Mental Health First Aid, An Overview

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What is Mental Health First Aid?

- "Mental Health First Aid takes the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health and substance use problems by improving understanding and providing an <u>action plan</u> that teaches people to safely and responsibly identify and address a potential mental illness or substance use disorder."
 - "Mental Health First Aid USA
- Created in 2001 by Betty Kitchener in Australia
- 8 Hour Interactive Class (not an EAP offering)
- Learn more at <u>https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org</u>.

Objectives

Learn about mental health conditions, types of crises and risk factors

Identify the components of a Mental Health First Aid plan

Understand the different types of mental health treatments and support systems

Receive additional resources including personal self-care strategies

What is a Mental Health Disorder?

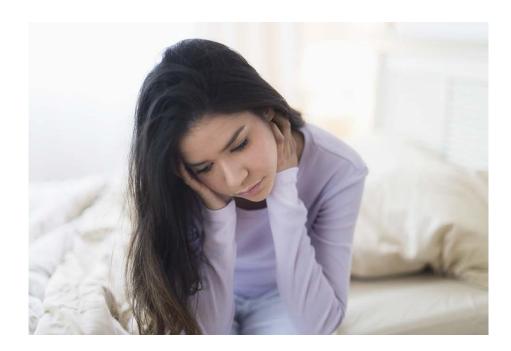
"Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities." – American Psychiatric Association

Common mental health conditions:

- ADHD
- Anxiety Disorders
- Autism
- Bipolar Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Depression
- Dissociative Disorders
- Early Psychosis and Psychosis
- Eating Disorders
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Schizoaffective Disorder
- Schizophrenia

Mental Health Symptoms

- Mental health symptoms can show up in a variety of ways.
- Examples of the types of symptoms:
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Behavioral
 - Thoughts



Risk Factors

- A history of mental illness
- Stressful life situations (financial, loved one death, divorce)
- Chronic medical condition (diabetes, heart disease)
- Brain damage/traumatic brain injury
- Trauma (military combat, assault)
- Use of alcohol or recreational drugs
- A childhood history of abuse or neglect
- Few friends or few healthy relationships
- Prior mental illness

Protective Factors

- Parental/Familial Support
- Good social support system
- Economic Security
- Availability of constructive recreation
- Community Bonding
- High self-esteem
- Good problem solving skills
- Feeling of control in own life
- Spiritualty
- Avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs



Mental Health Action Plan

- Action A: Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm
 - How to Talk with Someone who is Suicidal
 - What do you do?
- Action L: Listen Nonjudgmentally
- Action G: Give Reassurance and Information
- Action E: Encourage Appropriate Professional Help
 - Types of Professionals
- Action E: Encourage Self-help and Other Support Strategies
 - Self-Care Strategies
 - Taking Care of Yourself

A: Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

- Talk of suicide should always be taken seriously and viewed as a cry for help rather than dismissed as an attention-getting tactic.
- Risk Factors for Suicide:
 - A prior suicide attempt
 - Depression and other mental health disorders
 - Substance abuse disorder
 - Family history of a mental health or substance use disorder
 - Family history of suicide
 - Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
 - Having guns or other firearms in the home
 - Being in prison or jail
 - Being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as a family member, peer, or media figure
 - Medical illness
 - Being between the ages of 15 and 24 years or over age 60

How to Talk with Someone Who is Suicidal

- Discuss your observations with the person
- Appear confident, as this can be reassuring
- Tell the person that thoughts of suicide are common and do not have to be acted on
- Realize that the person may be reluctant to involve family or professional help
- Try to involve a person in the decision making about what should be done, who should be told and how to seek professional help
- If the person has a weapon or is behaving aggressively, call 911.



What do you do?

- If there is a risk of suicide, take immediate action to keep the person safe:
 - Do not leave him/her alone
 - Ensure he/she has a safety contract at all times
 - Discuss past supporters and see if they're still available
 - Do not use guilt or threats to prevent suicide
 - Implement the other steps of the ALGEE Action Plan
 - Seek additional support if needed, including 911.

L: Listen Non-judgmentally

- Engage with person in the first-person. Use "I" statements, focusing on what you have noticed.
- Inquire about the situation but don't push.
- Remember its about the person, not you.
 - Experience is different
 - Perspective is different
 - Culture may be different
 - Use of language may be different

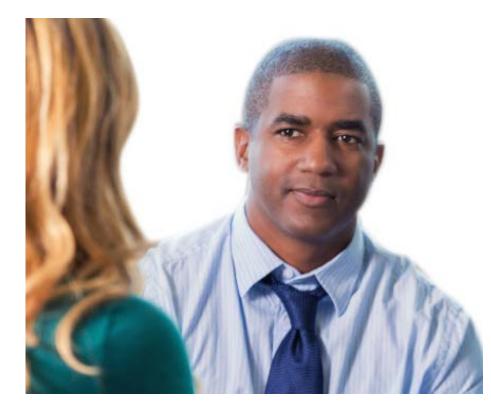
G: Give Reassurance and Information

- Give Reassurance
 - Validate the person's experience
 - Offer consistent support
 - Speak in terms of hope
 - Do NOT dismiss the problem or emotions
- Give Information
 - Acknowledge your role and what you can do
 - Provide practical help
 - Provide information
 - Do NOT provide advice



E: Encourage Appropriate Professional Help

- Individuals with mental disorders are treatable with a variety of therapies and/or supports
- Evidence-based practices are interventions for which there is consistent scientific evidence showing that they improve individual outcomes



Types of Professional Help

- Individual, family and/or group therapy
- Alcohol/drug treatment, withdrawal management
- Problem-solving, decision making or social skills training
- Academic counseling
- Dietary Management
- Medication

E: Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies

- Identify others who may be helpful
- Explore activities that might help manage symptoms
- Find strategies that interest the person
- Discuss self-help strategies with a health professional
- Engage the family as well as the person
- Promising Self-help Strategies:
 - Are interesting to the person
 - Promote a sense of satisfaction
 - Enhance social connections
 - Should be safe

Self-Care Strategies

- Physical Self-Care
 - Are you getting adequate sleep?
 - Is your diet fueling your body well?
 - Are you taking charge of your health?
 - Are you getting enough exercise?
- Social Self-Care
 - Are you getting enough face-to-face time with your friends?
 - What are you doing to nurture your relationships with friends and family?
- Mental Self-Care
 - Are you making enough time for activities that mentally stimulate you?
 - Are you doing proactive things to help you stay mentally healthy?
- Spiritual Self-Care
 - What questions do you ask yourself about your life and experience?
 - Are you engaging in spiritual practices that you find fulfilling?
- Emotional Self-Care
 - Do you have healthy ways to process your emotions?
 - Do you incorporate activities into your life that help you feel recharged?

Taking Care of Yourself

- Have you decided what you will do for self-care?
- Who can you debrief with now?
- If you feel upset or distressed later, who can I call?
- If I share with others, how do I ensure the confidentiality?
- Do you or your family need a break?

Your Employee Assistance Program

Call toll-free or visit us on the web

24 hours a day/7 days a week

Thank you!

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