



Behavioral Health Program:

Mental Health First Aid Training Glossary of Key Terms

FY23: November 2022 – September 2023



Mental Health First Aid Training Glossary Key Terms

Addiction: A generic term for severe substance use disorders, generally referring to loss of control over use of substances leading to physical and psychological dependence.

Adjustment Disorders: Unhealthy or unhelpful reactions to stressful events or changes including depressed mood or nervousness and misconduct or violating the rights of others.

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): A traumatic experience that occurs before age 18. ACEs include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; physical or emotional neglect; intimate partner violence; violence against a child's mother; substance misuse in the home; parental separation or divorce; and/or having an incarcerated household member.

Aggressive Behaviors: Can be verbal (insults or threats), behavioral (throwing things, violating personal space), emotional (raised voice or looking angry). Aggressive behaviors may be a response to fear, or can be the result of poor communication. It can vary between individuals.

Alcohol Intoxication: Substantially impaired thinking and behavior caused by excessive use of alcohol.

Alcohol Withdrawal: The physical symptoms a person experiences when they stop drinking or drink substantially less than usual, such as tremors and increased blood pressure; can lead to seizures and delirium or confusion.

ALGEE: The Mental Health First Aid 5-step action plan to help people with mental health challenges. It includes Approach, assessing for risk of suicide or harm, and assist; Listen, nonjudgmentally; Give reassurance and information; Encourage appropriate professional help; Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

Antidepressant Medications: Drugs used to prevent or treat psychosis.

Anxiety: A feeling of worry caused by perceived threats in the environment. Although unpleasant, anxiety can be useful in helping a person avoid dangerous or risky situations. It can motivate the person to take action and address the immediate risk as well as everyday troubles.

Anxiety Disorders: Disorders characterized by intense worry about future events that disrupt a person's ability to perform at work, school, or in relationships. Examples include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorders and social anxiety disorders.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A disorder in which a person finds it unusually difficult to concentrate on tasks, pay attention, sit still, and control impulsive behavior.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): An umbrella diagnosis encompassing distinct diagnoses: autistic disorder; childhood disintegrative disorder; pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified; and Asperger syndrome.

Behavioral Addiction: Similar to substance addiction, except the person is addicted to the feeling brought on by an action, such as gambling rather than a substance.

Behavioral Health: Refers to the field of both mental health and substance use.

Bipolar Disorder: A mental disorder characterized by extreme swings in mood, with periods of depression, periods of mania, and extended periods of a normal mood in between.

Burnout: A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when one feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

Counseling: A variety of treatment techniques that aim to help a person identify and change troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

Compulsive Behaviors: Repetitive behaviors that the person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession in order to reduce anxiety.

Complementary Treatments: Treatments like life coaching and lifestyle changes that involve using natural or alternative therapies and changing the way one lives.

Culture: A combination of a person's values, norms, expectations, and identity that can affect one's perceptions, the actions they take, how they interact with others, and impacts how communities and families are organized.

Daily Living Activities: Individual activities, such as eating, bathing, grooming, and dressing, which are typically performed as self-care.

Depression (Major depressive disorder): A common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how people feel, the way they think and the way they act. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of physical problems and additional emotional problems (for example, irritability). Depression and depressive disorders are dangerous if left untreated.

Delusions: Fixed beliefs that do not change even when there is conflicting evidence. Some delusions are bizarre, others are not.

Detoxification: The process medical professionals use to safely manage the physical symptoms of withdrawal associated with stopping drug use.

Developmental Disabilities: A group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. They include intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders, and physical disorders such as vision impairment, epilepsy, and cerebral palsy.

Discrimination: Negative behaviors against a person based on perceived belonging to a social group.

Disability: A health condition that disrupts people's ability to work, care for themselves, attend school, and have relationships.

Drug: A chemical substance that can change how a person's body and mind work by affecting the brain in diverse ways.

Dual-Diagnosis: When a person has more than one health condition at the same time.

Early Intervention: Refers to recognizing the warning signs of a mental health or substance use problem and acting before it gets worse. Early intervention can prevent symptoms from becoming more serious.

Eating Disorders: Serious illnesses tied to irregular eating habits, severe stress, or concerns about body image, characterized by too much or too little food intake. Examples include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and orthorexia nervosa.

First Aider: An individual certified to provide Mental Health First Aid to a person experiencing a mental health or substance use problem or crisis.

Hallucinations: Seeing, hearing, feeling, or smelling things that others do not see, hear, feel, or smell.

