



CONNECTIONS
Link Life

Training For Trainers

Professional Competency
Building Course

LESSON 5

PCB UNDERPINNING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR SENIOR AMBASSADORS



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Lesson 5 Underpinning Professional Standards for Senior Ambassadors

Lesson Overview

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Lesson Modules

1. Topic 1 Attitudes and beliefs
2. Topic 2 Programme Fidelity
3. Topic 3 Professional Standards
4. Topic 4 Support for Senior Ambassadors

Module 1 Attitudes and beliefs

1. You in the helping role
2. Congruence when working with suicide.
3. Congruent facilitators
4. Congruent helpers
5. Thoughts for facilitators
6. The importance for supervision
7. Cultivating Your Inner Supervisor
8. The belief that everyone can do something to promote positive mental health and prevent suicide.
9. The confidence to connect with and help a person in emotional distress or with thoughts of suicide
10. Readiness for delivery of your course
11. The importance of self-care for you as a facilitator
12. Ideas of how that might look
13. Wheel of life
14. 8 factors of happiness

Module 2 Programme Fidelity

1. Licence Agreement
2. The Programme PowerPoint
3. Programme Resources
4. ID Codes
5. Programme Forms (Participant Eval & Senior Ambassador Report)
6. Course Presentation Length
7. Participant Numbers
8. Participant Suitability
9. Delivery Environment
10. Recommended Facilitator Resources
11. Promotional Materials
12. What to do when you have tried everything, but your IT fails

Module 3 Professional Standards

1. PHA quality standards for services promoting mental and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention
2. Work within your capacity and remit

Module 4 Support for Senior Ambassadors

1. Senior Ambassadors Members Area

2. Logging into the Members Area
3. Resources
4. Keep Safe Website pages
5. Newsletters
6. Connections Approved Facilitator Directory
7. Facebook Group

Module 1

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

1. You in the Helping Role

These facilitator beliefs below underpin the core beliefs that have informed the Connections Curriculum. They are reflected in every corner of the programme content, and it is a requirement that they be modelled in the delivery of the programme by facilitators.

It is therefore important that facilitators are aligned and congruent with the underpinning beliefs of the curriculum as this congruence will add to the strength of the curriculum's key messages being heard consistently across the network.

- Suicide is preventable.
- Suicide is more than a health problem.
- Suicide is a community mental health problem that tells us something about the overall wellbeing of our community.
- Emotional Wellbeing is a predictor of the likelihood of flourishing in all aspects of a whole life.
- The reasons for suicide are complex and every suicide is unique.
- Healing families, local cultures and communities is part of cultivating wellbeing for individuals.
- The origins of emotion are as much about the past as the present.
- Open, honest talk about suicide dispels stigma and taboo and encourages help seeking.
- People thinking about suicide want help to stay alive.
- Cultivating a sense of life worth living can bring relief for hurt and pain
- Releasing negative thoughts or behaviours is easier when we cultivate something positive in its place
- We can often minimise the things that can increase vulnerability for a suicidal person.
- Language matters in suicide prevention

2. Congruence when working with suicide.

It is important to be mindful of the right balance when we consider ethics, legality, autonomy, and free will when working with suicide. There must be consideration for the safety of oneself, and for the others in the room when delivering this programme. This congruence should be upheld when we go out into our homes, workplaces, schools and our communities, when we talk about suicide and come across people on our path of life who have been impacted by suicide or emotional distress. The need to be non-judgemental aims to support a route to safety for others and for oneself.

3. Congruent facilitators

Our attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions play a part in how we show up in the world around others. Congruent facilitators are self-aware and actively work on their self-development, they are a positive role model for the things that make a congruent helper, they believe in the programme they are delivering and its ability to make a difference. The

4. Congruent helpers

These facilitator beliefs about helpers underpin the beliefs within the Connections Curriculum in relation to helpers and the quality of helping. It is important that facilitators are aligned and congruent with the underpinning beliefs of the curriculum and that they work towards influencing all learners who engage with the programme to embrace these beliefs.

