



The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)
cordially invites you to a webinar on

Behind the Mask: Masculinity and Mental Health

Date: 29 August 2025
Time: 12:00 – 13:30
Venue: Zoom
RSVP: [Click here to register](#)



Why This Matters

Men in both high- and low-income settings are often reluctant to seek mental health care due to entrenched masculinity norms. These norms shape behaviour, attitudes, and emotional expression—discouraging vulnerability and help-seeking.

Traditional ideals that prize strength, independence, and emotional restraint can make it harder for men to talk about depression. Globally, this contributes to higher suicide rates among men, with South African male rates about five times higher than women's. This webinar will explore how masculinity norms influence men's mental health and willingness to seek help—focusing on the South African context. Together, we will create space for open dialogue, raise awareness across life stages, and promote more inclusive, accessible, and gender-sensitive support systems.

Key Topics

- How traditional and evolving masculinity norms shape men's mental health and help-seeking behaviours in South Africa.
- Cultural, social, and economic barriers that prevent men from accessing mental health services.
- Effective, gender-sensitive approaches that support emotional well-being and resilience in men at different life stages.

Moderator



Dr Natisha Dukhi is a public health scientist whose interdisciplinary research bridges science, leadership, advocacy, and sustainable development. She holds a PhD in Public Health and brings extensive experience as a medical scientist, lecturer, and researcher with a record of addressing complex health challenges globally. Her expertise spans child and adolescent health, nutrition, non-communicable diseases, gender-based violence, and mobile health. As a Senior Research Specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council, she leads/contributes to several large-scale, multi-stakeholder projects. As a scientist, mentor, and science diplomat, science diplomacy and advocacy are reflected in her roles as a Fellow of the African Science Leadership Programme, former Co-Chair of the South African Young Academy of Science, and Executive Committee member of the Global Young Academy. She is a thought leader in public health, contributing actively to national and international platforms. With numerous peer-reviewed publications and the prestigious Gro Brundtland Award, her work continues to shape policy and empower the next generation of African scientists and beyond.

Speakers



Professor Tholene Sodi is a registered Clinical Psychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Limpopo. He holds the SAMRC-DSI/NRF-UL SARCHI Chair in Mental Health and Society at the same institution. He is a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and serves as Advisor to its Council. He has served on various national and international professional platforms, including the Boards of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP). He is a former President of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), former Chairperson of the Professional Board for Psychology, and former Vice President of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). He was also a Member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Mental Health. His research interests include youth mental health, culture and mental health, suicide, behavioural medicine, mental health policy, and implementation science.



Professor Crick Lund is Professor of Global Mental Health and Co-Director of the Centre for Global Mental Health, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London. He is also an Honorary Professor in the Alan J. Flisher Centre for Public Mental Health (CPMH), Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, University of Cape Town (UCT). He trained as a clinical psychologist at UCT in the mid-1990s and was subsequently involved in developing post-apartheid norms for mental health services for the national Department of Health. He worked for the World Health Organisation (WHO) from 2000 to 2005 and has consulted to several countries on mental health policy and planning. He was a founding member of the CPMH and served as its first Director, from 2010 to 2017, when he joined King's College London. His research interests lie in mental health policy, service planning and the social determinants of mental health in low and middle-income countries.



Ms Phinah Kodisang is the Chief Executive Officer of the Soul City Institute for Social Justice, a renowned South African organization championing gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, and social justice. With over 20 years of leadership experience, Phinah has been instrumental in driving transformative programs addressing systemic inequalities and advocating for the rights of women and girls. Under her leadership, Soul City has expanded its impact through innovative campaigns and community engagement initiatives. A dynamic leader and advocate, Phinah is deeply committed to creating a more just and equitable society.