



Friends of MHFA Australia Newsletter

April 2013



2014 MHFA Calendar Competition

For the first time, MHFA Australia will be producing a calendar featuring artworks and photos from MHFA Instructors and the public. It will be available for purchase by MHFA Instructors and members of the public later in the year.

We are currently calling for entries from MHFA Instructors, MHFA course participants, friends of the MHFA Program and other interested members of the public.

A free calendar is up for grabs and the chance to have your photo appear in this calendar and on the cover. If you've got what it takes to be this year's winner, get creative – get your camera out and start snapping!

12 winning images will appear in the 2014 Mental Health First Aid Australia Calendar and other associated promotional materials, along with the photographers' names and captions. The major prize winning image will also be positioned on the front cover and the winner will receive a special prize (to be announced).

Entries must be related to MHFA, such as:

- Photos from MHFA courses
- Photos of Algee, the MHFA mascot, out and about
- Images of artworks and other craft projects (e.g., those created during a MHFA course)
- A photo of a MHFA course participant with a story of how they've applied their mental health first aid skills.

These are just ideas, we welcome your creativity!

More info here:

www.mhfa.com.au/cms/calendar-comp

US President Obama endorses MHFA

On January 16th 2013, President Barack Obama announced his "Now Is The Time" plan, which put forward a new series of executive actions and legislative proposals to help curb gun violence. The plan includes several mental health proposals focused on increasing the recognition and treatment of mental health issues in children and youth. One of these proposals is to provide financing for Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for teachers and other adults who interact with youth, to help them recognise the signs and symptoms of mental illnesses and to assist them with finding appropriate professional treatment.

Since the USA adapted the MHFA

Australia program and launched it in 2009, it has spread across the country at an impressive rate. As of early 2012, over 1,850 Instructors had trained over 50,000 course participants. Now, since Obama's Plan, interest in the MHFA USA Program is growing nationally. The Plan was also rather timely for MHFA USA, who began offering Youth MHFA in early 2013.

More info on Obama's plan, and similar government endorsement of MHFA around the world. at the MHFA Blog here:

<http://bit.ly/MHFA-Obama>



NEW MHFA Action Plan Posters now Available!

MHFA Australia is excited to announce some handy new resources – MHFA Action Plan posters. These are available for purchase (as a set) to MHFA Instructors and members of the public. The set includes an A2 sized version of the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE), listing the 5 steps of how to provide mental health first aid, and a slightly more detailed A3 sized version, with a description under each action along with helpful little Algees (the MHFA mascot) depicting each.

We encourage MHFA Instructors to put the poster up during their courses, and to recommend this resource to course participants. For those who have attended a MHFA Course, we encourage you to display them in your home or workplace!

Available at the MHFA Shop here:

<http://bit.ly/M-Shop>



Above. A3 Action Plan Poster



Above. A2 Action Plan Poster



teen MHFA Update

An evaluation of the teen MHFA is now under way. So far, 400 students in years 10 and 11 at a Melbourne private school received the training over a three week period in February and March. The course was very well received by a diverse population of students, many of whom reported that they were currently supporting friends with mental health problems. Students learn the teen MHFA Action Plan, as well as a little about specific mental health problems, and a little bit about the way feelings, thoughts and beliefs influence each other.

Students were particularly appreciative of the films created by MHFA Australia to complement the course. One of these videos is a three-part 'talking heads' style video called "Talking About It", in which two young people, Ali and Luke, describe their experiences living with depression. The other is a drama called "Mates" in which a young man assists a friend who is depressed and experiencing suicidal thoughts. Both videos are described as being very relevant, and though the drama in "Mates" is sometimes experienced as being a little scary to watch, it in particular shows how even a situation which is very frightening to think about can be dealt with effectively by using our simplified teen MHFA Action Plan.

Teachers at the school have reported back that they have heard students discussing the material - a terrific confirmation that they value the lessons! The school has experienced a higher than average number of referrals to its counselling service, and are really pleased with this result.

Once follow-up evaluation data has been collected from these students, **we will begin scheduling teen MHFA Instructor Training – open to currently accredited Youth MHFA Instructors. Stay tuned!**

The MHFA Australia Awards 2013 - Entries Now Open!

The Annual Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Australia Awards were launched in 2012 to showcase the achievements of individuals, communities, organisations and education providers who have worked to improve mental health literacy through their support of MHFA courses, which began in 2001. The Awards acknowledge the high standard and commitment demonstrated by those involved in delivering the MHFA courses across Australia.

