



# Mental Health First Aid Awareness

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## Course Overview

- What is mental illness
- What is mental health first aid and why do we need it?
- Understanding Mental Health First Aid for;
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Substance abuse
  - Suicidal ideation



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## Before we get started:

Today's discussions may raise sensitive issues

- Please be respectful and supportive to others
- Feel free to take a break / take time out of the room: just let the person next to you know if you are OK



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This Awareness Course is based on key elements from the  
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID  
Accredited 12hr Course

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## Mental Health Awareness

With over 11.5 million Australians in employment, workplaces can play a significant role in supporting mental health

At any given time, **one in five employees is likely to be experiencing a mental health condition**, so it is important for workplaces to be well equipped to deal with these issues effectively

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## Mental Health Awareness



Mental health conditions tend to **affect people during their prime** working years (16 to 64 years).

In addition to the **personal cost to the individual**, untreated mental health conditions can have a direct impact on workplaces

The Heads Up initiative was recently launched in partnership with the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance (MHWA) to encourage business leaders to take action on mental health in the workplace and give it the same priority as physical health and safety

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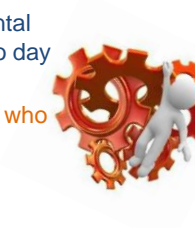
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# Mental Health Awareness

If we are to create a mentally healthy work place;

- it starts with the individual commitment of each staff member
- We need to consider our own mental health and how we manage day to day stressors
- then identify and assist other staff who may require assistance



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## Responses

- **Chronic stress** can lead to mental health issues
- Staff in our work places can be experiencing either acute or chronic symptoms
- Staff may have access to treatment or not yet be aware of services available to them to assist



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## What is a Mental Illness?

### DEFINITION:

A mental illness is a diagnosable illness which:

- Affects a person's thinking, emotional state and behaviour, and
- Disrupts the person's ability to:
  - work
  - carry out daily activities, and
  - engage in satisfying relationships



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## Professional Help Seeking

- Many people with common mental illnesses do not seek any professional help
- Only **35%** of people with a common mental illness receive professional help:
  - 59%** People with depressive disorders
  - 38%** People with anxiety disorders
  - 24%** People with substance use disorders



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Source: 2007 National Survey of Mental Health & Wellbeing  
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## Professionals who can Help

- General practitioners
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Allied health professionals
- Counsellors
- Mental health nurses
- Case managers



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## What is Mental Health First Aid?

**Mental health first aid (MHFA)** is the help offered to a person:

- developing a mental health problem, **or**
- experiencing a mental health crisis

The first aid is given until:

- appropriate treatment and support are received, **or**
- until the crisis resolves



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## Why Mental Health First Aid?

- Mental health problems are common
- Many people are not well informed about mental health problems
- There is a high level of stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems
- Many people do not seek help for mental health problems
- A person may not realise that they need help or that effective help is available
- Professional help is not always immediately available
- The helper's action may determine how quickly the person with the problem gets help or recovers
- MHFA has been found to be effective

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## Crisis Situations

- Suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- Non-suicidal self-injury
- Panic attacks
- Traumatic events
- Severe psychotic states
- Aggressive behaviours
- Acute effects from substance misuse
- Medical emergencies from substance misuse



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## Recovery

Recovery can be quicker for people who feel supported

- Support from friends and family
- Support from community
- Support from others who have experienced mental illness
- Self-help strategies
- Avoidance of alcohol and other drugs



Remember: first aiders also need to take care of themselves

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## Recognising Warning Signs



What does a person with psychological symptoms look like?

What are some of the psychological disorders that you might find in your workplace?



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Depression

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## What is DEPRESSION?

- Clinical depression lasts for at least 2 weeks and affects a person's emotions, thinking, behaviour and physical wellbeing
- It affects a person's ability to study, work and to have satisfying relationships
- In any one year, it affects around 6.2% of Australians aged 16- 85 years - more females than males
- 50% of people who get depression will have had their first episode by age 25
- Depression often co-occurs with anxiety and substance use disorders
- Once a person has an episode of depression, they are more prone to having other episodes



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## Symptoms of Depression

- **Emotions**

Helplessness, hopelessness, guilt, mood swings, lack of enjoyment and loss of interest, loss of confidence and self-esteem

- **Thoughts**

Self criticism, self blame, pessimism, suicide, worry, impaired thought and decision making ability, impaired memory and concentration



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## Symptoms of Depression

- **Behaviours**

Crying, withdrawal, aggression, use of alcohol/drugs, over or under eating, over or under sleeping

- **Physical**

Lack of energy, change in physical appearance, loss or gain in weight, slow or agitated movements



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## What is an Anxiety Disorder?

