



Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training for the College Curriculum: An Innovative Approach for Teaching Students About Mental Illnesses and Promoting Mental Health Well-Being

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What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.

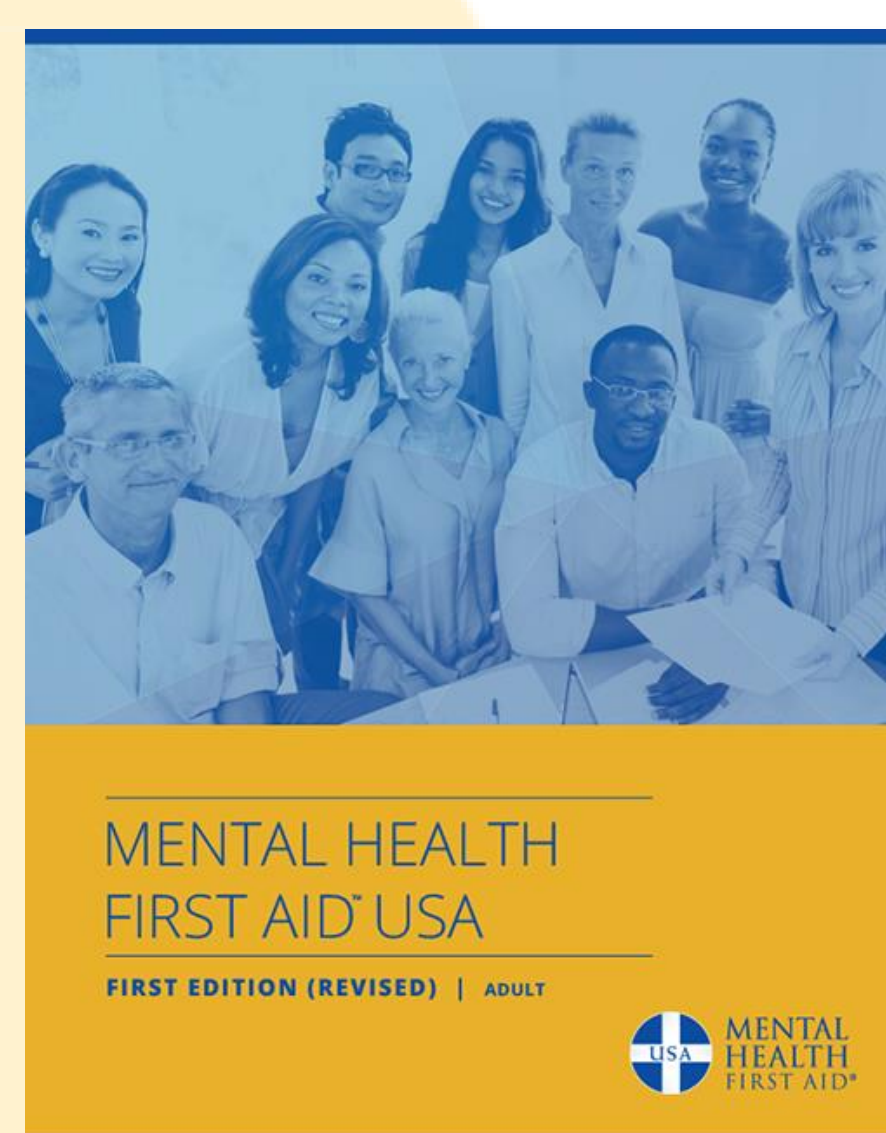
Why Mental Health First Aid?

- Mental Health problems are common
- Stigma is associated with mental health problems
- Many people are not well-informed about mental health problems
- Early identification and treatment can lessen the impact of mental illness
- Professional help is not always readily available
- Bystanders often do not know how to respond
- People with mental health problems often do not seek help

What are some outcomes of Mental Health First Aid?

- MHFA is effective in assisting people through mental health crises and challenges.
- builds mental health literacy
 - reduces negative attitudes about mental illnesses
 - shows people how they can help
 - brings the community together
 - offers hope for recovery

