
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course

Summary

- A Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course will set out what you need to do in a crisis until help arrives and where to find professional help.
 - A mental health crisis can include: panic attacks, experiencing withdrawal, feeling suicidal, reacting to relationship issues, having a psychotic episode, or a mix of these symptoms.
 - If you have a friend, family member or close colleague who has a mental illness, it is a good idea to sign up for an MHFA course.
 - As well as the standard MHFA training course, there is a range of tailored mental health first aid courses that cater to specific age groups, careers and cultural backgrounds.
 - Visit the MHFA website to find a mental health first aid course instructor in your local area.
-

Finding yourself in a mental health emergency can be an overwhelming and stressful experience. Unless you are familiar with the symptoms of mental illness and addiction, it may be difficult to know what a person in distress needs and what will make things worse.

A Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course will set out what you need to do in a crisis until help arrives. You will learn about the early warning signs of mental illness, how to communicate well, and where to find professional mental health help in your local community.

Learning about mental health

When someone is having a mental health crisis, they could be having a panic attack, experiencing withdrawal, feeling suicidal, reacting to relationship issues, having a psychotic episode, or a mix of these symptoms. An MHFA course can provide you with a basic understanding of the different kinds of mental illness and their associated symptoms.

In an MHFA training course you will learn about mental health problems and disorders, including:

- depression
- mood disorders
- substance abuse disorders
- trauma
- anxiety disorders
- psychosis.

MHFA courses also cover how to deal with the following mental health crisis situations:

- traumatic events
- panic attacks
- suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- severe psychotic states
- self-harm
- effects of drug or alcohol abuse
- aggressive behaviour.

The ALGEE action plan

All MHFA courses will teach you how to provide mental health first aid by using the ALGEE action plan.

The ALGEE action plan is:

- **Approach**, assess and assist with any crisis - assess the risk of suicide or harm and look for signs of trauma and high anxiety.
- **Listen** to the person non-judgmentally.
- **Give** the person reassurance, support and information.
- **Encourage** the person to seek appropriate professional help.
- **Encourage** the person to seek self-help and other support strategies.

Unlike other emergency action plans, the tasks that make up the ALGEE action plan DO NOT have to be done in sequence. You can assess the risks, give reassurance and listen without judgment, all at the same time.

Who should attend an MHFA course?

It is better to know what to do and not need to use your knowledge than to get caught in a difficult situation unprepared. If you have a friend, family member or close colleague who has a mental illness, it is a good idea to sign up for a mental health first aid training course. The MHFA courses are also a good idea for anyone who works in human services.

Human service roles include:

- social workers
- managers
- human resource officers
- welfare officers
- prison officers
- teachers
- TAFE and university lecturers
- police officers
- youth workers
- Aboriginal health workers
- nurses
- lawyers
- allied healthcare professionals
- counsellors.

Available mental health first aid courses

As well as the standard MHFA course, there is a range of tailored mental health first aid training courses that cater to specific age groups, careers and cultural backgrounds. Courses include:

- nursing students
- medical students
- financial counsellors
- youth
- teens
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Vietnamese.

Visit the [**MHFA website**](#) to read more about the various courses on offer.

Find a course

All courses are run by independent instructors that are trained and accredited by the MHFA. MHFA does not coordinate the courses themselves.

Visit the [**MHFA website**](#) to find a course instructor in your local area.

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

eLearning

eLearning is currently only available to nursing students and recent nursing graduates (within the last two years). The nursing course is an online version of the 13-hour Standard Mental Health First Aid Course for Nursing Students. More online courses are planned.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Mental Health First Aid, call (03) 9079 0200

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2019 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.