

A photograph of a woman and a young girl sitting on a stone ledge, looking out over a green lawn and trees. The woman is on the right, wearing a striped shirt, and the girl is on the left, wearing a blue polka-dot dress. They are both seen from the back, looking towards a bright, sunlit outdoor area with green grass and trees in the background.

Bupa Global

Executive Wellbeing Index

Bupa 

**Generational shifts in approaching
family mental health**

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UK focus:

Generational shifts in approaching family mental health

OVERVIEW

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has placed additional and unforeseen burdens on everyone, and in the face of these challenges it's no surprise that the mental health of both business leaders and their families has been impacted. According to Bupa Global's **Executive Wellbeing Index**, three quarters of executives (78%) have experienced poor mental health during the pandemic, and 68% have seen symptoms such as fatigue, anger, impatience or low mood in their family members too.

And children and young people have been some of the most affected by the events of the last year. Recent Bupa research showed that 4.1 million teenagers have experienced symptoms of mental ill-health during the pandemic. And with over half feeling uncertain about their futures, the effects may be felt long into adulthood.¹

These children need the support of their parents to cope. However, pervasive stigmas around mental health issues along with the pressures of social standing and family reputation have long been a burden to bear. According to the Executive Wellbeing Index, half of the UK's business elite admit that speaking about mental health issues is still seen as a sign of weakness in their wider family, with many reporting that the pressure of living up to the expectations of their parents has damaged their mental health and ability to open up.

SHRUGGING OFF STIGMAS

Encouragingly, though, the pandemic may have provided a watershed moment, with two thirds of the UK's business leaders saying they think about mental health differently now, and have more awareness of their family's emotional needs.

As the pressures of the pandemic continue, it's crucial that individuals continue to break the cycle and open up on mental health – for themselves, their peers and future generations – casting off their own stigmas and the parental pressures they may once have faced.

UPDATING EXPECTATIONS

Life's pathways can be shaped at a young age. Two in five business leaders say they had little freedom in life choices such as their career, and for nearly half, even their choice of partner was heavily influenced by the high expectations from parents and wider family – with consequences for their mental health.

But the pandemic is encouraging business leaders to realign their priorities for their children, and following in the family footsteps is taking second fiddle to mental health and wellbeing. The UK's high achieving parents now say they won't put pressure on their children to take the same paths as they did, and in recognition of their own limitations, most don't want their children to be like them.

Here, Bupa Global's Executive Wellbeing Index explores the mental health impact of the pandemic on UK business leaders' families and offers advice on supporting children during this difficult time.



68% of business leaders recognised symptoms of mental ill-health in family members during the pandemic, including...



fatigue



disturbed sleep



anger



low mood

1. Bupa research, January 2021 <https://www.bupa.co.uk/mental-health/teenage-mental-health> Royal College of Psychiatrists, September 2020: Royal College of Psychiatrists, September 2020



KEY FINDINGS

- **63%** of business leaders report that the pandemic has made them feel differently about mental health
- And **68%** recognised symptoms of mental ill-health in family members during the pandemic, including fatigue, disturbed sleep, anger, and low mood
- Half of UK executives (**49%**) say that speaking about mental health in their family would have been seen as a sign of weakness
- And **39%** say the pressure of living up to the expectations of their parents has damaged their mental health
- Half (**51%**) admit to not having a close relationship with their parents while growing up
- But the majority (**58%**) are considering how much time they spend away from their own families following the pandemic
- And **31%** want to be more open and approachable on mental health with their children

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS CAN HAVE MANY DIFFERENT SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS

You should seek help from a health professional if you or someone in your family have feelings that are:

- stopping you from getting on with life
- having a big impact on the people you live or work with
- affecting your mood over two or more weeks

COMMENTING ON THE FINDINGS

Dr Pablo Vandenabeele, Bupa Global's Clinical Director for Mental Health said:

“While business leaders have been navigating an ever changing economic landscape, no less challenging has been the situation at home, with partners and children battling with new mental health pressures and stressors.

“And with decreased travel and more time spent together as a family, all parties are recognising the mental health impact on one another.

“When it comes to children and teenagers, they have faced some of the toughest challenges of the pandemic and we know that their mental health has suffered. The fact that parents are realigning their expectations means the stigmas of the past are diminishing, and that executives today are committed to taking a more proactive and open approach to addressing mental health concerns. This is a positive step which is likely to pay dividends for both executives themselves and their families in the future.