- Everyone can do something about preventing suicide.
- Intervention skills can be learned by anyone.
- There are two people in a suicide intervention process.
- Interventions always require more than one type of help and helper.
- Each helping role requires clarification to be effective.
- Helpers are more likely to help if they believe that they have a role and that they are not alone.
- Trusting relationships are at the heart of suicide intervention.
- Helpers need to be careful with their care.
- Helpers need to put their own gas masks on first, helpers cannot serve from an empty vessel.

5. Thoughts for facilitators

These are thoughts for facilitators alone and not for use within the public domain. They are to aid facilitators reflect on their understanding of suicide. Posted here as statements or questions they exist to prompt facilitators to get curious about suicide and seek opportunities to deepen their own understanding. We also hope to see facilitators add their own thoughts and engage in thought provoking conversations with their peers and through our social platforms.

<p>A person at risk needs both the desire to die and the capacity to die.</p>	<p>Hopelessness is the end point. When tolerable existences seem impossible, when you feel powerless and disconnected, then suicide can seem comforting.</p>	<p>Habituation: The script or this internal dialogue can normalise the activity. “I will put up with this for so long and then I will end it all.”</p>
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<p>Exposure to pain or danger on a regular basis (habituation) can result in less fear of that pain or danger. An individual becomes more accepting of pain, pain is normalised. When an individual has that fear of pain or death reduced then their threshold for staying alive when suicidal is reduced. In some way the person has overcome their instinct for self-preservation.</p>	<p>Let us think... of a child where self-injury and dangerous situations become unthreatening and mundane, does this somehow make suicide seem easier to carry out?</p>	<p>Let us think of...The lifestyles of disparate groups such as physicians, anorexics, athletes etc that can expose them to pain, either that of their own or others (vicarious). In a sense that exposure can increase their vulnerability, how?</p>
<p>Suicide is not about personal weakness it is more accurately interpreted as an act of fearlessness - a learned behaviour which has been practiced over time.</p>	<p>At a cognitive level access to means is a significant risk factor and increases the probability of acting out on thoughts when in a suicidal episode.</p>	<p>Information and talking about methods may lead people from thoughts to plans.</p>
<p>Information can further habituate an at-risk patient to the idea of suicide - this is worth considering when creating campaigns with young people. Conversely important psychological messages include messages of hopefulness, life, and survival, are important protective factors.</p>	<p>People who do not repeat: Tend to be suicidal for a more specific reason. People who repeat: Suffer from generalised unhappiness with life. Feel acutely and chronically powerless about their own life. Suicide becomes an escape route from unbearable pain.</p>	

6. The Importance of Supervision

As a facilitator of a suicide prevention and early intervention programme you are exposed to emotionally intense and potentially distressing situations. To ensure you can provide the highest level of support to participants, it is essential that you reach out when you need support, this can be to a supervisor, or you can connect back with FME who can help you to with a support route.

Supervision provides a structured opportunity for facilitators to reflect on their experiences, seek guidance on complex cases, and receive emotional support. This process helps to maintain professional boundaries, improve intervention strategies, and prevent burnout.

Supervision should be conducted by experienced mental health professionals who can offer both clinical and emotional guidance.

7. Cultivating Your Inner Supervisor

Over the past number of years, we have been supporting several of our Connections facilitators develop their inner supervisor. An opportunity to do this is usually when you have reached the point that you feel that you need to reach out for help.

It is always okay to ask for help but before you do it is helpful if you, pause and consider these questions. We have found that most of our facilitators, most of the time have the capacity to resolve their own dilemmas, support their own reflection and decision making.

We would love it when facilitators share these reflections and learnings with us via the reports, email or via the peer support social media forum.

We are thrilled to have conscious facilitators working on delivering the Connections programmes supporting and guiding participants as they learn and travel part of their own personal experience of healing.

You will have your own helpful reflective questions, but these form a starting point.