Entries for the MHFA Australia Awards 2013 are now open! As in 2012, there are four award categories:

- 1) *Instructor Champion*: an individual effort in any of the MHFA Courses (Standard, Youth, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and/or Vietnamese).
- 2) *MHFA Community*: a community wide effort by an organisation or group of organisations to increase mental health literacy by conducting MHFA courses.
- 3) *MHFA Workplace*: a workplace wide effort by an organisation to increase mental health literacy of employees by

conducting MHFA courses.

4) *MHFA Education Provider*: a whole of university/ institution approach to increasing mental health literacy by conducting MHFA courses to staff and students.



In 2013, the MHFA Australia Awards will be presented on Monday 14th October 2013 at a ceremony held during the 8th Annual MHFA Instructor Conference (14-15 October, CQ Functions Melbourne CBD).

More information at the MHFA Blog here:

<http://bit.ly/MHFA-Awards-13>

Further information and application form here:

<http://bit.ly/MHFA-Awards-info>

Good luck to all nominees!

Upcoming MHFA Instructor Training Courses

NEW Instructor Training course dates for the second half of 2013

announced. These courses train suitable people to become accredited instructors of the Standard, Youth or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFA Courses.

5-day Standard:

29th April - 3rd May 2013 - Perth
(Currently full - waiting list)
17th June - 21st June 2013 - Melbourne
5th August - 9th August 2013 - Brisbane
25th Nov - 29th Nov 2013 - Melbourne

5.5-day Youth:

7th April - 12th April 2013 - Melbourne
2nd June - 7th June 2013 - Sydney
25th Aug - 30th Aug 2013 - Brisbane
27th Oct - 1st Nov 2013 - Melbourne

5-day Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander:

29th April - 3rd May 2013, Melbourne
17th June - 21st June 2013, Broome
22nd July - 26th July 2013, Sydney
2nd Sept - 6th Sept 2013, Melbourne
28th Oct - 1st Nov 2013, Adelaide

View our Instructor training calendar and

APPLY ONLINE here:
<http://bit.ly/MHFA-APPLY>

OR you can EXPRESS INTEREST:

If the courses currently advertised don't suit your needs, express your interest in MHFA Instructor Training here to receive notifications when we update our training calendar:
<http://bit.ly/MHFA-EOI>

Guidelines for Providing MHFA to an Aboriginal Youth

An MHFA Australia research project is looking at the best way an adult can help an Aboriginal youth who is developing a mental illness or is in a mental health crisis. This research uses the Delphi method which aims to gain consensus between experts.

The first stage in this research project was to conduct a literature search on the topic. This search informed the development of a questionnaire, which asks respondents what elements are most important when helping an Aboriginal youth. Researchers are in the last stages of finalising this questionnaire. Experts in Aboriginal youth mental health are currently being recruited to provide their judgement on various

topics within mental health first aid, e.g. how to engage them, what to discuss and what body language to use.



The guidelines developed by this project will inform the writing of a Youth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFA Supplementary Booklet and associated teaching curriculum. These guidelines will help ensure that the community provides the best possible support to Aboriginal adolescents who are developing mental illness or are in a mental health crisis.

This initiative is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.



MHFA Training for Financial Counsellors and Financial Counselling Students

Wanted: Mental Health Consumers, Carers and Professionals for Expert Panel

MHFA Australia is soon rolling out training for financial counsellors and current financial counselling students around Australia. The first step is to customise the MHFA curriculum to make it useful for financial counsellors.

We are looking for 30 mental health consumers, 30 mental health carers, 30 mental health professional, 30 financial counsellors, and 30 financial institution staff to sit on a Delphi Expert Panel. Everyone's opinions count equally.

More info here:

<http://bit.ly/expert-panel>

This initiative is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Promoting Mental Health Service Use in Rural Australia

A journal article, 'Factors Promoting Use of Mental Health Services in a Rural Area of Australia', published in *Community Medicine and Health Education* in 2012, reported on research that identified several mental health help-seeking responses in a rural area of Australia.

Focus group and individual interviews were undertaken with participants who had personally experienced mental ill health, family and professional carers of individuals with mental ill health and individuals from rural culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The research focused on limiting and enabling factors that may promote use of professional services by these people experiencing mental health issues in a rural area of Australia.

One of the identified enablers of mental health seeking-behaviours was mental

health literacy, and targeted mental health initiatives.

