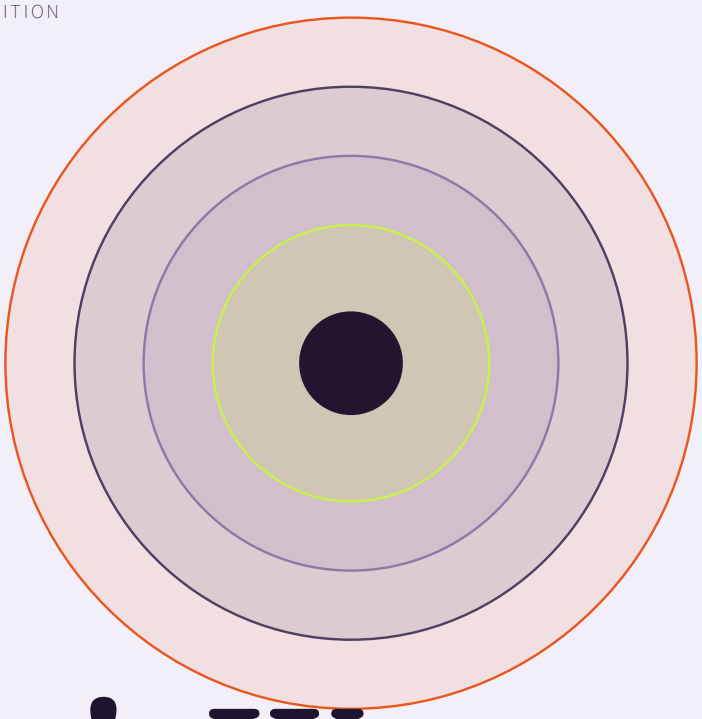


I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression

A reading of the book by Terrence Real (1997)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Terrence Real is a family therapist who has spent decades working with men and couples, and who later founded the Relational Life Institute. I Don't Want to Talk About It argues that depression in men often goes unseen because it is covert: it hides behind overwork, drinking, anger, affairs and withdrawal rather than showing up as sadness. Real separates this hidden form from overt depression, the low mood most people recognise, and shows how the first can turn into the second when a man's defences stop working. He traces the pattern to the way boys are taught to cut themselves off from feeling and from closeness, and to hurt that passes from fathers to sons. The book mixes stories from his practice with his own family history, including his father's depression. Recovery, in his account, means facing the depression directly and learning the relational skills most boys are never taught.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A lot of men's depression does not look like sadness. It looks like work, drink, anger or silence.

Real calls this covert depression. The man may not feel low at all, or may not admit it, but the pain shows up in what he does: the extra hours, the third drink, the short fuse, the evenings spent somewhere else. Because none of it looks like the textbook picture, family, friends and even doctors can miss it for years.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The busyness, the drinking and the temper are often ways of not feeling something.

Real treats many of men's habits as defences against a pain they have not let themselves feel. Work, alcohol, sex, risk and rage all lift a man out of the hurt for a while. The relief is real, which is why the habit holds, but the hurt underneath stays where it is.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When the defences stop working, the hidden depression comes to the surface.

In Real's account, covert depression can turn overt when something takes the defence away: a job ends, a marriage breaks, the drinking has to stop, the body gives out. What looks like a sudden collapse has often been building for a long time. Seeing that pattern takes some of the shame out of it.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Boys are taught to cut off feeling, and the cut gets praised as strength.

Real argues that boys are pushed early to stop crying, stop needing and stop leaning on others, especially their mothers. The lesson works: many men grow up unable to name what they feel. The cost is a disconnection from themselves and from the people who love them, which he sees at the root of men's depression.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Hurt that is not faced gets handed down.

Real writes about his own father's depression and anger, and about recognising the same pattern in himself. A father who never dealt with his pain passes it on in how he treats his son, and the son is likely to do the same unless he stops and looks at it. Facing it is how the chain breaks.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Neglect can wound as deeply as violence. It is just harder to see.

Real distinguishes active harm, such as being hit or shamed, from passive harm, such as being ignored, left alone with feelings or never comforted. Many men who say they had a fine childhood describe the second kind. Naming it is not about blaming parents; it helps explain where the numbness came from.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Swinging between feeling worthless and feeling superior keeps a man out of real contact.

A man who feels deep shame may cover it by acting bigger, harder or more right than everyone else. Both ends keep other people at a distance. Real's aim is a steadier middle, where a man can be no better and no worse than the people around him.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stopping the escape is the start of recovery, not the end of it.

Giving up the drink or the eighty-hour week can leave a man face to face with the feeling it was holding back, and that can be hard. Real's view is that recovery means learning to stay with the feeling instead of finding a new way out. It is slow, and it is learnable.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A man gets better in relationship, not on his own.

Real is a family therapist, and he treats depression as something that lives between people as well as inside one. Recovery means learning to speak about feelings, to listen, and to stay connected when it is uncomfortable. Partners, children and friends are part of the healing, and so is a good therapist.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Name your escapes
- [ ] Save the crisis numbers
- [ ] Book a doctor's appointment
- [ ] Tell one person
- [ ] Map what you were taught about feelings

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Check in with a feeling word each evening
- ◯ Pause at the reach
- ◯ Have one honest conversation a week

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Name your escapes

Write down the three things you reach for when something hurts: work, a drink, your phone, the gym, a fight.

Next to each, write roughly how much of your week it takes.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Save the crisis numbers

Put your local emergency number and a crisis line in your phone today: 988 in the US, Samaritans on 116 123 in the UK and Ireland.

You may need them for yourself or for someone else, and you will not want to search for them then.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Book a doctor's appointment

If your mood, sleep, drinking or temper has been off for two weeks or more, book a GP or family doctor visit this week.

Write down what you have noticed and for how long, and take the note with you.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Tell one person

Pick one person you trust and tell them, in a sentence or two, that you have not been doing well.

You do not have to explain everything. The point is that someone knows.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Map what you were taught about feelings

On one page, write what your father, and his father if you know, did with sadness, fear and anger.

Then write what you do with them. Look for what has been handed down.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Check in with a feeling word each evening

Before bed, name one feeling from the day that is more specific than fine, tired or stressed: hurt, lonely, ashamed, scared, proud.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Pause at the reach

When you reach for the drink, the phone or another hour at work, stop for one breath and ask what you are trying not to feel.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Have one honest conversation a week

Once a week, tell someone close to you one true thing about how you are, beyond the usual answer.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

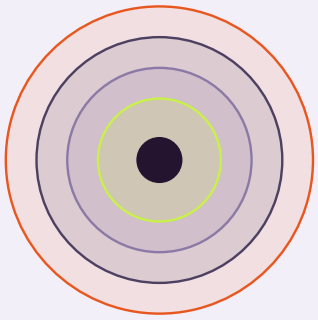
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



What a man will not feel, the people closest to him end up carrying. Facing it is how it stops with him.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER TERRENCE REAL