- What is this group or individual's needs?
- What will you have to clear up at the beginning about what the session is and isn't about?
- What 'elephants in the room' / experience would you need to acknowledge and appreciate - how might you do that in a way that feels right for you and does not highlight an individual?
- What might you do to help increase comfort and safety for everyone?
- How might you help the group move from thinking of their past experiences to thinking about the future?
- What additional resources might you like this group to have in place before you come?
- What will their flier/online promotion say that empowers choice for people?
- What might be the key messages that you would like this group to leave with?
- How might you HUG this group (Show Humanity, Understanding, Genuine Care)
- Ask yourself - is there a way for me to align my values and needs as a trainer with this groups need to talk about suicide? What is it that I can do and what is it I can ask of them to help ensure that we do not bring unfair attention to a specific death and at the same time acknowledge loss?
- What trainer beliefs are most relevant right now?
- How are the standards for safe practice being upheld?
- Where in the manual might there be some supportive information to help me reflect on this right now?
- Who else might support me work through this on our peer network?

8. The belief that everyone can do something to promote positive mental health and prevent suicide.

Focus on Cultivating Hope

Connections is a strength based, hope focused curriculum. This does not mean that the programme is dismissive of difficult experiences or stories of frustration, in fact the programme creates space to enable people to release this, to be heard but in a way that retains a sense of hopefulness for the future whilst acknowledging the pain of now or the past.

Connections Training is an antidote to negativity and pessimism, it is not a breeding ground for the acceptance, normalisation or conformity with emotional distress or suicide. We want the space to be reassuring and encouraging but we want to cultivate safe boundaries for everyone in the room, limiting advice giving to the guidance offered within this manual or within the scope of your profession.

In Connections workshops, we are not afraid of emotion it is welcome here, to be felt, witnessed, understood, and shifted. We never collude with stories, nor do we judge them, we allow them to be heard and we support the speaker to hear what is useful for them at this time. We encourage people to take personal responsibility for themselves and help empower them as creators and co-creators of their own future and to be a link to life in the future of everyone.

We do not enable poor self-care practices by talking about the importance of self-care yet not modelling it, instead we attend to self-care throughout the workshops, and we name it so that learners know it and it is a part of the essential learning. Whilst we explore how our human histories and experiences that have informed who we have become it is our hope that you take the message home that you can write your future story, rather than continuing to live a story that you have inherited and attached too. This is not you, **'You are not everything that happened to you'**.

We support the balance of exploring the problem and finding solutions. We help people connect with their sense of having a life worth living, finding their way through darkness towards their happiness and remembering their joy.

In Connections hope is the belief that we have in the other people in the room to do what it is that they need to do to survive and to thrive as best they can at this time. In Connections hope carries the qualities of respectfulness, gentleness, and kindness

9. The confidence to connect with and help a person in emotional distress or with thoughts of suicide

I am a Super-power: Self & World around me.

Suicide is a difficult subject to talk about and understand. Approaching someone to talk about suicide is not easy, people often lack confidence and are afraid of not knowing what to say, or perhaps saying the completely wrong thing! Please rest assured that this is not unusual!!

Our hope for you, is that by looking a little deeper within you will help give you the confidence and knowledge to have life-saving conversations. As you look a little deeper at what makes you who we are. You will gain knowledge and awareness that the roots of who you are lie within culture, personal history, experience, outlook and the impact that the world you live in has upon you.

Important factors to consider are your personal strengths and qualities. Identifying these can help you have difficult conversations with those who are having thoughts of life not worth living. It's important to acknowledge that you play an important role in suicide prevention and intervention therefore, it is imperative to know and connect with who you are and your beliefs and attitudes around suicide.

10. Readiness for delivery of your course

A facilitator's readiness to deliver a suicide prevention and early intervention programme is critical for its success. Readiness involves a comprehensive understanding of the programme's objectives, content, and the specific needs of the participants. Facilitators must be thoroughly trained in mental health first aid, crisis intervention, and trauma-informed care to effectively support individuals at risk. They should possess strong communication and empathetic listening skills to build trust and rapport with participants. Additionally, facilitators need to be aware of their own emotional well-being and establish self-care routines to manage the emotional demands of their role. Being well-prepared also means staying updated on the latest research and best practices in suicide prevention, ensuring a high-quality, evidence-based approach. Overall, a facilitator's readiness combines knowledge, skills, and personal well-being, creating a safe and supportive environment for participants.

