

Changing Minds Course Outline

DAY 1

Module 1 – Understanding Mental Health and Mental Illness

Goal – To introduce the concepts of mental health and mental illness and explore our response to mental illness.

Objectives:

- 1) To help everyone get to know each other
- 2) To introduce the concepts of mental health and mental illness.
- 3) To identify assumptions that many underlie our response to a person with mental illness
- 4) To explore what we mean by normal.
- 5) To expand our openness to people whose experience may be different from ours.

Module 2 – Living with a Diagnosis

Goal – To increase our ability to understand and relate to a person who has been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Objectives:

- 1) To learn about what mental illness may look like from the outside.
- 2) To identify the areas of a person's life that is impacted by mental illness.
- 3) To hear how individuals have been impacted by a diagnosis of mental illness and how they feel they are accepted by society.
- 4) To understand the importance and the limitations of medications in the treatment of mental illness.
- 5) To understand the impact of mental illness on relationships within the family, the community and the service system.
- 6) To understand the kind of statements that close down communication and the kind of statements that open up the interaction.
- 7) To understand the importance of recognizing and allowing for ambivalence.

Module 3 – Understanding Depression

Goal – To understand major depression and barriers to sensitive communication.

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the difference between the depression that everyone experiences and the depression that is an illness.
- 2) To understand the physical and emotional symptoms of depression.
- 3) To explore how severe depression can impact a person's life.
- 4) To identify common assumptions about depression and barriers to communication.
- 5) To demonstrate how readily we make assumptions when we are communicating with another person.
- 6) To practice tuning in to a person's real experience.

Module 4 – Understanding Anxiety

Goal – To recognize the effect of fear and anxiety in mental illness and develop the ability to respond to people's needs for safety.

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the physical and psychological components of anxiety.
- 2) To understand how anxiety is experienced when it is an illness.
- 3) To gain some understanding of the different kinds of anxiety disorders.
- 4) To understand the safety needs of a person with an anxiety disorder and the importance of honouring these needs.
- 5) To practice attentive listening.

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DAY 2

Module 5 – Understanding Psychosis

Goal – To learn to relate to someone who is temporarily experiencing a different reality.

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the definition of psychosis.
- 2) To understand that we are all capable of experiencing psychosis.
- 3) To learn how the symptoms of psychosis are experienced.
- 4) To gain a greater understanding of the illness of schizophrenia.
- 5) To understand how fear complicates communication.
- 6) To understand how body language is a powerful form of communication.

Module 6 – Understanding Mania and Mood Swings

Goal – To understand the impact of mood swings on a person's relationships and interactions.

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the symptoms of bipolar disorder, in particular the state of mania.
- 2) To gain insight into the experience of mania and mood swings.
- 3) To explore the impact of mania and mood swings on communication and relationships.
- 4) To understand the dynamics of the Victim Triangle.
- 5) To understand how to shift the dynamic and maintain healthy boundaries.

Module 7 – Understanding Complex Mental Health Problems

Goal – To understand how people develop extreme coping mechanisms in order to express their needs.

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the impact of traumatic experience on a person's development.
- 2) To understand the limitations of diagnostic labels for people with complex mental health problems.
- 3) To understand how society responds to people who have complex mental health problems.
- 4) To learn about the concept of personality disorders.
- 5) To better understand our reactions to people who have complex mental health problems.
- 6) To better understand how to maintain boundaries in a positive way.

Module 8 – Using Our Skills

Goal – To review and practice what we have learned.

Objectives:

- 1) To review the key messages and learning of the previous seven modules.
- 2) To practice the reflection and response skills of the previous seven modules.
- 3) To integrate the communication skills of the previous seven modules.
- 4) To complete an evaluation questionnaire about the program.