

WEEK 4

Encouraging others to share
their mental health story ...

#ShareYourStory

AN EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING INITIATIVE: FOR ALL UFS EMPLOYEES



“You're here to feel it, live it, tell it. And whatever you share might be what helps someone else heal, too. The tragedies and the joys you've experienced could become someone else's hope, the star they look to for comfort and guidance while they continue their own journey. ”

– Jennifer Healey

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*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*

Let's care for those who share



This week's BOO-tiful reminder: "You are a thousand times enough!"



Week 4 challenge:

Listen to someone else's story and reflect on your experience. This can be directly with someone you know or indirectly through guest speakers or YouTube videos.

This week's coping mechanism

Write down 3 things you are grateful for



The importance of helping yourself before you can help others:

<https://youtu.be/mgQRAuspuC4>

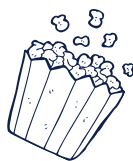
This weeks books to read:

- *Man's Search for Meaning*– by Viktor E. Frankl
- *Atlas of the Heart* - by Brené Brown
- *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone* - by Lori Gottlieb
- *Listening Well: The Art of Empathic Understanding* - by William R. Miller



This week's movies to watch:

- *My Mind and Me* - Selena Gomez [Documentary] (2022)
- *The Aviator* (2004)
- *Charlie Bartlett* (2008)



This week's series to watch:

- *Lady Dynamite*
- *BoJack Horseman* (animated)
- *Big Little Lies*

What's the one thing I'd like others to remember about me at the end of my life?





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.

#ShareYourStory



Encouraging others to share their mental health story ...

In week 4 we focus on the importance and the skills necessary for encouraging others to grow and have the confidence to talk about their mental health stories. By sharing your story, you are already instilling the confidence in others to start sharing their stories as well. However, there are a few more skills and knowledge that will help you to encourage and support others in the right way when they start sharing their stories with you. As knowledge is key to understanding and supporting others, we will touch on some common mental illnesses that people go through. We will then talk about how you can support people when sharing their individual stories and end off with some more coping tools that you can share with others as well.

Knowledge is Key! Understanding a few common mental health challenges

Depression:

Depression which is also known as major depressive disorder or clinical depression can cause severe symptoms that affect the way you function, feel and think.



Generalised Anxiety Disorder:

Refers to an individual who experiences excessive, chronic, and uncontrollable worrying over various topic areas that vary throughout the day for over six months.



Bipolar Disorder:

Bipolar Disorder includes severe shifts in mood, energy, and concentration. An individual with bipolar disorder may feel energised and elated one week and then the next week they feel indifferent.



Panic Attacks:

A brief episode of intense anxiety, which causes the physical sensations of fear. These can include a racing heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness, trembling and muscle tension.



Here is more information on how to deal with a traumatic incident & mental illnesses:

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/helping-staff-to-cope-with-trauma/>

<https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>



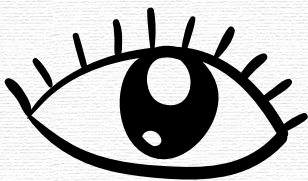
How to support people when sharing their individual stories

No matter what story we are telling or where we are telling it, sharing our stories is a vulnerable act. This vulnerability is important to recognize because it helps us to be better listeners and to provide the right type of support the next time someone tells us their story.

As we know, staying connected with friends and family plays an important role during times of stress. You can help others to cope with their mental health challenges and provide them with support through visits, phone calls, or video chats to help your loved ones to feel less stressed and overwhelmed by their current challenges. However, before we can do this, an important question that you need to ask yourself is whether or not you have the capacity to do so. At the end of the day, taking care of yourself first can better equip you to take care of others.

Asking someone to share their story can be an extraordinary ask. But with the right support, it can also be a wonderful experience. It's also important to encourage others to share their story, but not force it so that people feel comfortable sharing on their own terms. Here are some tips for supporting people when they share their stories with you.

Set the tone at the beginning of your talk by letting them know that you might ask them some questions, but they can choose to not answer these questions if it makes them feel uncomfortable or feel too vulnerable. This reminds them that they have power over how the experience goes.



Make eye contact and be present. Showing the person that you are present will create a safer space for them.

If there are evident emotions, show that you see them and **respond to them with empathy**. Try to provide a few moments for processing.



Do not give advice. Giving advice can hinder a person's growth and may sometimes even cause more harm than good. It may also be disrespectful and presumptive to insert your opinions and ideas when they may not be wanted.



Active Listening



When someone is sharing their story with us, providing them with support involves actively listening to what they have to say and not giving advice on how to fix their problems.

Active listening involves the following:

- ✓ *Pay close attention – listen for feelings and observe body language
Ensure there are no distractions*
- ✓ *Ask open questions – these questions do not involve a yes or no response*
- ✓ *Do not interrupt*
- ✓ *Keep eye contact*
- ✓ *Withhold judgement*
- ✓ *Use open body language*
- ✓ *Clarify what was said and what you understood*
- ✓ *Summarise and share what you've heard*



Mental Health at Work: Supporting Someone

https://youtu.be/p_V2rVofA54



Coping Tools

Board of advisors:

While encouraging and listening to others sharing their story is important, it also highlights how important social connection is when moving throughout own mental health challenges. Having a trusted board of advisors whom you can approach when you're going through a difficult time can therefore be very helpful.

Write down the person (or people) that first come to mind with the following statements:

A strategic thinker who can help you see the big picture.



An influencer who is connected and has a network to lead you to others or the help you need.

A logical, pragmatic thinker who can think critically through options.

A nurturer who is there in a supportive role for you.

An optimist is someone who can make you smile and laugh, and who brings a ray of sunshine to your day.

A practical person who will get on and do what needs to be done.

A professional/s who brings specific wisdom and advice.

A peer or someone who has “been there before”, whom you can identify with.

Types of Self-Care:

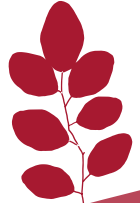
Emotional:

Activities that help you connect and reflect on emotions like journaling



Physical:

Activities that improve your physical health like eating healthy, and moving more



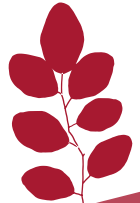
Spiritual:

Activities that nurture your spirit like meditation or prayer



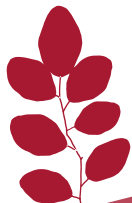
Social:

Activities that help nurture your relationships with others



Practical:

Tasks that help prevent future stress like organising or setting a budget



Mental:

Activities that stimulate your mind like reading or solving puzzles



**Understanding the mental health of young South Africans
(encouraging your children and students to share their story):**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRtYgRsXwpE>