



Mental Health Wilderness First Aid

Private & Custom Courses

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, particularly in remote areas. Rural communities, wilderness guides, resource industries, search & rescue teams, tree planters, outdoor educators, First Nations, 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 / Lead Instructor: Daye Hagel, M.A., C.C.C.

- Clinical counsellor in private practice, with specializations working clinically in remote areas, with trauma healing, First Nations, and young children.
- Canadian Certified Counsellor (C.C.C.), Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.
- Master's degrees in Counselling Psychology (University of Victoria, 2018) and Anthropology (University of Toronto, 2010).
- Veteran wilderness guide, >15years / 1500 field days. Level Three Guide & former Executive Director, Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of B.C.

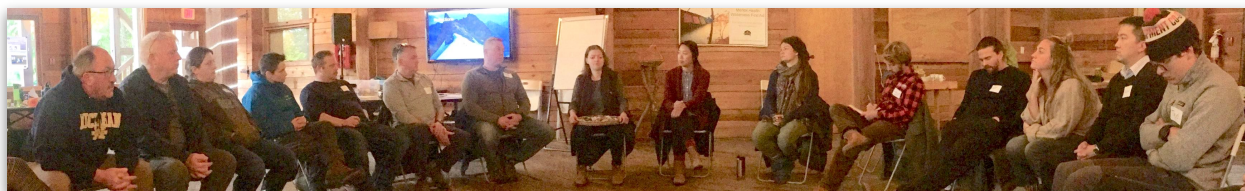


Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify where mental health diagnoses come from, the difference between having a “diagnostic” vs a “nervous system” perspective, and the basics of nervous system activation for first aiders.
- Use a simple step-by-step structure to assess and intervene in a mental health situation.
- Identify and demonstrate interpersonal and relationship skills for supporting mental health.
- Utilize specific interventions to support mental health symptoms in the field.
- Assess criteria for field-manageable situations, versus when evacuation is warranted.
- Create and implement individualized mental health support plans for use in the field.
- Access external support resources for themselves and their clients.





MHWFA Course Curriculum

Basic (16h) Course	Intermediate (40h) Course
<p><i>Note: the regular Basic course is 16h long, including 12h classroom and 4h self-paced homework. Upon request, it may be shortened for custom groups.</i></p> <p>A. Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructors, course outline, group agreements, peer introductions <p>B. What is Mental Health?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief survey of mental health in society Diagnostic vs nervous system “lens” on MH Pre-trip mental health intake form <p>C. Neurology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wizard brain & Lizard brain (prefrontal cortex & hindbrain/limbic system) Amygdalae & fear responses Sympathetic nervous system activation: fight / flight / freeze <p>D. MHWFA Steps</p> <p>Build Relationship (foundational skills)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold the space, connect Belly breathing, mirror neurons Active listening skills <p>1. Primary Survey - <i>safety & stabilization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABCs: Actual danger? Brain: wizard to lizard? medical Conditions? Lizard Brain Interventions: Breathing, Cognitive, Mindfulness, Physical, & Tapping interventions for nervous system regulation <p>2. Secondary Survey - <i>information & planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary Assessment: Semi-structured interview to gather more information Wizard Brain Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychoeducation Solution-Focused Conversation <i>including Cognitive Distortions</i> Baby Step Ladder Support Planning <p>3. Connect to Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evacuation criteria Normalizing connecting to resources What resources are available? Options in broader MH care outside of our scope of practice. <p>E. Special Topic Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panic attacks OR trauma (depending on course): Symptoms, urban protocol, field protocol, scenario <p>F. Final Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a written Field Notes page & support plan for a character experiencing anxiety, traumatic stress response, or panic attack in the field. 	<p><i>Note: the Intermediate course is 40h (including classroom & homework hours). The Intermediate course includes everything in the Basic course, plus:</i></p> <p>A. Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is resilience? Factors to foster resilience. Adopting a “trauma-informed perspective” “Double listening” <p>B. Trauma & PTSD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is trauma?: Trauma & the nervous system Past trauma (e.g. PTSD): field response Trauma exposure in the field: <i>Strategies to improve outcomes & mitigate risk factors for future PTSD</i> <p>C. Depression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is depression? MHWFA field responses: Baby step ladder, cognitive distortions, resourcing, & follow-up <p>D. Resistant & Uncooperative Subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stages of Change model for field use Motivational Interviewing & other strategies to encourage cooperation & change <p>E. Grief & Loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining conceptions around grief & loss Honouring relationships: holding space, inviting introductions & <i>re-membering</i> conversations. <p>F. Psychosis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is psychosis?: potential field causes ABCs: medical Conditions & psychosis Field response & <i>Chronic Conditions Criteria</i> for assessing evacuation <p>G. Disordered Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs & symptoms of disordered eating “Intuitive Eating” guidelines & “contagion” Safety / Support Planning & evac criteria <p>H. Self-injury</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do some people self-injure? Alternatives to self-injury & “contagion” Harm reduction options for self-injury Safety & support planning <p>I. Suicidal ideation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is “suicidal ideation”? Stats & scales. Noticing red flags & how to ask (directly) Resourcing, debriefing, & safety planning <p>J. Final Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete written scenario(s) & safety plan(s) for character(s) experiencing one or more of the above mental health issues in the field.



Resources & Materials

- MHWFA condensed waterproof field guide, activity handouts, & certificate of completion.
- An optional, illustrated course manual is available for purchase in print and/or PDF form (*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 - Individual students (subject to change)

- The enrollment fee for individual students joining a public course is \$295 (Basic 16h course) or \$395 (Upgrade from Basic to Intermediate 40h course).
- 5% GST is applicable to courses delivered in Canada or to Canadian clients.
- 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 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-awareness 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, and a personal tea mug.
- In the case that a student is unable to complete the course, the student may receive a credit to attend another MHWFA course within the next 12 months.

Virtual (online) courses

- Classes are hosted over Zoom. A computer with microphone, speakers, and webcam is necessary. Please use headphones and attend on an individual screen, even if you are in the same room with another student (this allows for breakout room practice). *Smaller screens such as smartphones are not recommended for the class.*
- 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.*