Health Disparity: Good health for some and poor health for others that occurs when health and health care are not equal across groups of people.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A program or plan that determines specialized instructional accommodations and related services for students in a public educational institution with a disability as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Inhalants: Volatile substances that produce chemical vapors that can be inhaled to induce a psychoactive, or mind-altering, effect.

Integrated Care: A combination of primary health care with mental and behavioral health care in one setting.

Intellectual Disability: Significant limitations in both intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and adaptive behavior, which cover a range of everyday social and practical skills.

Intervention: Any activities used to modify behavior, emotional state, or feelings.

Mania: A state of excitement manifested by mental and physical hyperactivity, disorganization of behavior and elevation of mood.

Medicaid: Health insurance that helps many people who cannot afford medical care pay for some or all of their medical bills.

Mental Health: A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.

Mental Health Challenge: Symptoms similar to a mental disorder such as confused thinking, or extreme highs and lows in mood which are not severe enough to warrant the diagnosis of a mental disorder. Some additional terms that describe mental health challenges are emotional and behavioral disorder, extreme emotional distress, psychiatric illness, mental illness, mental health condition, mental breakdown, nervous breakdown, nervous exhaustion, and burnout.

Mental Health First Aid: An early intervention public education program. It teaches participants to recognize the signs and symptoms that suggest a potential mental health or substance use challenge, how to listen nonjudgmentally and give reassurance to a person who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge, and how to refer a person to appropriate support and services.

Mental Disorders: Mental disorders marked by the elevation or lowering of a person's mood. Ex. Depression, bipolar disorder (also called manic depression), seasonal affective disorder (also called major depressive disorder with seasonal pattern).

Mental Illness: A diagnosable illness that affects a person's thinking, emotional state, and behavior and disrupts the person's ability to work or conduct other daily activities and engage in satisfying personal relationships.

Medical Treatments: Include prescribed medications and other treatments given by health care professionals such as psychiatrist or other medical doctor. For mental disorders, medications might include antidepressants, antipsychotics, or mood stabilizers, while for addiction, medications include those that deter the person from misuse or overuse of the addictive substance. Medication is usually combined with appropriate psychological treatments, such as counseling and other supports.

Microaggressions: Everyday derogations, slights, and invalidations that are often delivered to people of minority or marginalized backgrounds.

Mindfulness: Being conscious and accepting of the present moment while acknowledging one's thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations.

Mood Disorders: Mental disorders marked by the elevation or lowering of a person's mood. Examples include depression, bipolar disorder (also called manic depression), seasonal affective disorder (also called major depressive disorder with seasonal pattern).

Negative Symptoms: Associated with disruptions in an individual's regular emotions and behaviors. They are called negative symptoms because they are aspects of well-being that a person does not have.

Non-suicidal Self-Injury: Deliberate, self-inflicted damage to the body without the intent to die by suicide.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Disorder characterized by obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors along with feelings of anxiety.

Opioid Overdose: Happens when a toxic amount of a drug or combination of drugs overwhelms the body. It is a very serious situation that requires immediate medical attention (such as 911).

Outpatient Treatment: Any professional care that takes place when a person is not admitted to a hospital or inpatient setting.

Panic Attack: The sudden onset of intense worry, fear, or terror. These attacks begin suddenly and develop rapidly and briefly and involve an intense fear that is out of proportion to the circumstances in which it is occurring.

Panic Disorder: Recurrent unexpected panic attacks that interfere with daily living activities at home, work, and in social situations. This intense fear is inappropriate for the circumstances. A range of physical symptoms can appear, including rapid heart rate, sweating, sensations of shortness of breath, nausea, and feelings of being detached from reality.

Paranoia: A condition characterized by an unwarranted mistrust or suspicion of other people, places, or situations.

Positive Symptoms: Behaviors not generally seen in the person's typical healthy behavior. They are called positive symptoms because these symptoms are present.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Feelings of distress that last longer than one month following a traumatic event.

Prosocial Behavior: Positive actions that benefit others, prompted by empathy, moral values, and a sense of personal responsibility rather than a desire for personal gain.

Psychiatrist: A medical doctor who specializes in the treatment of mental disorders with severe or long-lasting impact.

Psychoeducation: A type of psychological therapy that can help reduce psychotic symptoms by helping the person develop alternative explanations of schizophrenia symptoms, reducing the impact of the symptoms, and encouraging the person to take their medication.

Psychological Maltreatment: Emotional abuse or emotional neglect.

