



## Mental Health Wilderness First Aid

Mental Health Wilderness First Aid courses provide interactive, evidence-based training on recognizing, assessing, and supporting those who are experiencing a range of mental health conditions in remote areas. Rural communities, wilderness guides, search & rescue members, tree planters, outdoor educators, and others living, working, or playing in remote areas have benefitted from MHWFA. Students are provided with an orientation to mental health conditions and psychoeducation (how the brain works); assessment tools, connection to outside resources, and practical intervention strategies for field use.

### Director: Donetta Faye (“Daye”) Cooper Hagel, M.A., C.C.C.

- M.A. Counselling Psychology, University of Victoria
- M.A. Anthropology, University of Toronto
- Canadian Certified Counsellor (C.C.C.), Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
- Clinical counsellor working in remote area mental health
- Level Three Guide & former Executive Director, Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of B.C.
- >15 years / 1500 days of experience as a professional wilderness guide.



### Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the learner will be able to:

- Identify a range of mental health conditions & the basics of nervous system activation.
- Use a simple step-by-step structure to assess and intervene.
- Assess risk and the importance of differentiating field-manageable mental health symptoms from other conditions.
- “Hold the Space”: demonstrate interpersonal skills for supporting mental well-being.
- Utilize specific interventions to support mental health symptoms in the field.
- Create and implement individualized mental health safety plans for clients in the field.
- Access external support resources for themselves and their clients.



## MHWFA Course Curriculum

Basic (8-12h) Course	Standard (24h) Course
<p><b>Note: the Basic course is 12h long. Upon request, it may be reduced to a minimum of 8h for custom groups.</b></p> <p><b>A. Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructors, course outline, group agreements, peer introductions</li> </ul> <p><b>B. What is Mental Health?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief survey of mental health in society</li> <li>Pre-trip mental health form</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Neurology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wizard brain &amp; Lizard brain (prefrontal cortex &amp; hindbrain/limbic system)</li> <li>Amygdalae &amp; fear responses</li> <li>Sympathetic nervous system activation: fight / flight / freeze, anxiety</li> </ul> <p><b>D. MHWFA Steps</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding Space           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belly breathing (diaphragmatic breathing)</li> <li>Mirror neurons</li> <li>Active listening skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>Primary Survey - <i>safety &amp; stabilization</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>ABCs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are they in a tiger cage?</li> <li>Brain: wizard to lizard?</li> <li>medical Conditions?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Lizard Brain Interventions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breathing Interventions</li> <li>Cognitive Interventions</li> <li>Mindfulness Interventions</li> <li>Physical Interventions</li> <li>Tapping Interventions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Secondary Survey - <i>information &amp; planning</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary Assessment</li> <li>Wizard Brain Interventions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychoeducation (I &amp; II)</li> <li>Solution-Focused Conversation</li> <li>Baby Step Ladder</li> <li>Safety Planning</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Connect to Resources           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing the idea of connecting to resources</li> <li>What resources are available?</li> <li>Options in broader MH care outside of our scope of practice</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>E. Special Topics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panic attacks: Symptoms, urban protocol, field protocol, scenario</li> </ul> <p><b>F. Final Assignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose from 3 scenarios and create a one-page written safety plan for a character experiencing anxiety or panic in the field.</li> </ul>	<p>Everything in the Basic course, plus:</p> <p><b>A. Resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is resilience?</li> <li>Trauma-informed perspective</li> <li>“Double listening”</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Trauma &amp; PTSD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is trauma?</li> <li>Trauma and the brain</li> <li>Past trauma (e.g. PTSD)           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary &amp; Secondary Survey considerations</li> </ul> </li> <li>Traumatic exposure on trip           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies to improve outcomes &amp; reduce the likelihood of future PTSD</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>C. Depression</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is depression?</li> <li>Depression and MHWFA steps</li> <li>Baby step ladder, resourcing, &amp; follow-up</li> </ul> <p><b>D. Grief &amp; Loss</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examining conceptions around grief &amp; loss</li> <li>Holding space</li> <li>Inviting introductions &amp; <i>re-membering</i></li> </ul> <p><b>E. Psychosis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is psychosis?</li> <li>Medical conditions question &amp; psychosis</li> <li>Field protocol</li> </ul> <p><b>F. Self-injury</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is self-injury?</li> <li>Why do some people self-injure?</li> <li>Alternatives to self-injury</li> <li>Harm reduction for self-injury</li> <li>Safety planning</li> </ul> <p><b>G. Suicidal ideation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is suicidal ideation?</li> <li>Suicide stats &amp; scales</li> <li>Noticing red flags</li> <li>How to ask about suicidal ideation</li> <li>Resourcing, debriefing, &amp; safety planning</li> </ul> <p><b>H. Final Assignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose from 3 scenarios and create a two-page of notes + written safety plan for a character experiencing trauma &amp; grief, self-injury, or suicidal ideation in the field.</li> </ul>