Specifically, MHFA was identified by many participants as an appropriate way to promote enhanced help-seeking behaviours through increasing mental health literacy.

For example, one participant commented: *'I went away from MHFA thinking ... now I'm more empowered, far more empathetic.'*

The findings of this report are very encouraging for those involved in Mental Health First Aid, in that increasing the number of people in the community with mental health awareness was viewed as a valuable support when others seek help for their mental health concerns.

Full article accessible here:
<http://bit.ly/MH-Rural-Aus>

Guidelines for Tertiary

Institutions *to assist them in supporting students with a mental illness*

A group of researchers from The University of Melbourne published an article in February 2013 on the development of guidelines to provide guidance for tertiary institutions. These guidelines were developed through a Delphi consensus study with Australian professionals and consumers.

The guidelines provide guidance for tertiary institutions to assist them in supporting students with a mental illness. It is hoped that they may be used to inform policy and practice in tertiary institutions.

Access the full article here:
<https://peerj.com/articles/43/>

Check out our **NEW MHFA** web-page for info on the **MHFA for medical students, nursing students and financial counsellors project:**
www.mhfa.com.au/cms/frontline



Residential Advisor at Charles Sturt Uni Assists Fellow Student

Carissa Perkins, MHFA Instructor and Student Equity and Diversity Officer in the Student Services division at Charles Sturt University (CSU), recently conducted a 12-hour Standard MHFA course with the Residential Advisors (RAs, or student dorm supervisors) at CSU. A couple of weeks following the course, one of the RA students came and spoke to Carissa to let her know how grateful she was for the training when she came into contact with one of her 'dormies' who had some long-term issues with non-suicidal self-injury.

This RA student was proud that after completing the MHFA course she was able to deal with the situation calmly and openly, listening to the fellow student's comments and concerns without judgment or fear. She commented:

"I really didn't believe I would need the MHFA training so soon, but within two days of the students moving in, I was approached by a student who was self harming. I was so thankful that I had done the MHFA course as I was able to help the student and give her the encouragement to get the help that was needed. This scenario made the MHFA course a reality and I was so thankful that the university had given me the chance to do this. Mental health should be a topic that receives more attention, and through the MHFA course I believe it is."

The RA was able to recommend appropriate help to the fellow student, who is now seeking treatment and showing some initial signs of being on the road to "recovery". The RA and staff have also set up a support network, as the student is away from home for the first time without friends or family.

What a great outcome! Thank you to Carissa and her course participant for sharing this encouraging story.

Here are some recent stories of MHFA in action!

It is always encouraging to hear how the **MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE)** has impacted peoples' lives and given them the strength, courage and willingness to assist friends and family who have a mental illness or are facing a mental health crisis. More info on the MHFA Action Plan ALGEE here: <http://bit.ly/MHFA-Action>



Aunty May Helps her Grandson

A NSW Aboriginal female Elder, named Aunty May, recently attended an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFA course in her local community. As Aunty May was learning about the signs and symptoms of depression, she started to recognise these in her 20-year-old grandson who lived with her.

She decided to practice the MHFA Action Plan ALGEE to assist her grandson.

"I asked my young'in upfront whether he was feeling depressed - he told me yes! I then asked whether he wanted to kill himself. Again, he said yes", Aunty commented.

Aunty immediately took her grandson to the local emergency department.

"ALGEE has helped me to learn how to help others. We have many young people committing suicide in our community. Often they don't have anyone to talk to. And when they do talk - do we really listen and respond correctly? The training of ALGEE saved my grandson. We need more of this to save other peoples' grandsons and granddaughters".

MHFA Australia thanks Aunty May for sharing her story.

MHFA Can Help Save Lives!

Principal Master MHFA Instructor, Jackie McRae, was sent this great feedback from one of her course participants.

"A week after completing the MHFA Course, I was presented with a situation where my recently acquired knowledge of MHFA was used. My daughter's unwell boyfriend was standing on a chair, with a belt wrapped around his throat, which was around a patio beam. Talking this through with my daughter (who rang me in a panic) I used ALGEE to diffuse the situation. The young person was talked off the chair, and the belt removed, and was able to talk to me on the phone calmly and freely. I firmly believe without the knowledge of the MHFA course, the situation may not have ended up with the pleasing result it did. I was very relieved, as was my daughter as I'm sure you could imagine, who was outstanding in her ability to remain calm, and listen to me talk, and relay the information clearly, calmly and accurately. Thank you!"