Psychological Treatments: Psychological treatments involve changing the way the person thinks or behaves to: reduce symptoms, increase life skills, and reduce problem behaviors, like using too much alcohol. These treatments are called counseling or "talk therapies" because they usually involve talking face-to-face and developing a supportive relationship with a mental health professional, such as a counselor, social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or substance use professional. Therapy can happen one-on-one, in a group, or with family members.

Psychologist: A mental health professional with advanced training who can diagnose and treat mental health conditions. Psychologists are not medical doctors and cannot prescribe medication.

Psychosis: A general term used to describe a mental health condition in which a person has lost some contact with reality. Psychosis causes a person's thoughts and perceptions to be disrupted, and the person may not understand what is real and what is not. Psychosis is a syndrome, or collection of symptoms, not an illness.

Psychotic Disorders: Severe mental disorders featuring abnormal thinking and perception that cause a person to lose touch with reality. Examples include schizophrenia, and schizoaffective disorder.

Prevention Programs: Includes policies or practices to reduce stress in the workplace, as well as stress management courses, parenting skills training, and education about substance use and addiction and about physical exercise to improve mood.

Protective Factor: Something that decreases the chances of a person being adversely affected by a circumstance or disorder.

Reassurance: Emotional support, such as empathizing and voicing hope and practical help that removes a person's doubts or fears.

Recovery: The process of change through which individuals improve their health and well-being, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential and personal journey with the goals of hope, empowerment, and autonomy.

Remission: In the recovery process, remission refers to a reduction of key symptoms of substance use.

Resilience: A person's ability to "bounce back" or overcome challenging experiences.

Risk Factor: Something that increases the chances of a person being adversely affected by a circumstance or disorder.

Sedative: A medication that helps someone to sleep.

Signs: As it relates to mental health, signs are objective health indicators that can be seen.

Substance Use Disorders: Disorders that occur when the recurrent use of substances causes impairment, including health problems, disability, and/ or failure to meet personal obligations. Examples include, Alcohol use disorder, and Opioid use disorder.

Self-care: Refers to activities and practices that you can engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and maintain and enhance your short-and long-term health and well-being.

Self-Help: The practice of improving yourself or coping with your own problems using resources and strategies you access on your own.

Self-Directed Violence: Behavior directed at oneself that deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury. Self-directed violence may be suicidal or non-suicidal in nature.

Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED): Mental health challenges that severely limit children's ability to function at school, at home and in the family.

Serious Mental Illness (SMI): Mental health challenges that severely limit an adult's ability to function at work, at school, at home, and in the family.

Specific Phobia: Intense anxiety and fear about a specific situation or object.

Social Support: Having a network of family and friends available to turn to in a challenging time.

Stereotype: A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Stigma: Stigma involves negative attitudes (prejudice) and negative behaviors (discrimination). Fear and misunderstanding are often referred to as stigma.

Stimulants: Substances that increase a person's alertness, attention, and energy and also increase blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration.

Suicide Attempt: A non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt might not result in injury.

Suicide Ideation: Thoughts or plans about suicide.

Suicide: Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Symptoms: A subjective mental or physical characteristic that indicates the potential existence of a concern, condition, or diagnosis.

Tolerance (Substance Use): A person's ability to function while under the influence of a substance. Tolerance generally increases as a person continues to use a substance. The person needs to use increasing amounts to get the desired effect, or they get less effect with the same amount of the substance.

Trauma: An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Trauma-Related Disorders: Disorders that result following a traumatic or stressful event. Examples include post-traumatic stress disorder, and acute stress disorder.

Well-being/Wellness: Wellbeing is unique to each individual and may include physical, mental, professional, and social health. It is learning to cope with illness, crisis, or trauma and associated challenges while adjusting their lifestyle. A person pursuing well-being aims to balance the emotional, financial, social, spiritual occupational, physical, intellectual, and environmental dimensions of their lives in a way that works for them.

Withdrawal Management: Medical and/or psychological care for individuals who are experiencing withdrawal from substances that can involve a stay in a treatment facility, medication, and ongoing therapy.

Wraparound Care: A team approach that involves all individuals who are relevant to the well-being of an individual (such as family members, teachers, and social service providers) in setting goals with the person and developing an individualized set of services and supports. Wraparound services and support are usually provided in the person's home or outside the hospital or other inpatient facilities.

Young Adult: Those ages 18-24.

References

1. MHFA (2022). *Mental Health First Aid USA Manual/ Adult*. National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (p. 4-234).
2. MHFA (2022). *Mental Health First Aid USA Manual/ For Adults Assisting Children and Youth*. National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (p.ix-408)