

WEEK 3

Growing with your mental health story!

#ShareYourStory

AN EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING INITIATIVE: FOR ALL UFS EMPLOYEES



“People are like acorns, which contain within it all the potential to be a magnificent oak tree. People might need nourishment, encouragement, and the light to reach toward, but the oak treeness is already within the person” - *Whitmore, 2002*

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through quality, impact, and care.

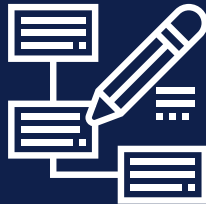
Let's get Growing!



This week's BOO-tiful reminder:
"Make time for yourself and take breaks"

Week 2 challenge:

Write your wellness action plan



This week's coping mechanism

Do a **colouring** exercise

<https://www.justcolor.net/nature/coloring-flowers/>



I had a black dog, his name was depression:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiCrniLQGYc&t=245s>

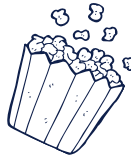
This weeks books to read:

- *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness* – by Elyn R. Saks
- *The Gifts of Imperfection* - Brené Brown
- *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't)* - Brené Brown
- *Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression* – by Brooke Shields



This week's movies to watch:

- *The King of Staten Island* (2020)
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012)
- *Welcome to Me* (2015)



This week's series to watch:

- *Modern love*
- *Pure*
- *Normal People*

What piece of advice would you give your younger self?





#ShareYourStory

The UFS offers a limited number of free counselling sessions for UFS staff (contact CareWays on 0800 004 770).

You can also do your own mental health screening (mhaascreening.org) to help give you a picture of your mental health state.





Growing with your mental health story ...

Week 3 focuses on reflecting on your personal growth and how you can grow further from your mental health story. Remember, your mental health story is a continuous one. It doesn't just fall away after the month of October. You can decide when to start a new chapter and when to change the ending. We therefore want to focus on how to stay motivated and grow further from sharing your story by developing your own wellness action plan on how to move forward with your mental health.

Keeping yourself motivated after sharing your mental health story

“When I share my story through my creative work or speaking, I am reminded of where I've been – and more importantly – of where I am now. I'm proud of how far I've come and it's important to me to keep moving forward. Sharing my mental health story keeps me motivated.” – study participant from Lindstrom, Sofija and Riley (2021)

We already know that our mental health stories are a powerful tool in advocacy, fighting stigma and in our own recovery. Your story is significant and powerful, no matter how you decide to tell them. Our mental health stories are continuous, and you have the power to end a chapter and to turn over a new page in your mental health journey. It's up to you to decide how you are going to write your next chapter.



Tips & reminders moving forward in your mental health journey...

Give feedback

Give feedback occasionally to your confidant, or support group that you are a part of. This will give them a chance to see if their efforts and support are what you need. This may also give them a chance to see if they need to make any changes in the way that they have been treating you. If, on the contrary, your family or friends are unknowingly unsupportive, let them know. By learning to navigate these difficult conversations you learn to communicate your needs clearly to your support system. When you clearly articulate your needs to your support system, you will be better supported, and your needs more easily met.

Have expectations from yourself and your support team

Understand and appreciate the uniqueness of your own journey. Some people's progress will be a lot faster, while others may be a lot slower. For others, it is not just healing, but learning to manage, live with and grow with their mental health condition. In the process of healing, learn to give yourself time. It is not a linear process with quick fixes. Expecting the process to take time will often work in your favour as you will be more patient with yourself. For a better illustration, if you sustain a life-altering physical injury, healing will not happen overnight, it will take time, support, and a lot of effort in physiotherapy - the same goes for your mental health. Understand that not all days are the same. Your best will not look the same every day, as long as you remain committed to the promises you made to yourself.

Trust the process

Because each person's journey is unique to them, the process is not linear, it can go back and forth in trial and error as you forge your own path to healing. There is no time frame that can be allocated at the beginning of your journey. You need to trust that your commitment and the support of your friends will benefit your growth.



Article: *Harnessing the Force by Owning Our Stories*



Written by *Brené Brown*

<https://brenebrown.com/articles/2018/05/04/in-you-must-go-harnessing-the-force-by-owning-our-stories/>

Own your journey

Trust your instinct when you are not sure and take charge (and accountability) of the trajectory that you set yourself on. Remember, not everyone should necessarily be a part of your journey. Include those that you trust and that can offer you the support that you need. Talk about your story freely only when it feels right to you, not because you feel obligated to. If you have gone to seek professional help, ensure that it is with someone that you think is a good fit for you.