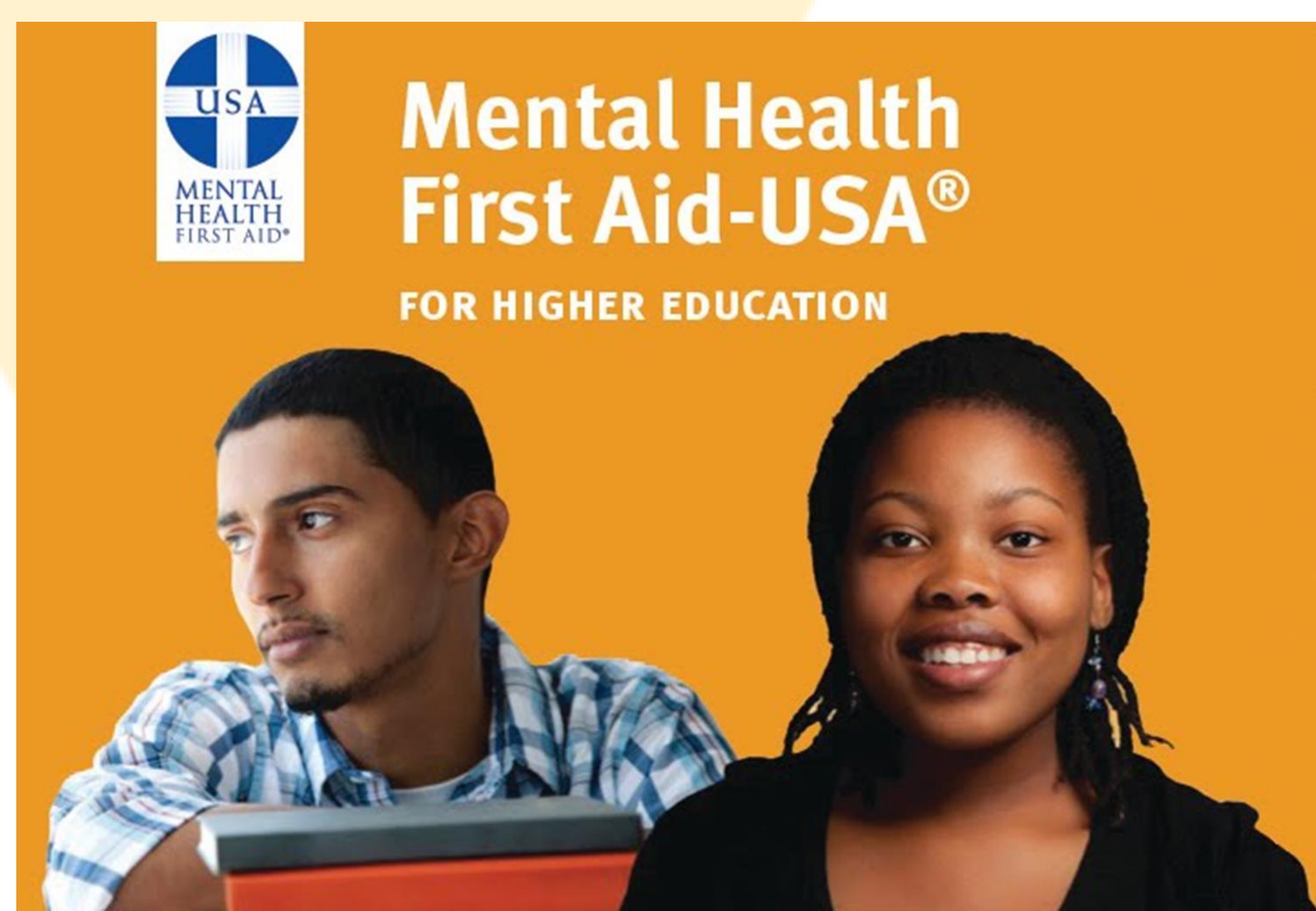
MHFA Handbook



How to be trained in Mental Health First Aid?

- 8 hour training
- discussions, exercises and videos
- MHFA handbook
- MHFA Action Plan
- practice scenarios
- certification

MHFA for Higher Education PowerPoint Slides



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

What is UNIV-370?

- 7 week MHFA certification course
- 1 Credit (0 credit option available)
- 1.25 hours/week
- 1 - 1.5 hours of work outside of class: journals, quizzes, reflections, projects

UNIV-370 Grading Criteria

Assignments and Tests

- 4 Journal Prompts
- 4 Quizzes
- Informational flyer
- Role Play Scenario
- Class Participation
- StrengthsFinder Assessment
- Final Test and Certification



Course Announcement Flyer



To gain the three-year Mental Health First Aid certification, students must attend and participate in every class meeting. Students may be able to earn academic credit without attending every class, but they cannot earn certification without perfect attendance.

Feedback from students:

What's the most useful thing you've learned?

What surprised or challenged you?:

- "I was surprised to learn that asking a person about thoughts of suicide won't put the idea into their head."
- "Thinking things through and writing the role play scenario made me realize how important it is for me to have learned the skills taught by this class."
- "I was shocked to read this statistic in the manual: "17% of High School students in the US reported that they had seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months."
- "The ALGEE[®] acronym gives me a framework for knowing what questions to ask and emphasizes the importance of listening."
- "I was surprised to learn that mental illness affects almost 1 in 4 Americans. I thought the ratio was lower."
- "I am amazed by the amount of information about mental health and mental illness that is not readily available to the public."
- "Taking this class helped me to become more accepting of my own personal struggles with mental illness. I used to think my depression and anxiety were my own fault."

UNIV-370 Course Schedule

Week 1	• What is MHFA?: Impact of Mental Illness and Stigma
Week 2	• Understanding Depression and Anxiety
Week 3	• MHFA Action Plan for Depression and Anxiety
Week 4	• Suicide Risk Assessment and Non-Suicidal Self Harm
Week 5	• MHFA for Panic Attacks and Traumatic Events
Week 6	• MHFA for Psychosis
Week 7	• Substance Use Disorders (includes Opioids)
Week 8	• MHFA for Eating Disorders (<i>optional</i>)

Learning Objectives

Provide students with the opportunity to:

- ✦ Identify a variety of mental disorders and understand the signs and symptoms of these disorders.
- ✦ Learn how to use the ALGEE[®] Action Plan to provide aid to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis or challenge.
- ✦ Compare and contrast the life experiences of people with and without mental disorders as a means of developing empathy and non-judgmental awareness.
- ✦ Explore the powerful role of stigma and the ways individuals can work to reduce the effects of stigma associated with mental health concerns.
- ✦ Practice effective communication and active listening skills.
- ✦ Discuss their own mental health challenges.
- ✦ Identify campus and community mental health resources.

How to Become Certified as a MHFA Instructor:

- ✦ Attend a 5-day or 3-day training: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>
- ✦ Training includes: in-depth instruction on facilitating the curriculum, a written exam and demonstration of the ability to present to a variety of audiences.
- ✦ Only certified instructors can teach the Mental Health First Aid course.

Katie Clare and Patrice Levinson are certified Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) instructors who developed and implemented a 1 Credit undergraduate course (UNIV-370) offering the 8-hour MHFA training for Higher Education with certification to undergraduate students at George Mason University.

Special thanks to Jacquelyn Nash, UNIV Courses and Programs, Center for Academic Advising, Retention, and Transitions and to the Course Redesign Academy, Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, George Mason University, <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/>