- Everybody experiences anxiety at some time
- Anxiety can vary in severity from mild uneasiness through to a terrifying panic attack
- An anxiety **disorder** differs from normal anxiety in the following ways:
  - It is more severe
  - It is long lasting
  - It interferes with a person's work or relationships

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## Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

### • Physical

Rapid heart beat, 'pins and needles', nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, 'butterflies', shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, muscle tension, headache, sweating, restlessness, shakir



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## Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

### • Psychological

Excessive worry, flashbacks, mind racing, memory problems, decreased concentration, irritability, indecisiveness, confusion, restlessness, sleep disturbance

### • Behavioural

Avoidance and compulsions, increased use of alcohol and drugs

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## What is a Substance Use Disorder?

- Using alcohol or other drugs does not mean the person has a substance use disorder
- Substance use disorders tend to begin in adolescence or early adulthood – 18 years is the median
- They include either:
  - Abuse of alcohol or other drugs
  - Dependence on alcohol or other drugs
- They often co-occur with other disorders

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## Risk Factors for Alcohol use Disorders

- Availability and tolerance of alcohol in society
- Alcohol use in the family
- Social factors
- Genetic predisposition
- Alcohol sensitivity
- Enjoyment from drinking
- Other mental illnesses

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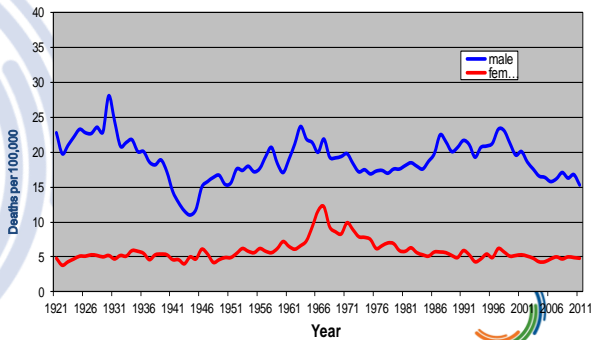
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## 1921 – 2011 SUICIDE RATES IN AUSTRALIA



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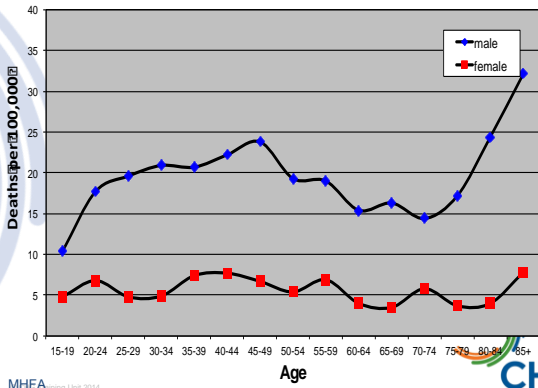
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### 2011: SUICIDE RATES IN AUSTRALIA BY AGE




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### Signs that a Person may be Suicidal

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Seeking access to things they can kill themselves with
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Hopelessness
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Feeling trapped, like there's no way out
- Withdrawing from friends, family or society
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living, no sense of purpose in life

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### Crisis Management

- Enquire about thoughts of suicide self harm and harm to others
- Enquire about their plan
- Enquire about their access to their plan
- Access to means and knowledge

- When discussing with the individual;**
- Calm, matter of fact, concerned manner
  - Have a logical flowing set of questions

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## Assess for suicidal thoughts and behaviours:

### 3 Key Actions

1. If you think someone may be suicidal, ask them
2. If they say yes, do not leave them alone
3. Link them with professional help



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## Mental Health First Aid

How do we consider approaching an individual who may be in crisis and is demonstrating some or any of these symptoms?



