

# TEEN-TO-TEEN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## *Asked by Schools*

### **1. What is Teen-to-Teen Mental Health First Aid?**

Students learn about the tMHFA Action Plan, different types of mental health problems and mental health crisis situations in young people, and the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It teaches students to recognize when a friend is experiencing major changes in their thinking, feeling and behavior, and when these changes may indicate the presence of a mental health problem. This is an education course, and is not a therapy or support group.

### **2. What are the benefits?**

Research so far shows that students who receive the training show better recognition of mental health problems, greater confidence in offering help, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes, and that these benefits are maintained after three months of follow up.

### **3. What are the risks?**

The school welfare service may experience an increase in demand for services during and after the period in which the courses are run. Anecdotally, schools which have participated in the program so far have reported that this has not created an undue burden and that they are glad the services are being accessed appropriately.

Occasionally, a student becomes distressed by the content. This can often be dealt with quite quickly, with a conversation with the school counsellor or other member of the welfare staff. Otherwise referral to an appropriate service may be required. Most people, even if they find the material upsetting, are ultimately glad they attended.

### **4. How is this different from the Adult-to-Adolescent MHFA course?**

The Adult-to-Adolescent MHFA course equips an adult with the skills to identify and assist an adolescent who is developing a mental health challenge or is experiencing a mental health crisis. The tMHFA course is for adolescents aged 13-18 years, and equips teens with the skills to identify and assist another teen who is experiencing a mental health difficulty.

### **5. How is this different from the Adult-to-Adult MHFA course?**

The Adult-to-Adult MHFA course equips individuals with the skills to identify and assist another adult developing a mental health challenge or experiencing a mental health crisis. The tMHFA course is for adolescents aged 13-18 years, and equips teens with the skills to identify and assist another teen who is experiencing a mental health difficulty.

### **6. There has been a suicide at our school. Is it a good time to run the course?**

We advise waiting at least 3 months after a suicide has taken place before implementing the course. After a crisis, students are eager to learn more about mental health and how to help a friend with suicidal thoughts. The tMHFA program is sensitive to empowering grieving teens, while also making sure that they're not blaming themselves for how they may have previously responded.



## **7. How do we know if our school is eligible to run the program with our students?**

Schools are eligible to run the program if there is at least one (1) adult who is an accredited Mental Health First Aider.

## **8. Before committing, how can I learn more about tMHFA?**

To learn more about tMHFA or our other Mental Health First Aid training courses, you can attend a free-of-charge MHFA Informational Session, which is held every month at The LightHouse Arabia. Please check our monthly event calendar for details <https://www.lighthousearabia.com/mhfa>.

## **9. If our students complete the course, are they less likely to approach our school counselor or welfare team?**

The tMHFA course gives teenagers the skills they need to recognize and respond to mental health problems and crises in their friends, and to get the help of an adult quickly. It does not equip/encourage students to handle their problems alone.

## **10. If students who attend the tMHFA course are currently experiencing their own mental health concerns, could the training have a negative effect?**

Some young people with a history of mental health problems feel that this course will be too upsetting to be involved in. Others will want to be involved. We strongly recommend that the school welfare team/counselor discuss with the student what they feel most comfortable doing, but don't make the decision for them. They also need to be aware that if they begin to feel upset during the course, they are free to stop attending. However, if your student is currently experiencing high levels of distress and is receiving mental health care, you should discuss it with their mental health professional.

## **11. Can teachers/school staff attend the tMHFA course when it is held in the school?**

The founders of this program advise against having teachers supervise the tMHFA trainings as it prevents teens from opening up and minimizes active participation in group activities. We find that participants learn the most through experiential learning and for these reasons, we would prefer to train teens by themselves without any teaching staff present.

