



WEEK 1

TOOLS TO THRIVE BY TAKING CONTROL

AN EMPLOYEE WELLBEING INITIATIVE: FOR ALL UFS EMPLOYEES

TAKING CONTROL OF MY MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

Mental illnesses affect 19% of the adult population, 46% of teenagers and 13% of children each year. People struggling with their mental health may be in your family, live next door, teach your children, work in the next cubicle or sit in the same church pew.

However, only half of those affected receive treatment, often because of the stigma attached to mental health. Untreated, mental illness can contribute to higher medical expenses, poorer performance at school and work, fewer employment opportunities and increased risk of suicide.

Although the general perception of mental illness has improved over the past decades, studies show that stigma against mental illness is still powerful, largely due to media stereotypes and lack of education, and that people tend to attach negative stigmas to mental health conditions at a far higher rate than to other diseases and disabilities, such as cancer, diabetes or heart disease.

Stigma affects not only the number seeking treatment, but also the number of resources available for proper treatment. Stigma and misinformation can feel like overwhelming obstacles for someone who is struggling with a mental health condition. Here are a few powerful things you can do to help:

- Showing individuals respect and acceptance removes a significant barrier to successfully coping with their illness. Having people see you as an individual and not as your illness can make the biggest difference for someone who is struggling with their mental health.
- Advocating within our circles of influence helps ensure these individuals have the same rights and opportunities as other members of your work, church, school and community.
- Learning more about mental health allows us to provide helpful support to those affected in our work, families and communities.
- Creating awareness of mental health and offering support where needed.

It is important to take control of your mental health status. This starts by being aware of what mental illness is and being aware that you may be struggling with a mental health condition.

Find out if you may be struggling with a mental health condition by talking to a professional.

UFS offers a limited number of free counselling sessions for UFS staff (contact [CareWays](#)). You can also do your own mental health screening ([mhascreening.org](#)) to help give you a picture of your mental health state.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Create the routine that is right for you. We don't all have the same schedules or responsibilities and some of us struggle with certain parts of daily life more than others. All healthy routines should include eating a nutrition-rich diet, exercising, and getting enough sleep, but no two routines will be exactly the same. In fact, your routine may not even be exactly the same every day.

Start small. Changing up your day-to-day routine all at once probably won't end up with lasting results. Pick one small thing each week to work on. It could be adding something new and positive, or cutting out a bad habit. Small changes add up.

Add to your existing habits. You probably already have some habits worked into your routine, like drinking a cup of coffee in the morning. Try adding new habits to existing ones. For instance, if you want to read more, you could set aside ten minutes to read while you have your coffee (instead of drinking it on your drive to work).

Make swaps. Think about the things you do during the day that aren't so healthy and swap them with better behaviours. For example, if you feel sluggish in the afternoons and eat sugary snacks for a quick pick-me-up, try taking a brisk walk instead to get your blood pumping and endorphins flowing. Or if you find yourself having a few alcoholic drinks after a long stressful day, try sipping hot tea instead.

Plan ahead. When life gets hectic, you may be tempted to skip out on the new parts of your daily routine. By doing things like prepping meals ahead of time, picking out an outfit the night before work, or having an alternate home workout option for the days you can't make it to the gym, you help set yourself up for success even when you're hurried.

Make time for things you enjoy. Even if it's just 15 minutes a day, set aside time to do something you find fun or relaxing—it will release chemical messengers in your body that are good for your physical and mental health.

Reward yourself for small victories. Set goals and celebrate when you reach them. Have you added exercise to your weekly routine and worked out every day as planned for the last couple weeks? Treat yourself! Watch a movie you've been wanting to see or try out that new video game.

Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day. Making life changes can be hard and you might forget to do something that is new to your routine every once in a while. You don't have to be perfect, just try to do better the next day.

PLANNING YOUR ROUTINE

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU WANT TO BE PART OF YOUR ROUTINE?

EXAMPLES: EXERCISE, READING, QUALITY TIME WITH MY KIDS

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF YOU ACCOMPLISHING YOUR GOALS OR TASKS ABOVE?

EXAMPLES: WORKING OVERTIME, NEEDING NEW GLASSES, TOO TIRED

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WHAT ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO ADDRESS THE BARRIERS YOU WROTE DOWN IN THE BOX TO THE LEFT?

EXAMPLES: START WITH A 30 MIN WALK, GO TO BED EARLIER

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USE THIS CALENDAR TO LAY OUT THINGS YOU CAN CHANGE AND INCORPORATE INTO YOUR SCHEDULE. THE CALENDAR CAN INCLUDE SPECIFIC THINGS YOU WANT TO INCORPORATE INTO YOUR ROUTINE (LIKE A SPECIFIC EXERCISE), OR CHANGES YOU NEED TO MAKE TO REDUCE BARRIERS (LIKE GOING TO BED EARLY). USE THE SUPPORT COLUMN TO THINK OF PEOPLE OR THINGS YOU CAN USE TO HELP YOU ACCOMPLISH YOUR GOALS.

ACTIVITY	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUPPORT

HOW CAN YOU REWARD YOURSELF FOR SUCCESSFULLY MAKING NEW THINGS PART OF YOUR ROUTINE?

EXAMPLE: IF I WALK FOR 30 MIN, 3 TIMES PER WEEK FOR 2 WEEKS, I CAN TREAT MYSELF TO A DINNER OUT.

Daily Planner

Date _____

Week

M T W T F

Time	Agenda	Projects
9		
10		
11		
12		
1		
2		
3		
4		Notes
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		



While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health.

Remember this **weeks challenge**:

Email a short (3 sentence) paragraph about why you think it is important for people to be aware of their mental health status

to

niemancl@ufs.ac.za

Also you can do your **own mental health screening** here



mhascreening.org

It's free!

