



Why Train in Mental health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid plays an important role in building community awareness and a culture of wellbeing. Read below for just a few of the reasons why Mental Health First Aid training is so important.

- **Mental health problems are common:** About one in five Australian adults will suffer from some form of common mental health problem in any one-year. Throughout the course of a person's life it is highly likely that they will either develop a mental health problem themselves or have close contact with someone who does. Mental Health First Aid is as important to the community as general first aid.
- **Mental health problems can be disabling:** Mental health problems can be more disabling to the sufferer than many chronic physical illnesses, seriously impacting physical health, work and relationships. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has concluded that mental health problems rank as the third biggest health problem in Australia after cancer and heart disease, and the largest in terms of actual disability.
- **MHFA gives you confidence in dealing with crisis:** The Mental Health First Aid action plan helps you to know what steps to take in different crisis situations. Would you know what to do if a friend is experiencing a panic attack for the first time, or a workmate who has been very depressed expresses thoughts of suicide? What if a family member were to begin to experience psychotic symptoms – the earlier help is found the better.
- **MHFA reduces stigma:** Attitudes of rejection are often experienced by the sufferer due to associated stigma and ignorance in the community. Mental Health First Aid can play an important role by increasing empathy and understanding through education.



- **MHFA is therapeutic:** MHFA is not therapy nor does it teach you to be a therapist. However a controlled trial of MHFA in the workplace conducted in 2002 and published in BMC Psychiatry in 2004 found amongst other benefits, MHFA improved mental health in the participants themselves. This was an unexpected finding possibly associated with the therapeutic value of education in itself.
- **MHFA increases mental health literacy and early recognition of symptoms:** The course teaches you how to recognize symptoms and how to guide someone genuinely needing help in an appropriate direction. When a mental health problem first emerges it is the family, friends or workmates who are there. MHFA training increases mental health literacy, and importantly, it increases the possibility of early recognition of a developing mental health problem which may prevent a future a crisis.
- **Many do not know help is available or need encouragement to get help:** Many people feel too ashamed to share their problem or to seek help. Many do not know help is available or may not realize they need help due to clouded thinking. Mental first aiders can play an important role in encouraging a person to get professional help and by directing them to self help therapies.
- **We all play a part in creating a healthy society:** Most participants choose to do the course for one of three reasons; their work involves people contact, they have someone close who is affected by a mental health problem, or they see it as their duty as a citizen or parent to learn first aid skills.

See www.mentalhealthstation.org for Regular trainings in our venue or yours. Sydel@mentalhealthstation.org