



THE PRESSURE TO PROVIDE: A SOUTH AFRICAN MAN'S REALITY

BY LESEGO C, EMPLOYEE AND EAP BENEFICIARY

I don't remember the last time I exhaled—really exhaled, without worrying about what's coming next.

Every month feels like a race. A race to pay bills, to make sure my family is okay, to stretch what I have just enough to survive. Sometimes, I wonder—if I lost my job today, who would I turn to? Who would pick up the slack for me the way I've always picked it up for others?

The truth? Probably no one. Because as a man, I am expected to be the provider. The pillar. The solution.

THE HEAVY WEIGHT OF "BLACK TAX"

I don't just work for myself. I work for my mother, who still stays in the same house we grew up in. I work for my siblings, because I'm the one who made it out, and it's on me to make sure they do too. I work for my cousins who are still struggling to find jobs. And I work for my own household—my kids, my partner, the life I'm trying to build for them.

They don't even have to ask anymore. I know when the month is ending, my phone will ring. It's school fees, electricity, groceries. Someone needs help, and because I'm the one who's "doing well," I must come through.

I love my family. I want to help. But sometimes, I feel like I'm drowning.



WHEN THE PRESSURE BECOMES TOO MUCH

It's not just about money—it's about the **mental load**.

When there's an emergency, I'm the first call. When there's a crisis, I'm the one expected to fix it. And when I say I can't? The disappointment is heavy. I see it in my mother's voice when she says, *"It's okay, my boy, don't worry."* But I know it's not okay. I hear the frustration in my sibling's sigh when they realize there's no extra cash this month.

And then comes the guilt. The feeling that I should be doing more, earning more, trying harder. But where does it end?



FINDING A WAY TO BREATHE AGAIN

Since speaking to the Financial Advisor from Serenity, I've started making changes—not because I don't care, but because I need to survive too.

1. Learning to Say “No” Without Guilt

I used to think that saying “no” made me selfish. Now, I understand that if I give away everything, I'll have nothing left—not for myself, not for my own children, not for my future. Saying no doesn't mean I don't care. It means I need to protect my own stability, too.

2. Setting a Family Budget

Instead of reacting to every emergency, I've started setting aside a fixed amount for family support. Once that money is done, it's done. This way, I can help without sinking myself into debt or financial stress.

3. Pushing for Financial Independence

I've started having tough conversations with my family about money. Instead of just handing out cash, I'm looking at long-term solutions—helping someone start a business, funding a skill course, showing them ways to generate income. It's not easy, but the cycle has to change.

4. Prioritizing My Mental and Emotional Health

For years, I carried this pressure alone. I never spoke about how it was affecting me—because what kind of man complains about providing? But keeping everything inside only made things worse. I've learned to talk about it now, whether with a close friend, a mentor, or a Counsellor at Serenity. And it's helping.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE—THERE'S HELP AVAILABLE

If you're feeling overwhelmed, listen to me: **you don't have to do this alone.**

Through the Barlow Employee Wellness Program services, you can have access to free, confidential support. Speak to a **Financial Advisor** to help you manage your money, or talk to a **Counsellor** about the stress and anxiety of carrying this load alone.

Being a provider doesn't mean breaking yourself in the process. **You matter too.**



Breaking cycles. Empowering providers. Restoring balance.

At Serenity Corporate Wellness, we provide expert counselling services designed to help individuals and organizations cultivate healthier, more productive environments. Whether you're facing personal challenges or seeking to build a stronger workplace culture, our tailored support ensures you never have to navigate these struggles alone. Take the first step toward unlocking your full potential — to learn more visit: www.serenitycorporatewellness.com