“We can all take steps to improve our own mental health, and build our resilience – our ability to cope with adversity. But sometimes professional help is needed, and at Bupa Global we have been really investing in mental health to support our members and their families in accessing the services they need. For example, we now offer coverage for more mental health conditions like ADHD, addiction and self-inflicted injuries. So, I'd urge any parents who are concerned about a family member to seek help sooner rather than later.”



OTHER RESOURCES

- **Mind**
– information for children and young people
- **City Mental Health Alliance UK**

ADVICE ON SUPPORTING YOUR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic has had a huge impact on everyone's mental health, but it has been pronounced in children and teenagers, who have experienced disruption to their routines, social lives, exam schedules and key rites of passage.

Here is Dr Pablo Vandenabeele's advice on supporting children with their mental health.



Acknowledge their frustrations

Parents instinctively lean towards best-case-scenario responses when talking to their children. However, honest and open discussions are often more successful.

Remember, you can't control what happens in the wider world, but you can control how you communicate with your children about any challenges they are facing. Though it may feel difficult at the time, children will benefit more from honest conversations in an understanding home environment.



Be mindful of your words

It's important for parents to listen and respond to any concerns without judgement. Run through the conversation in your head, or with a friend beforehand, to ensure you feel comfortable with the topics you are tackling and to help avoid them closing down.



Have difficult conversations on neutral ground

If you recognise signs of stress and anxiety, then early intervention is key. Avoid their bedroom or the kitchen table and find a neutral space – such as an early evening walk – to open up the conversation.

Be sure to let them properly process the chat, and let them know they can come back to you later on if needs be.



PUT THE RIGHT SUPPORT IN PLACE

Don't be afraid to get help if your family is struggling to cope. Bupa Global has multiple resources for those affected by mental health issues – including its **Global Virtual Care** service which provides confidential access to a global network of doctors available 24/7 in multiple languages – enabling you or your child to speak to a specialist at a time that suits you.

For families, the **Elite Global Health Plan** is ideal as it covers two children up to the age of 10 at no additional cost, subject to underwriting.



About Bupa Global

Bupa Global is the premium health insurance arm of Bupa. Established in 1971, it provides customers who want premium international coverage with products and services to access the healthcare they need anytime, anywhere in the world, whether at home or when studying, living, travelling or working abroad.

Now almost fifty years later Bupa Global is continually striving to provide the best medical services to its 500,000 customers based all around the world.

Speaking over 60 languages and with 1.5m medical providers part of its direct settlement network, offices are located in London and Brighton (UK), Miami and Philadelphia (USA – GeoBlue), Copenhagen (Denmark), Cairo (Egypt), Dubai (UAE), and Hong Kong (China) as well as regional offices in Mainland China and Singapore.

In order to continue to be a world leader in health insurance for individuals and companies, Bupa Global invests in continually developing its services, products, systems, and technology.

Bupa Global supporting members' mental health

Helping members manage the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bupa Global has invested in its mental health expertise and offering, in order to provide extensive mental health cover for individuals and their families.

To support members in accessing the services they need, Bupa Global has started to remove both annual and monetary limits across plans for in-patient and day-patient mental health treatment (up to the annual maximum limit of your chosen plan), and now offers greater coverage for mental health conditions including ADHD, addiction and self-inflicted injuries.

Bupa Global also has multiple resources for those affected by mental health issues – including its Global Virtual Care service which provides confidential access to a global network of doctors available 24/7 in multiple languages – enabling members to speak to a specialist at a time that suits their busy schedules best.

Bupa Global has also launched the Ultimate Plan, offering the highest level of private health cover available from Bupa. With no annual limits, it provides end-to-end, personalised health management with a range of physical, mental and preventive healthcare services. Dedicated assistance is provided from a personal healthcare concierge, with access to senior clinical staff from the comfort of their home.

Bupa Global is also focused on supporting the health and wellbeing of its people through the pandemic. Initiatives include a Covid-19 people hub and a new employee newsletter with a focus on wellbeing and resources, and a digital health and wellbeing programme. Bupa Global's Mental Health First Aid Network has been expanded with more business leaders taking the training and an Employee Assistance Programme has been rolled out across all parts of the Bupa Global business (new to China, Hong Kong, Singapore & Egypt).

For more information on all of Bupa Global's world-leading products and services, visit www.bupaglobal.com