11. The importance of self-care for you as a facilitator

Just as this is an important part of the Connections Link Life programme, Self-care is also a crucial component of maintaining the well-being and effectiveness for facilitators. Engaging in regular self-care practices helps to mitigate the emotional toll of working in a high-stress environment and ensures that facilitators can sustain their ability to support others. Facilitators should be encouraged to:

5. **Set Boundaries:** Clearly define work and personal time to avoid overextension.
6. **Engage in Regular Reflection:** Take time to reflect on their experiences and feelings related to their work.
7. **Seek Peer Support:** Build a network of colleagues who can provide mutual support and understanding.
8. **Utilise Professional Support:** Access professional counselling, therapy or supervision as needed.

9. **Practice Stress-Relief Activities:** Incorporate activities such as exercise, mindfulness, hobbies, and relaxation techniques into their daily routine.
10. **Monitor Their Well-being:** Regularly check in with themselves to assess their mental and emotional health and have an action plan in place for if/when they notice signs of emotional distress or burnout.



“Self-Care is a critical component of cultivating positive emotional health practices. In Connections: Searching for a Life Worth Living we teach you to ‘put on your own gas mask first’.”

This is important on multiple levels:

Producing the right bio-chemical balance in our bodies

Neuroscience has helped us make sense of the mind/body connections, we now know that it is essential to relax the nervous system consciously and regularly to help support the production of important bio chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, endorphins, and oxytocin. In doing this we also help to regulate harmful bio-chemicals like noradrenalin, adrenalin and cortisol which are toxic in our bodies and when unregulated contribute to our poor emotional and physical health.

Developing Positive Shame Free Relationships

Through attachment theory we have learned that how we are with people influences their ability to be able to develop and maintain healthy, loving, secure relationships with other people and grow important qualities like self-efficacy, self-confidence and a sense of belonging. In secure and loving relationships people can be vulnerable, they have developed shame resilience and therefore are more likely to reach out and seek help when feeling vulnerable. Research into shame resilience has now proved in evidence that people who have been raised with shame-based responses are more likely to be involved with risk taking behaviors and suicide, those raised free from shame-based responses are less likely to be impacted by poor mental health outcomes.

Influencing each other

Science has helped us evidence the impact of our ability to influence those who we live with and work with. We now know through studies of the brain that mirror neurons in one person's brain is literally reading and copying the neurons in another person's brain. How I cope will teach your brain how to cope how I respond in a given situation will teach your brain how to respond in a given situation. As adults, parents, practitioners, leaders, educators, childcare workers etc wanting to influence and change mental health outcomes we need to begin with ourselves. Our children, families, communities etc need much more than education, we need action to back up our teachings. Through bringing mindful awareness to how we are with others, how we are feeling and by proactively working on regulating our stress responses we directly influence the abilities of those we seek to influence to do the same. You 'being well' is contagious, you're not being well is also contagious.

Gut Health

Science has made leaps over the past 20yrs, and we have recently benefited from groundbreaking research which has located neurotransmitters in the gut. Many mental health practitioners will now be as interested in what we are eating to help support improved mental health as when we eat food, we are activating the cultures living within our microbiome, triggering neurotransmitters which in turn cause physiological and emotional responses. Much of how we are is what we eat - Food and Mood are completely interconnected.

We Model Healthy & Unhealthy Selfcare

A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another. Thus, the neuron "mirrors" the behavior of the other, as though the observer were itself acting. Mirror neurons are suspected to be responsible for our capacity to empathise with another and our capacity to connect with others.

"Considering all of this we can begin to see why the greatest gift we can give anyone else is to look after our own needs for self-care first. Through being well and through modelling wellbeing we transmit to others what it is that we hope for them."

Personal Responsibility for Self-Care

Self-care is taking care of yourself. This is something that we hope comes naturally to people, however the reality is that many people often need reminding to look after themselves. It is usually not at the top of our to do lists.

Self-care is an act of self-love; it is so important to place yourself high up on your list of priorities.

It is your personal responsibility to look after you. Whilst it's nice to have someone do something nice for us. It's not the same as taking time out to specifically look after and love oneself.

If you're serving others feeling drained, empty, tired, anxious and stressed, you're probably not serving them in the way you want to. Our lives are so busy, and there is a lot expected from us day to day. This is why we need to refuel, recharge and revive. Once we do, we are meeting the expectations of everyday life from a place of abundance.

