

The approach of MHFA Ersthelfer

More than 40 percent of all people in Germany experience a mental disorder in the course of their lives that should be treated. Although mental disorders are so frequent, this topic leads to uncertainty, fear and prejudices. Therefore, prevention, early recognition and destigmatization are important in this field.

MHFA Ersthelfer addresses these aspects. The MHFA course for mental health is based on the principle of physical first aid: In a 12-hour course, every adult can become a mental health first aider.

In the MHFA course, employees learn to recognize and address a colleague's mental health problems in time. They acquire basic knowledge about various mental health problems, which they can use to provide support and information when talking to a person that may suffer from a mental health problem. An important aspect of the course is learning and practicing how to encourage others to seek professional help and to activate their resources.

Mental Health First Aid is a global and innovative program that is active in 24 countries worldwide and has already trained more than 4 million first aiders. The program was founded in Australia in 2000 and has been scientifically evaluated on a regular basis. Several meta-analyses show that the MHFA course increases knowledge about mental health, reduces stigmatizing behaviors, increases self-confidence in being able to assist others and improves the participant's own mental health.

The global vision of Mental Health First Aid is: First Aid for mental health should be as natural as First Aid for physical health.

Curriculum MHFA Ersthelfer-Kurs

Among others, topics are: signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental diseases with a focus on depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis and substance use problems. Participants get to know the MHFA action plan to assist people who are developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem or who are in a mental health crisis. This action plan will be put into practice with case examples, role plays and other exercises. Participants will get manifold information about evidence-based, professional, peer- and self-help-support.

The topics are divided in 6 sessions (2 hours each):



After finishing the MHFA course, participants get the possibility to give feedback to the instructor and to complete an online exam to earn accreditation as a certified MHFA first aider.