

CACHE Level 2

Certificate in Understanding Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health Advocacy in the Workplace

TYPES OF MENTAL ILL HEALTH

PHYSICAL HEALTH

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

COMMUNICATION

SUPPORT

GUIDANCE

Workbook

Section 1: Exploring mental health



Did you know?

One in four people worldwide will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives.

The mental health continuum

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 2.

Mental health professionals often refer to the 'mental health continuum'. What this means is that mental health can be thought of as a scale that moves from healthy to ill. Everyone's mental health is somewhere along this scale or continuum.



The diagram shows a simple representation of the continuum. At the 'healthy' end of the continuum an individual functions normally and at the 'ill' end they are experiencing severe mental distress which affects their daily life and may have been diagnosed with a mental disorder. The 'reacting' stage represents an individual experiencing temporary and reversible mental distress - for example, in response to a particularly stressful situation such as bereavement or sudden unemployment. At the 'injured' stage, there is severe and persistent distress that could impact on their daily life and lead to a mental disorder. The main point here is that mental health is not simply a dual state representing healthy or ill but a continuous spectrum.



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Factors that increase the risk of mental health

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 3.

There are a number of risk factors that can increase the risk of an individual experiencing mental ill health. Factors may be temporary, causing short-term mental ill health or distress, or long-term, leading to more serious mental disorder. The risk factors may arise from inside the learning or work environment or from outside this environment in the individual's home and social life. Factors outside the learning or work environment may not appear to be the concern of educators and managers but may affect the individual's learning and/or work. It is important that educators and managers consider the support they can give to individuals even where factors are outside of learning or workplace control. Often it is a combination of factors from inside and outside the workplace that lead to stress, anxiety and ultimately mental ill health.

Did you know?

The World Health Organisation say that “work is good for mental health, but a negative working environment can lead to physical and mental health problems”.



Factors inside the learning or work environment

Risk factors for mental ill health in the learning or work environment include:

- Health and safety policies that are missing or inadequate so that stress and other health and safety issues in the workplace/learning environment are not identified and managed properly.
- Poor communication which means individuals do not feel that they know what they need to do in the work or learning environment and do not feel supported.
- Poor management practices such as failing to explain roles and responsibilities, unclear reporting lines, failure to provide sufficient resources and failure to manage staff/learners effectively.
- Limited participation of individuals in decision-making and limited control over their own work/learning.
- Inflexible working/study hours which do not support individuals in managing work/life balance.

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- Unclear tasks or objectives so individuals do not know what they need to do.
- Giving individuals tasks which are unsuitable for their competencies or insufficient training, knowledge and support with tasks which may lead to non-achievement of objectives.
- High or unrelenting workloads or study requirements which mean individuals do not have time to complete tasks.
- Unfair distribution of group work where one person is not doing their job properly and others have to compensate for them.
- Bullying and psychological harassment.

Factors outside the learning or work environment

Risk factors for mental ill health outside the learning or work environment include:

- Individual vulnerability such as low self-esteem and insecurity or inadequate coping mechanisms.
- Lifestyle choices, for example, alcohol or drug use which can put individuals at risk of developing mental health problems.
- Family history of mental ill health which may be hereditary.
- Problems at home such as domestic violence, neglect, divorce or family breakdown.
- Feeling cut off from family and friends or from the local community which can lead to feelings of isolation or rejection.
- Negative or traumatic life experiences such as unemployment, homelessness, bereavement, sudden illness, or being assaulted or abused.
- Big life changes even where these are positive such as getting married, having children or moving home which can be stressful for individuals.
- Financial worries arising from unemployment, redundancy, business failure, mounting debt or worries about the rising cost of living.
- Community or local environmental problems such as prejudice and discrimination, violence and crime or poor living conditions.