Becoming whom I want to be

Remember April's story on identity switching in week 2? Her story incorporates the self-categorization theory. This theory recounts the important aspects regarding the malleability of social identities and the factors that determine social categorization. The theory states that in order for you to adjust your social identity, you have to alter your behavior and cognition to different situations.

Each person holds multiple identities at once. For instance, you can say, "I am a parent and an employee". This means their superordinate identity would be a "working parent". To better understand identity switching, it is important to be aware of the differences between the identities you hold. Your social identities are also partly determined by goals, attitudes, and behavior. This implies that changes to your social identities need to include these thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Using this theory, identity switching can be seen as a way of moving beyond surviving to a state of thriving.

Becoming YOU

Our thoughts eventually manifest in our reality. In other words, you feel the way you think and you think the way you feel. To change your story, you need to find a way to break the chain of memorizing and reliving your pain. Take small incremental steps to change your reality by acknowledging your past and changing your thoughts regarding specific events to help shape your new reality. Knowledge is the key ingredient to changing your thinking, because every time you learn something new, you make a new connection. So, to be the person you want to be and to feel the way that you want to feel, you need to make an effort to learn and forge new ways of thinking to release those chemicals within the brain that signals the body to feel the way you are thinking. Here is a video where he shares how we can slowly change.

Dr Joe Dispenza on learning how to reprogram your mind:



<https://youtu.be/rXGDAq6FnXo>

"Nerve cells that fire together wire together" - Dr Joe Dispenza



ACTIVITY TIME!

Over this next week, write down the thoughts (and behaviours) that you have noticed that make you feel bad:

Write down how you are going to make the effort to change your thinking in order for you to feel the way you want to feel:



MENTAL HEALTH CHECK-IN:



Have you gotten some sunshine lately?



Have you taken some time away from your phone?



Have you been kind to yourself?



Have you spent time with your loved ones or friends?



Have you practiced some mindfulness?

Challenge Time!



Creating your Wellness Action Plan!

A wellness action plan is an easy and practical self-management tool of helping you support your own mental health. Wellness Action Plans are for everyone, not just someone who has a problem right now. For all of us, it's important to stay aware of our mental health and a wellness action plan can help with this. Here are some questions to reflect on when setting up your wellness action plan.

What helps you stay mentally healthy?



Who is your support?



What triggers your mental health?



What can I do to minimise this?



How does your mental health affect your performance and productivity?



Do you think you work in a positive work environment? If not, what changes would you make?





Coping Tools to remember!

Lack of sleep

Keep sleep regular by getting up and going to bed at the same time every night. Get at least 8 hours of sleep. Avoid using your phone at least 1 hour before bed.

1

Loneliness

Embrace volunteer work. This is a great way to meet new people. Helping others and giving back is also a great way to build your mental health overtime.

2

Be mindful and meditate

These techniques will help you to focus on the present rather than dwell on negative and unhelpful thoughts.

3

Stay Healthy

Physical health effects our mental health. So, increasing your physical activity, reducing alcohol and smoking habits and maintaining a healthy and balanced diet will affect how you feel

5

Do more feel-good things

When our mood hits a low point, we may not enjoy doing the things that are important to us or that we enjoy doing. Try listing the things and doing them each day. Start with the easier activities and as you progress through your list, you might just see that shift in your mood.

4

Move more every day

Activity reduces stress, increases energy levels, makes us more alert, and can help us sleep better. Set aside some time every day to do some physical activity and make it a routine.

6

Mental Health Diary

S M T W T F S

Date: _____

How I'm currently feeling (AM)

Remember it's okay not to be okay

Time I woke up:

Screen time:

Movement:

Bedtime:

How I'm currently feeling (PM)

5 things I did when I first woke up

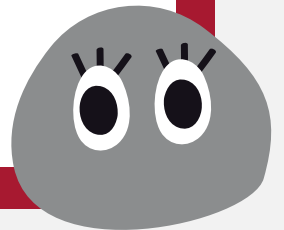
1

2

3

4

5



Water Intake

