prevent losing your cool during a spousal spat by squeezing the tips of your thumb and forefinger together. When your toddler has a tantrum, rub lotion into your hands and breathe in the scent.

Sleep. Too stressed to snooze? Try using a white noise machine for background sound or a humidifier with a diffuser for a light scent in the air.

Creating a sanctuary. If clutter is upsetting, spend 10 minutes each day to tidy. Display photos and images that make you feel happy. Throw open the curtains and let in natural light.

Quick stress relief at work

Meetings. During stressful sessions, stay connected to your breath. Massage the tips of your fingers. Wiggle your toes. Sip coffee.

On the phone. Inhale something energizing, like lemon, ginger, peppermint. While talking, stand up or pace back and forth to burn off excess energy, or take calls outside when possible.

On the computer. Work standing up. Do knee-bends in 10-minute intervals. Suck on a peppermint. Sip tea.

Lunch breaks. Take a walk around the block or in the parking lot. Listen to soothing music while eating. Chat with a colleague.

Your workspace. Place family photos on your desk or mementos that remind you of your life outside the office.

Quick stress relief on the go In traffic.

Play music or listen to an audiobook. Take a different route to see something new. Do neck-rolls at stoplights. Sing in the car to stay awake and happy.

Public transportation. Take a break from reading, cell conversations, and music to tune into the sights and sounds around you. Try noticing something new, even if you're on the same old bus ride.

Running errands. Wear a special perfume or lotion so you can enjoy it while you rush from place to place. Carry a stress ball in your pocket. Take a mental "snapshot" or "postcard" at each destination.

Waiting in lines. Instead of worrying about time slipping away, focus on your breathing. People watch. Chat with the person ahead of you. Chew a stick of minty gum.

Avoid unnecessary stress

It's not healthy to avoid a stressful situation that needs to be addressed, but you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

Learn how to say "no." Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress. Distinguish between the "shoulds" and the "musts" and, when possible, say "no" to taking on too much.

Avoid people who stress you out. If someone consistently causes stress in your life, limit the amount of time you spend with that person, or end the relationship.

Take control of your environment. If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-travelled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.

Pare down your to-do list. Analyse your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Alter the situation

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. If something or someone is bothering you, be more assertive and communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you've got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the stress will increase.

Be willing to compromise. When you ask someone to change their behaviour, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.

Create a balanced schedule. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.

Adapt to the stressor

If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

Reframe problems. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and

regroup, listen to your favourite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.

Look at the big picture. Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

Adjust your standards. Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with "good enough."

Practice gratitude. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Accept the things you can't change

Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control, particularly the behaviour of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AWARENESS INFORMATION 6 OF 2021

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission or rejection of this conduct explicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance and creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Any of the following unwanted behaviour may constitute sexual harassment:

- Leering;
- Wolf whistles;
- Discussion of one's partner's sexual inadequacies;
- Sexual innuendo;
- Lewd & threatening emails, whatsapp, text messages;
- Graphic descriptions of/displaying pornography;
- Stalking whether physically and/or on social media;
- Leaning over, invading a person's space;
- Indecent exposure;
- Tales of sexual exploitation;
- Pressure for dates;
- 'Accidentally' brushing sexual parts of the body;
- Sexual sneak attacks;
- Obscene phone calls;
- Inappropriate invitations;
- Sexual assault;
- Insisting that workers wear revealing clothes;
- Pressing or rubbing up;
- Sexually explicit gesture;
- Unwelcome touching or hugs;
- Comments about women/men's bodies;
- Sexist jokes, cartoons, GIF's, emojis;
- Public humiliation;
- Sabotaging women's/men's work;
- Soliciting sexual services
- Hooting, animal noises, kissing noises etc.
- Inappropriate gifts

If you have assessed the above and applied it to your working circumstances and you can tick one or more of the above, you are urged to report the inappropriate and unwelcome behavior, alternatively discuss same with the Sexual Harassment Advisor for assistance and advice.

EMERGENCY LINES

Dr Reddy's Help Line(SADAG)
0800 21 22 23

Cipla 24hr Mental Health Helpline
0800 456 789

Pharmadynamics Police &Trauma Line
0800 20 50 26

Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety Helpline
0800 70 80 90

ADHD Helpline
0800 55 44 33

Department of Social Development Substance Abuse Line 24hr helpline
0800 12 13 14
SMS 32312

Suicide Crisis Line
0800 567 567

SADAG Mental Health Line
011 234 4837

Akeso Psychiatric Response Unit 24 Hour
0861 435 787

Cipla Whatsapp Chat Line
(9am-4pm, 7 days a week)
076 882 2775

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) can be reached on 011 234 4837 or 0800 20 50 26 and speak to a trained counsellor who can assist you further.

Offices are open 7 days a week from 8am – 8pm.

Fax number: 011 234 8182

Substance Abuse line 0800 12 13 14 is available 24hrs.

Or alternatively email Zane on zane@sadag.org

Employee Health and Wellness Programme:

Ntombenhle Xaba: 033 395 3336 or ntombenhle.xaba@kzncogta.gov.za

Carol Leonard: 033 395 3338 or carol.leonard@kzncogta.gov.za

Sister Gugu Ndlovu: 033 395 2566 gugu.ndlovu@kzncogta.gov.za

Sexual Harassment Advisor

Lelani van den Berg: 033 395 3092 or lelani.vandenberg@kzncogta.gov.za



Help line: 0800 21 22 23
Website: www.sadag.org
SMS: 31393

 @TheSADAG  The South African Anxiety and Depression Group



SADAG

HELPLINES

SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE

0800 567 567

24
hours

DR REDDY'S
MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE

0800 21 22 23

8am-
8pm

CIPLA
MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE

0800 456 789

24
hours

CIPLA
WHATSAPP CHAT LINE

076 882 2775

9am-
4pm

DEPT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
SUBSTANCE ABUSE HELPLINE

0800 12 13 14

24
hours

ADCOCK INGRAM
DEPRESSION & ANXIETY HELPLINE

0800 70 80 90

8am-
8pm



WWW.SADAG.ORG

SMS - 31393

24
hours

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