## Resources & Materials

- MHWFA Key Concepts waterproof field guide, activity handouts, & certificate of completion.
- An optional, illustrated course manual is available for purchase for \$35 plus shipping & GST (PowerPoint slides are not made available). The introduction and table of contents are available to read free on the MHWFA website.

## Prerequisites

- Age 16+ for open-enrollment courses. A working knowledge of English is required.

## Cost

- 2022 course cost is \$245 for a Basic or Upgrade course or \$490 for a Standard course (plus GST).
- A sliding scale is available for self-identified low-income earners, up to 35% off.
- Additional scholarships may be available upon request; please inquire. We value accessibility and maintain a small scholarship fund for those in need.

## Logistics & protocol

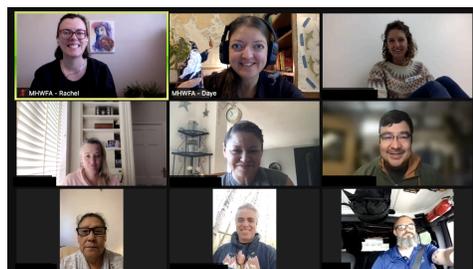
*Exploration of mental health topics can be challenging or triggering as well as empowering for learners. Self-care is emphasized during this course. Students are encouraged to let the instructor know ahead of time if they anticipate some of the course material might be personally challenging. Students are also encouraged to practice self-care throughout the course and take personal breaks or access resources as needed.*

### In-person courses

- Classes are mostly indoors with some outdoor scenarios.
- Please come rested and bring a notebook, pen or pencil, clothing and footwear suitable for outdoor scenarios, PPE as appropriate, and a personal tea mug.
- Participants agree to respect other students and the learning environment. It is not necessary to come in close proximity of others during learning or scenarios.
- All participants agree to self-monitor, and not to attend class if they are ill. *In this case, a student may receive a credit to attend a MHWFA course within the next 12 months.*

### Virtual (online) courses

- Classes are hosted over Zoom. A computer with microphone, speakers, and webcam is necessary. *Smaller screens such as smartphones are not recommended for the class.* Zoom is a user-friendly platform and you do not need much special stuff to attend – however, **you should practice the basics with a friend before your first class**: how to accept a Zoom invitation, mute yourself, switch views, etc.
- Please come rested and bring a notebook, pen or pencil, have hot drinks and snacks available.
- Please **keep your video on** throughout the course (unless you are having bandwidth issues). **Communicate with the instructor if you would like extra support or to chat privately, or are needing to leave early for any reason** – so we don't worry about you.
- **Consider bringing one or more simple physical distraction tools to the course.** Play-doh, simple colouring materials, knitting, or fidget toys are all good options. *While this may sound unusual, it is evidenced to assist the brain to process emotional material.*





## Custom Courses

### Information for arranging a private group course

We love custom courses! We regularly run private online and/or in-person MHWFA courses for silviculture, outdoor education, search and rescue teams, First Nations, corporate groups, adventure guiding, fieldwork, postsecondary and other organizations. Please see the custom course information below, and know also that we value adaptability and accessibility. Contact us with your ideas and we'll look for creative ways to adapt or make accessible a custom course that's suited just to your group.

#### Logistics

- A custom online course page will be provided. Students are to visit and register through the online course portal before the course begins. All course information including Zoom and resource links, pre-course reading materials, course assignments, and course policies are provided on the course portal.
- 100% attendance, plus participation and completion of course assignments, is required from each student for them to receive a course completion certificate.
- In-person courses are mostly indoors in a classroom-like space, with some outdoor scenario practice where feasible. A classroom space with moveable seating and a projector and screen is required. Internet access is not necessary. Access to an outdoor green space such as a nearby field or park is helpful for a change of scenery during scenario practice.
- 1-3 instructors will attend and facilitate, depending on the number of students and the course.
- Courses may be structured in a similar fashion to any of the below options, or another arrangement, with the consent of the instructor.