When we are not filling our own tanks, sometimes we can turn to those around us to fulfil this role. But this isn't realistic. It can put too much pressure on family, friends,

and work colleagues to fill in the gaps of our wellness. Whilst they can provide some of the stuff we need, we cannot depend on them to do this for us. They deserve to have us at our best, fulfilled, charged and happy!

What does self-care mean to you? Are you implementing self-care into your life? Do you feel happy, fulfilled & energetic?

Self-Care is a professional requirement rather than an optional add on

Self-care for professionals is about actively looking after your own mental health and wellbeing so that you can more effectively support the people you work with. The concept of self-care is similar to the safety procedures on an aircraft: In the unlikely event of an emergency, fit your own oxygen mask first, before attending to dependents. By putting yourself first you can, more effectively, help your loved ones or those in need.

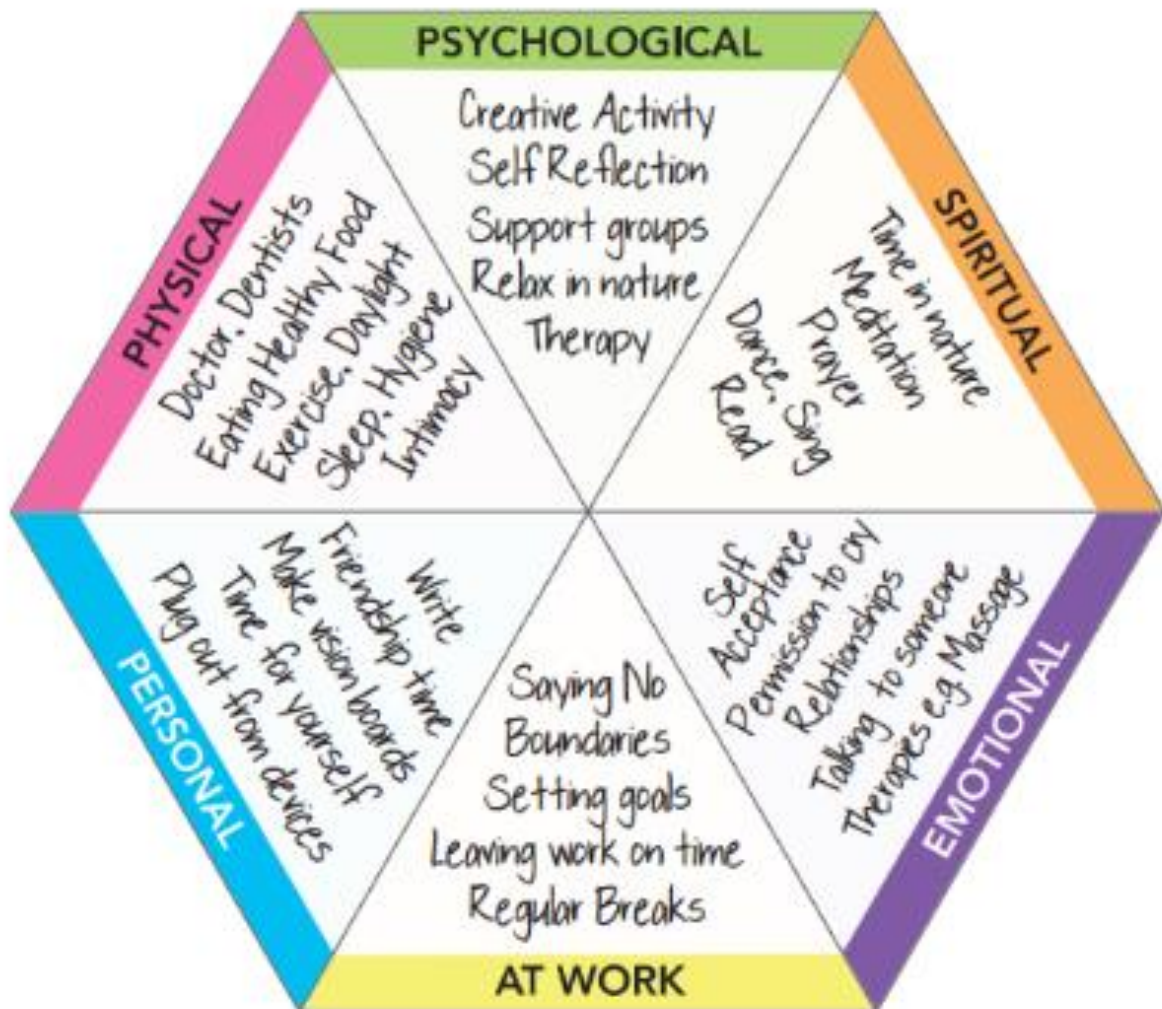
This is important because people who look after people often experience vicarious trauma through listening to the stories told by and through feeling the pain expressed by the people they work with. This secondary trauma, also referred to as compassion fatigue, can seriously impact the quality of carers give without realising and play havoc with carers physical and mental health as does all unresolved trauma.