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### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID ACTION PLAN

- Action 1:** **A**pproach the person, assess and assist with any crisis
- Action 2:** **L**isten non-judgmentally
- Action 3:** **G**ive support and information
- Action 4:** **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- Action 5:** **E**ncourage other supports

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## ALGEE

### Action 1: **A**pproach the person, assess and assist with any crisis

- Approach the person about your concerns, look out for any crises and assist the person to deal with them
- If the person is in crisis, this is your first priority
- It may be immediately apparent, or may emerge during your conversation with the person
- Review how to assist in that crisis situation

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## ALGEE

### Action 2: **L**isten non-judgmentally

- Listen non-judgmentally at all times when providing MHFA
- Engage the person in discussing how they are feeling
- Ask how long they have been feeling this way
- Set aside any judgments about the person or their situation
- Most people want to be listened to empathetically before being offered help
- Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal listening skills

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## ALGEE

### Action 3: **G**ive support and information

Once a person has been listened to, it may be easier to then offer support and information

- **Support can include:**
  - Emotional support
  - Hope for recovery
  - Practical help
- **Information can include:**
  - Mental illnesses are real medical conditions.
  - There is effective help available
  - Getting help early means mental illness will pass more quickly and is less likely to reoccur later

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## ALGEE

### Action 4: **E**ncourage appropriate professional help

- Offer options of help available from mental health professionals
- Many people do not know about the various professional options available, such as:
  - medication
  - counselling or psychological therapy
  - help with vocational and educational goals
  - help with finances problems

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## What if the Person Doesn't want help?

- Try to find out if there are some specific reasons why, e.g. concern about cost, not liking the doctor, being sent to hospital
- Offer reliable information (pamphlets, books, websites) which may help them to see that seeking help is a good idea
- Continue to encourage them to seek or accept professional help
- However, do not threaten, lecture, nag or use guilt to change their mind; this may damage your relationship with them and make it hard for them to approach you again in the future
- Let the person know you are prepared to talk when they are ready
- If their symptoms become severe, you may need to seek assistance for them against their wishes

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## ALGEE

### Action 5: **E**ncourage other supports

#### Recovery can be quicker for people who feel supported

- Support from friends and family
- Support from community
- Support from others who have experienced mental illness
- Self-help strategies
- Avoidance of alcohol and other drugs

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## Managing Symptoms



If we are to manage acute stressors more effectively and allow better management of ourselves and others to prevent chronic symptoms developing, managing our own resilience can provide key opportunities.



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## Key Resilience Characteristics



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## Building Your Resilience

### Physical Health & Wellbeing Checklist



- Business / Career
- Finance
- Health
- Family & Friends
- Relationships
- Personal & Spiritual Growth
- Fun & Recreation
- Physical Environment



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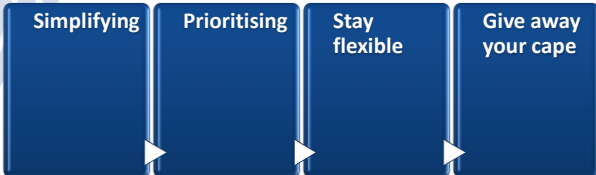
## Stress Busters

Stress is Like **Dark Chocolate** .....

**A Little of it won't kill you!**

But too much chronic stress has a negative impact!

**So consider.....**




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## Key points

- Understand **risk factors** and **warning signs** for Mental Health
- Develop strategies for **early intervention**
- Develop your own **personal resilience** plan to manage your stress & maintain your **Work / Life/ Self Balance**



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## Adelaide University Employee Assistance Program

### CHG Support Services:

- Critical Debriefs
- Manager Assist
- EAP for individuals and family
- Colleague Assist

**Colleague Assist**

Adelaide University recognises that our staff are our most valuable asset

Colleague Assist is a CHG service program which acts as an extension of the EAP program to assist employees in identifying colleagues. This program is available to all staff who are eligible to access the EAP program.

Colleague Assist can help employees with strategies to help a work colleague:

- Deal with personal issues
- Deal with work-related stress
- Deal with workplace conflict
- Deal with difficult people
- Prepare for a difficult workplace scenario

CALL TODAY

8354 9898 (Business Hours)  
0418 883 855 (After Hours EAP)

CHG Psychologists work at the following locations:  
 CHG Adelaide City     CHG Flinders Medical Centre (FMC)     CHG Flinders RMC  
 CHG Glenelg Campus     CHG North Flinders Campus     CHG Sturt Campus  
 CHG West Campus     CHG West Flinders Campus



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## Questions

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