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Jenny's story

Jenny is a teacher in a big comprehensive school. After a fellow teacher left and was not replaced due to lack of funding, Jenny was given additional teaching hours. While she can manage the teaching, she's finding it hard to keep up with all the marking and additional tasks required by her job. Jenny spoke to her manager who told her to 'just get on with it'. She feels she has no support in the workplace and is finding the job extremely stressful. She is staying up late to mark books and complete administration work which means she isn't getting enough sleep. Then her mother died, and her manager made a fuss about her having time off to grieve and to support other family members. Jenny went to her doctor with symptoms of stress and anxiety and is now signed off work.



Knowledge Activity 1: Identify the long-term and temporary risk factors for Jenny and whether they are from inside or outside the work environment.

It is a mixture of factors that are affecting Jenny's mental health. She is under too much pressure at work because she has been given too much work and she is not receiving the right support from her manager. This is likely to be a long-term issue. The death of her mother has added to her distress and, whilst the immediate situation of the death is a temporary issue – she needs to take time off on a short-term basis – added to the other problems and her manager's poor attitude, it has led to her being signed off work sick.

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The effects of physical health on mental health

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 4.

It has long been recognised by medical professionals that there is a link between physical and mental health. Individuals who feel well physically are more able to cope with the mental strains and stresses of everyday life.



Knowledge Activity 2: Describe how you feel about life when you are physically well and how you feel when you are ill.

Lined writing area for the Knowledge Activity 2 response.

When they are ill, most people will find that they also feel a bit sad and sorry for themselves. They are less able to cope with everyday tasks and might be irritable towards others. Often, they just want to curl up in bed! Where physical health problems are long-term, individuals may become depressed.



Did you know?

Around 30 per cent of all people with a long-term physical health condition also have a mental health problem, most commonly depression/anxiety.

(The King's Fund <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/time-think-differently/trends-disease-and-disability-mental-physical-health>)

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By looking after physical health, we also protect our mental health, and lifestyle factors have an impact on our mental well-being. Lifestyle factors include:

- Physical activity and being outdoors – exercise leads to the brain producing more serotonin which is a chemical in the body that lifts our moods and makes us feel better. In addition, exercise keeps the body fit and helps weight loss which makes people feel more positive. There is some evidence that being outdoors also lifts a person's mood so exercising outside may bring even more benefit for well-being.
- Nutrition – the food we eat affects the development and day to day maintenance of the body. A balanced diet helps to keep the body healthy and provides the proteins, vitamins, minerals and other elements the body requires to maintain and repair itself. It is known that some deficiencies (e.g. of certain vitamins) can affect mood and poor diet can leave people feeling tired and lethargic which will lead to low moods. Keeping a healthy weight is important in feeling better physically but also for good self-esteem and self-confidence. A healthy, balanced diet will help individuals maintain a healthy weight.
- Healthy lifestyle – smoking, alcohol and drugs all have an impact on mood and mental well-being. Though they may make people feel happier for a short while, they may feel very low when the effects wear off and long-term or excessive use of alcohol and drugs may lead to mental health issues. Nicotine, for example, has been shown to interfere with the levels of dopamine in the brain and can switch off the brain's mechanism for making dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical which supports positive feelings so lack of it may cause depression.
- Rest/sleep – the body needs to rest in order to repair itself. A lack of rest or sleep puts pressure on the body and can make people unwell. It can also lead to issues with memory and thinking processes, cause individuals to be irritable and behave in ways that are out of character and trigger anxiety and depression.
- Long-term health conditions – long-term health conditions, even where they are not life threatening or life shortening, can lead to mental health problems. For example, skin conditions such as psoriasis may cause embarrassment, anxiety and distress. Other conditions such as chronic migraine are painful and can disrupt home and work life, leaving individuals feeling worried and depressed. In most cases, individuals with these types of conditions will not see a counsellor as part of their treatment plans and may develop long-term mental health issues alongside their physical health condition.

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Did you know?

Some individuals may experience seasonal affective disorder which is a type of depression that appears to be affected by the seasons. Individuals may experience low moods, irritability and lethargy in the winter months when there is less sunlight.



Knowledge Activity 3: Think about your own physical health and write down three things you could improve. Say why you need to improve these areas and how you could achieve it.

Handwriting practice area with 10 horizontal lines. A large 'SAMPLE' watermark is visible across the lines.



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