Do you or anyone you know have a similar story?

MHFA Australia would love to hear from you if you have a similar story.

We are also looking for someone who has used the ALGEE Action Plan after having attended a MHFA course to speak at the 8th Annual MHFA Instructor Conference 14-15 October 2013 in Melbourne (logistically it would need to be someone living in Victoria, preferably Melbourne).

If you know of someone, please ask them to email us at mhfa@mhfa.com.au by the end of April if possible.

NEW Mental Health Resources

• Talking 4-minute video version of the excellent book **'I Had a Black Dog'** (by Matthew Johnstone). Access via YouTube here:

<http://bit.ly/BlackDog-vid>

• Mobile phone app for young people (between 18 and 25) with mental health issues **'The Fifth Army'**, focusing on bullying, homophobia and depression. Developed by Cotton on Foundation and headspace.

<http://fiftharmy.com.au>

• **Bereavement Guidelines (SANE Australia)** providing guidance on how to support family and friends when someone with a mental illness dies by suicide.

<http://bit.ly/SANE-bereavement>

• Cultural responsiveness in perinatal mental health - an **e-learning course for working effectively with women** and their families from CALD backgrounds.

<http://bit.ly/MMH-perinatal>

• *beyondblue* - **'Perspectives'** [returning to work following a mental health problem] **Online Program**. This provides a good introduction to MHFA, so it is a good idea for workplaces to check this out before they attend a MHFA course.

<http://bit.ly/bb-perspectives>

• **mindhealthconnect** - a new Commonwealth-funded portal for issues surrounding mental health care, providing relevant support and resources.

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

• Red Cross and triple j Unearthed - **Recovery Playlist** of new music and expert advice to help young people who have experienced a trauma.

<http://bit.ly/RC-TJ-recovery>

• A DoHA funded **DVD for parents with mental illness** to help them to be open and talk about their mental health issues with their children.

www.copmi.net.au/familyfocusdvd

The MHFA Australia Team Thankyou for your Continued Support:

- Betty Kitchener OAM, CEO and Adult Programs Manager
- Nataly Bovopoulos, Deputy CEO & Company Secretary
- Dr Claire Kelly, Youth Programs Manager
- AJ Williams, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander MHFA Project Manager
- Gloria Claessen, Consultant MHFA Trainer and Standard MHFA Coordinator
- Tony Hoare, Consultant MHFA Trainer
- Katrina Dart, Consultant MHFA Trainer
- Leanne Northausen, Finance Officer
- Louise Woodruff Sanz, Standard and Youth MHFA Programs Officer
- Maria Ibarra, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander MHFA Program Officer
- Katherine Birt, Communications and Web Officer
- Kathryn Chalmers, Research Assistant
- Kathy Bond, Research Assistant
- Frank Skender, Stock Storage & Dispatch

- David Jorm, Consultant IT Systems Developer
- Tim Marwick, Consultant IT Systems Developer

Read profiles on our team members here:

www.mhfa.com.au/cms/our-team



Pictured above: Some of the MHFA Team at a lunch celebrating 6 months since MHFA Australia became an independent not-for-profit charity organisation.

Right - Left: Nataly, Lee, Katherine, Laura Hart (not currently working for MHFA but a great friend of the Program), Betty, Louise and MHFA co-founder Tony Jorm.

MHFA Instructor and Friend of MHFA appointed Deputy Commissioners of NSW Mental Health Commission



Congratulations to **Fay Jackson** and **Prof Alan Rosen** for their appointments as Deputy Commissioners of the NSW Mental Health Commission, which was established to monitor, review and improve the NSW mental health system.

Fay Jackson is a Master MHFA Instructor who has delivered 78 MHFA courses since becoming accredited in 2003. Prof Alan Rosen has been a supportive advocate of the MHFA Program since it began 11 years ago.

We are thrilled Fay and Alan have been recognised for their wisdom, care and advocacy for people with mental illness.

More info here:

<http://bit.ly/Deputy-Commiss>

Donate to MHFA Australia

We'd like to thank those generous people who have donated to MHFA Australia this year so far.

All donations go directly into further developing the MHFA programs.

To make your tax deductible donation direct to MHFA Australia, visit the MHFA website and select 'Donate', or click the link below to go direct to the Donation page via Everyday Hero:

<http://bit.ly/MHFA-DONATE>



Thank you!