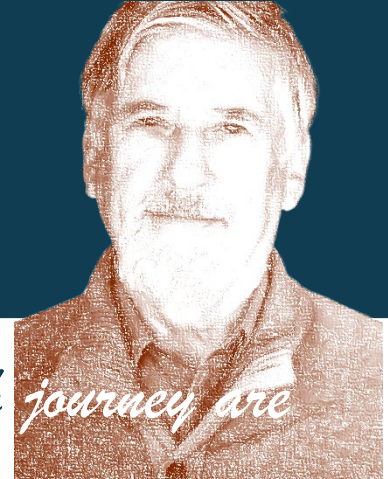


MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERIES

KEN



*The words that describe my mental health journey are
Patience and Confidence.*

Why were those the words you picked?

I chose patience and confidence. These two words have been interconnected in my journey through life. When I approach a situation with patience, I tend to have a better experience, more fun, realize greater success, and build more confidence. When I build more confidence, I have more courage to take on challenges and try new things.

However, I think we can get ourselves hung up on wanting to see big results quickly. In trying to achieve these big results, we can often miss a part of the picture, take ineffective actions, make more mistakes, and mismanage the situation. When I start looking for "Quick Wins" it rarely works out. I tend to be more irritable, overextend myself, create more distress with the people around me, and experience greater disappointment in missing the mark and how I approached the whole situation. Ultimately, I can end up in spirals of negative thinking, judgement, and self-doubt.

I start to tell myself I am not good enough.

I have learnt some hard lessons along the way, and now I try to approach situations with patience, understanding, and a pragmatic view. In doing so, I have found much more success in achieving my goals, as well as the impact on my mental health. This breeds confidence, confidence breeds more success, and success breeds more enjoyment in what I do.

What is one internal barrier, perspective, or insecurity you hold that you feel is unproductive?

Fear of judgment and getting stuck in indecision are my barriers.

Growing up, and if I am honest, even as an adult, I have spent a lot of time worrying about what others will think about me. I can become consumed worrying about how they will judge me or critique my choices and actions.

I am not saying we should go through life without being aware of how we impact the people around us; what I am saying is, that spending time constantly worrying if everyone around me thinks I am smart, and successful or if they respect me is a race I will never win.

This fear of judgement from others can create a lot of indecision and distress for me. I can start to focus on "keeping up with the Jones's" and forget to ask questions like "what do I really want?", "what is important for me?", or "what is important for the people close to me".

I know I have gained more wisdom as I get older, but this does not stop me from getting stuck in indecision. I do believe there are more complex factors that need to be considered then before. More people may be impacted, or as I get older, bigger questions arise about my legacy. However, I know that my indecision often has more to do with a fear of what others may think, and downplaying my skills, expertise, and experience.

What is something you are grateful to have learnt, or skill you are proud to of incorporated into your mental health journey?

Learning to listen.

I think as we get older, we can get stuck believing there is only one way to do things or hold on too tightly to the way it was. Especially when so much around us is changing. This can feel overwhelming and even a little scary or intimidating.

I believe the antidote to these problems is listening. The Bible says, "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger" James 1:19.

By taking the time to listen, I have gotten the opportunity to better connect with people, understand complex situations, and learn from the mistakes of others.

Taking time to listen, I mean really listening to clients, mentors, peers, friends, and family, has been a significant differentiator in my personal and business relationships.

As it relates to the culture of mental health and masculinity or being a "man" what is one thing you are hopeful or excited to see changing in the future?

I believe the image of a "man" --- tough, rugged or strong, is changing.

Growing up the ideal “guys guy” were cowboys like John Wayne or Clint Eastwood, and hockey players like Gordie Howe or Bobby Orr. These guys would grit their teeth and “suck it up” to get the bad guy or win the game, and if you tried to do anything different meant you were weak or not good enough.

Asking for help even in the smallest ways let alone going to a psychologist or counsellor, would often come with a huge amount of fear, shame, judgement, and secrecy. Because we should be able to just “suck it up”. In trying to uphold this image of a guy’s guy we would often struggle alone or turn to unhealthy coping methods. We internally thought the fear of being considered weak or a “problem” was greater than whatever issue we were facing.

Today, the way we talk about mental health or our feelings is something that is really changing in younger generations. There is more and more acceptance that feelings and emotions matter, and if we leave them unaddressed, they will have real impacts on our health and the people around us.

I believe this awareness is helping to change my own openness to ask for help or even just talk about issues with people around me. I am hopeful that if we keep on this track, it can help us let go of ideals that are no longer helpful, and the extra burden we carry worrying about what others might think.

What is a piece of advice relating to mental health that is so good or so horrible, you would want others to know or be aware of as they move through their own journey?

The good advice is to find someone you trust and confide in them.

In my life, I often benefit from having several mentors and people close to me who are willing to help. I am even more fortunate to develop a truly trusting relationship with a select few.

For example, over the last 20-plus years, I have had a standing meeting every Wednesday morning with one of my greatest friends and confidants. The trust we have built in our relationship over the years helped remove the fear of judgement or defensiveness that I can sometimes have. I can be real with him. I can share anything, and he can do the same. We are both there to support each other and call each other on their “stuff” if needed.

I don’t need to pretend to have all the answers; we can talk about our mistakes, brainstorm ideas to solve our problems, or even take time just to get rid of the “garbage” that builds up in our heads. This relationship is priceless, and without it I am not sure I would have been able to experience the success and opportunities I have had in life.

Finding someone you can confide in can be hard, but it is worth the effort. I encourage those around me to think about what areas of life (e.g., business owner, father, grandfather etc.) they are trying to navigate and find someone that they can build a trusting relationship with to help in those areas. You may find the support you need in one person or multiple people; however you set it up, I believe it is critical to find it.

Ken started his professional career as a truck driver, doing long haul trucking across North America. Ken always had a passion for art and design and in 1996, after 20+ years in the trucking industry, he started a thriving vehicle graphics company which he ran for over 20 years. Unlike many entrepreneurs at his time, Ken did not have any formal business training or "How to Handbook". His success stems from passion, hard work, living with humility, and asking for help when he needs it. Ken has an incredible ability to connect with people. Developing an incredible network of peers and mentors that provide social support, accountability and guidance is a significant contributing factor to his success as a business owner.

Ken is always looking to give back to his community. He volunteers with several non-profits and charities. Most importantly, Ken is a loving mentor to many, friend to most, as well as a husband, father, and a grandfather to five beautiful grandkids