

Mental Health First Aid, An Overview

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 [action plan](#) 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 <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>.

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
- Spirituality
- 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!

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

The information presented in this presentation is confidential and expected to be used solely in support of the delivery of services to Magellan members. By receipt of this presentation, each recipient agrees that the information contained herein will be kept confidential and that the information will not be photocopied, reproduced, or distributed to or disclosed to others at any time without the prior written consent of Magellan Health, Inc.