



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

About mental health

- One in five Australians will be affected by mental illness at some time in their lives. Approximately 1 in 40 will be affected by a severe ongoing mental illness.
- Mental illnesses, like depression, or anxiety, arise as a result of a number of complex factors. Over 70% of people with mental health problems recover and get on with their lives.
- There are simple steps that people can take to reduce stigma and support people with a mental illness in the community.
- While people often know a lot about physical health, they are often unaware of mental health. This lack of awareness contributes to the stigma that is often associated with mental illness.
- The stigma of mental illness often prevents people from seeking help and disclosing to family, friends and colleagues. It also prevents people providing appropriate support to family members, friends and neighbours simply because they do not know how.
- By increasing our knowledge and understanding of mental health and mental illness, we can empower ourselves to make changes to help improve and sustain our mental health and that of others.

Mental Health First Aid

- Basic First Aid is the initial help given to someone experiencing a physical health problem before professional treatment arrives. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches the same skills for mental illness.
- MHFA improves mental health literacy and helps people to:
 - recognise the signs and symptoms of someone with mental health problems
 - respond to various mental health crises, engage with, support and signpost people to appropriate professional help.

Helping someone in a mental health crisis

- A mental health crisis may occur when a person may feel suicidal, a person may be having anxiety attacks, a person may be in an acute stress reaction or a person may be out of touch with reality in a distressing psychotic state.
- Here are some general strategies you can use to help:
 1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are present.
 2. Remain courteous and non-threatening, but be honest and direct.
 3. Listen to the person in a non-judgmental way.
 4. Avoid confrontation at all costs - be prepared to "agree to differ" with the person's perspective.
 5. Clarify and address what the person sees as the major issues first (not what you, the helper, see as the major concerns).
 6. Do not attempt to manhandle the person, except to prevent serious assault or suicide attempts.
 7. Encourage / assist person to receive professional mental health help.



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8. Finally, if the incident was traumatic for you, or you feel anxious or distressed, discuss these issues with a friend or a professional service.

Seeking professional help

- For 24-hour urgent clinical assessment, support and counselling:
 - The Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL) Metropolitan 1300 555 788 or Peel 1800 676 822
 - Rurallink 1800 552 002
- Consult your GP or local mental health services
- Seek advice from a mental health professional.
- Many organisations also have access to confidential counselling services through their human resources department.

Further information

- **Mental Health First Aid** provides guidelines and information on courses. It also has guidelines on supporting Indigenous people experiencing a mental health crisis.
 Website: www.mhfa.com.au
- **Australian Red Cross and Green Apple Development** offer MHFA training.
 Phone: 9475 3330
 Website: www.gamhs.com.au
- **Brain Ambulance** delivers MHFA training and mental health education and wellness training for workplaces.
 Phone: 9582 9741
 Website: www.brainambulance.com.au
- **E-learning MHFA course** is an interactive MHFA e-learning course on CD-Rom, which you can order online. It provides information on mental illness and how to better recruit and support people living with a mental illness in the workplace.
 Website: http://www.mhfa.com.au/elearning_mhfa.shtml
- **ORYGEN Youth Health** has youth mental health resources and MHFA training packages.
 Website: <http://orygen.org.au>
- **WA Mental Health** is a one-stop-shop for mental health information in WA.
 Website: www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth

FACT SHEET

