

Mental Health Awareness: A Holistic Approach to Improving your Wellbeing

1. Introduction

Question: What is the purpose of this podcast?

Answer: This podcast will focus on the following:

- The importance of making your mental health a priority.
- A holistic approach to improving your wellbeing.
- Mental Health Awareness month (October)

Question: What is mental health?

Answer: The World Health Organization (WHO) defines 'Mental Health' as a state of wellbeing, in which every individual –

- realises their own potential;
- can cope with the normal stresses of life;
- can work productively and fruitfully; and
- is able to make a contribution to their community.

The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in WHO's definition of health, as contained in its constitution: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Question: Why should students, in particular, make their mental health a priority?

Answer:

Reference the efforts we take to keep our physical body healthy.

- Brushing your teeth- you brush your teeth more than once every day in order to avoid decay and to maintain your hygiene.
- Seeking medical help- you will go to the pharmacy or consult with a medical doctor whenever you experience persistent flu-related symptoms like coughing, sneezing, and fever in order to be in good health.

Emphasise that the same level of effort we make for our physical health must also apply to our mental health because:

- Your mind is not a separate entity from the rest of your body; the two are connected and interdependent.
- Emotions are physical. For example, when you feel:

Psychological (mental and emotional)	Physiological (physical)
1. Stress or anxious	Headache, sweating, the tension in your arms, shoulders and neck, the heart beats faster, and you may even struggle to sleep.
2. Happy or excited	The heart rate increases, the sympathetic nervous system increases activity, and the brain begins to signal the increased production of hormones (endorphins and serotonin) which are all released into your

	bloodstream. The outcome is that your body will begin to relax, leading to a decrease in your heart rate and lower levels of blood pressure and the stress hormone cortisol.
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Therefore, it is vital to pay attention to your thoughts, emotions and behaviour daily. You must acknowledge and express your emotions as this will contribute to maintaining good mental health and have a positive impact on other aspects of your wellbeing.

2. Core tips

Question: What top tips can you give for being proactive with regards to one's mental health?

Answer: You must take a holistic approach to improve your wellbeing; you are a holistic being.

1. **Intellectual:** Time-management and effective planning
2. **Emotional:** Acceptance; Assertiveness; Self-care and self-love
3. **Physical:** Eat, sleep and exercise enough – drink plenty of water!
4. **Social:** Be aware of the support systems and structures available to you – within your family, friendship circles and on campus.
5. **Spiritual:** Make time for what gives you meaning in life
6. **Financial:** Effective Financial planning and budgeting

3. Final words

Question: How does the University of the Free State and in particular SCD provide support to students who may be having mental health challenges?

Answer: The psychologists at (SCD) provide psychological support and intervention to all registered UFS students. The services at SCD are free for all students registered at UFS.

SCD offers:

- **Counselling-** Individual, group and career.
- **Workshops-** Stress Management, Anger Management, Assertiveness, Emotional Intelligence, Relationships, Self-care, Self-discovery and Mental health survival.
- **Programmes-** REBT, Self-esteem and Grow
- **Initiatives:** The UFS Student Toolkit and Wellbeing Warriors
- **Telephonic counselling and referrals:** UFS Student Careline 0800 00 6363

SMS 43302

helpline@sadag.org

Question: I heard you mention that October is Mental Health Awareness Month. Please tell us more about it? What exactly will be happening taking place?

Answer: Yes, Gerben, the month of October is a significant one not only in South Africa but worldwide.

Mental Health Awareness Month (5 weeks):

- World Mental Health Day (10 October 2020). **SCD will commemorate it on 9 October 2020.**
- World Mental Health Awareness Week (4-10 October 2020)

SCD Awareness Campaign:

The Theme:

- **Hope for Humanity**

Virtual Campaigns:

- Week 1-5

Motivational quotes:

Send out motivational quotes to all students throughout the month.

"Pay it forward" challenge (throughout the month):

#iThemba (Hope)

#SCD

#MentalHealthMatters

#HumansUnited

#SpiritofUbuntu

Challenge students to send:

1. Memes, quotes or cards to 3 fellow students who can also forward to three of their contacts and so on. We will check to see whether in October one card can reach most students across all campuses. The aim is to break down the stigma surrounding mental health by openly sharing something related to mental health.
 2. A virtual hug, high five or handshake and promote social distancing. We can even have three options and make it a competition between students to see which one they prefer the most.
- Week 1
Podcast: Holistic wellness
Briefly speak on holistic wellness and the importance of prioritising mental health. Introduce mental health awareness month- our theme and the activities SCD will be doing.
 - Week 2: World Mental Health Awareness Week (4-10 October 2020)
Article and podcast: Hope and Ubuntu (Kindness)
The focus will be on compassion and kindness.

Stories of Hope

Getting students to share their journeys either in the video, written or audio format depending on our clients' preferences (anonymous or not). Maybe sharing their journeys could inspire others.

- **Q-Lit radio (UFS QwaQwa) (5-9 October)**

The focus will be on Mindfulness.

- **Competition**

Challenge students to create a video/audio recording sharing tips on how / what has kept them coping during the lockdown. They must submit their entries on Blackboard. We pick the top 10 entries. The winners will get their videos/audio posted on our Facebook page, and they get to win data prizes or hard copy of the toolkit. Competition and winners will be inclusive of all campuses.

Planning:

- **Marketing**

Promote the campaign on different platforms: Wellbeing Warriors page, Blackboard, Facebook and Instagram.

We hope that students feel encouraged and empowered to take the necessary steps to improve their mental health. **SCD motto: clear mind, clear path!** Thank you.