<b>MHWFA Custom Course Scheduling Options</b>		
	<b>“Basic” or “Upgrade to Standard” MHWFA Course (12h)</b>	<b>“Standard” MHWFA Course (24h)</b>
	<i>Note: Upon request, the Basic course may be reduced to a minimum of 8h for custom groups.</i>	
Example 1 <i>in-person courses only</i>	(Short course option): 3-hour online class ahead of time, followed by one single in-class day from 9am-3pm.	4x weekly 3-hour online classes ahead of time, followed by 2x in-person classroom days from 9am-4pm.
Example 2 <i>in-person courses only</i>	Two days in a row, 8am-3pm each day.	Three days in a row, 8:30am-5:30pm.
Example 3	Two Saturdays, 8am-3pm each day.	Four Saturdays in a row, 8am-3pm.
Example 4	Once a week, evenings 6pm-9pm, for four weeks.	Once a week, evenings 6pm-9pm, for eight weeks.



<b>MHWFA Custom Course Fees</b>		
	<b>Basic MHWFA (12h) or Upgrade from Basic to Standard (12h)</b>	<b>Standard MHWFA (24h)</b>
	<i>Note: the Basic course is 12h long. Upon request, it may be reduced to 10h or a minimum of 8h for custom groups.</i>	<i>This rate applies for single courses that are run all at once, with the same students.</i>
<b>Course fee</b> up to 22 students	<b>\$3,950 (+5% GST)</b>	<b>\$6,950 (+5% GST)</b>
<b>Additional fees (in-person courses only)</b>		
<b>Travel expenses</b> from home to course location	+\$0.61/km and/or flights / ferries	
<b>Accommodation expenses</b>	If private accommodation is available on site, no fee will apply. Otherwise, a modest hotel accommodation fee will apply.	
<b>Classroom &amp; equipment expenses</b>	A suitable classroom, projector, projecting screen & sound system are required for in-person courses. These may be provided by the booking organization, or arranged by MHWFA and added to the total cost.	
<b>Discounts available</b>		
<b>16 or fewer students</b>	Subtract \$750	
<b>Non-profit organization</b>	Non-profit organizations may request a discount from 5%-25% based on their needs and circumstances.	
<b>Local, in-person course</b>	Local, in-person groups may qualify for additional discounts due to reduced staffing costs; please inquire.	
<b>Other discounts</b>	Other discounts may be available, based on the size and structure of the group. One possibility for smaller groups is to arrange a program around your preferred dates, which is also open to outside enrollment, for a reduced rate. Please inquire if your group is on a budget and would like to arrange something.	

## Terms

A **deposit** of 10% of the total fees is required at the time of booking to secure course dates, and will be deducted from the final invoice.

The balance owing will be due within 14 days of the scheduled course end date.

All fees are in **Canadian dollars**, and may be paid by the client's choice of:

- Cheque (made out to **Donetta Hagel** and mailed to **3757 Dove Creek Road, Courtenay BC, V9J1R9**),
- E-transfer to [info@mentalhealthwildernessfirstaid.ca](mailto:info@mentalhealthwildernessfirstaid.ca).



## Cancellation policy

- Between 15-30 days from the course start date, the deposit is non-refundable. However, if a change to the course date is agreed upon, the deposit may be transferred to new course dates, less a \$100 administration fee.
- Within 14 days of the course start date, the deposit is non-transferrable and will be forfeited if the course dates are cancelled or changed.
- Individual students who are enrolled in an in-person custom MHWFA course and who cannot attend the course due to COVID-19 symptoms may transfer their enrollment to any same-level open-enrollment MHWFA course within 12 months.
- In the case that MHWFA cancels the course (e.g. due to instructor illness or technical issues), any amount paid may be applied to a future booking or refunded in full. Cancellation of a *portion* of a course (e.g. one out of four classes) may result in a rescheduled class, or a pro-rated refund, at the client's discretion.



## Health Protocol

- All participants agree to self-monitor, and not to attend an in-person class if they are ill. *The student may receive a credit to attend a future MHWFA course in such a case.*
- **Please note:** MHWFA respects medical privacy and the constitutional rights enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. We do not require the disclosure of personal medical information, including but not limited to health passports or medical testing, from our staff, contractors, clients, or students. We respectfully will not provide personal medical information, health passports, electronic tracking, or biometrics from our staff or contractors as a condition of providing services. Any course changes or cancellations due to the imposition of such a requirement are subject to standard cancellation policies.

“One of the best things about this course is, not only do students gain skills to help support clients, they are also better able to be aware of and manage their **own** mental health experiences in life and in the field.”

- James Rodger,  
Adventure Guide Program Coordinator,  
Thompson Rivers University