12. Ideas of how that might look

- **ANCHOR**- Knowing who we can go to for coregulation or finding things that help us feel grounded
- Taking time to yourself
- Saying 'no' or saying 'yes' to align with what we really want to do- setting boundaries for ourselves
- Cooking a meal
- Trying out a new hobby
- Trying a new way to **MOVE** our bodies
- Going for a walk
- Slather up on our favourite body cream and take time to give yourself a massage.
- Acknowledging the need to **BREATHE**
- Get fresh air
- Get out into nature.
- Practice breathing exercises that help you regulate our nervous systems i.e. box breathing
- Trying new ways to **EXPRESS** ourselves
- Try creative writing alone or in a group
- Drama classes or groups
- Singing and listening to music that we love
- Speak your thoughts and feelings out loud to someone who you trust
- Find a therapy that works for you, talking therapy, hypnotherapy etc
- Learning how we can **RELAX**, what works for us?
- Meditation guided or on our own
- Listening to a podcast
- A relaxing bath

- A massage or therapeutic treatment
- Taking time away from devices

13. Wheel of life



The wheel of life is a great exercise to examine how we are looking after ourselves and how fulfilled we are in the following areas of our life:

1. Psychological

Are we engaging in creative activity? Are we able to self-reflect, and how does that look for us? Are we part of support groups or have support network around us? Do we take time to relax in nature? Are we attending therapy in all its forms depending on our needs?

2. Spiritual

Are we taking time to go into nature? Maybe some of us enjoy meditation or other practices that help us to nurture our spirit. Prayer, dance, reading, singing are also things that can help us to meet our spiritual needs.

3. Emotional

Is there self-acceptance? Do we give ourselves permission to cry? Are our relationships emotionally safe and fulfilling? Do we have someone to talk to? Are we attending therapies that might help us to work through emotions.

4. At work

Are we fulfilled in our role? Do we love our workplace? Are we saying no? Are we setting boundaries? Setting goals? Leaving work on time and taking regular breaks?

5. Personal

Do we have personal time to engage in the things that make us happy and promote our emotional, mental and physical wellness? This might be reading, writing, or any other hobbies and activities that we make personal time and space for. Do we have friendship time and quality time with the people we love to be around? Do we take time to unplug from our devices and connect with ourselves?

6. Physical

Are we listening to our physical health? Attending dentist and doctors' appointments? Are we eating healthy food, participating in exercise, getting sunlight? What does our sleep quality and pattern look like? Are we keeping on top of our hygiene? And do we have intimacy?

14. 8 factors of happiness

8 FACTORS OF HAPPINESS

Source: Duke University Study on Happiness

- 1 LACK OF SUSPICION and RESENTMENT**
nursing a grudge was a major factor in UNHAPPINESS
- 2 NOT LIVING IN THE PAST**
pre-occupation with past mistakes and failures lead to depression
- 3 NOT WASTING TIME & ENERGY FIGHTING THINGS YOU CANNOT CHANGE**
"co-operate with life"
- 4 STAY INVOLVED WITH THE LIVING WORLD**
resist withdrawal & become reclusive during stress
- 5 REFUSE TO INDULGE IN SELF-PITY WHEN LIFE HANDS YOU A RAW DEAL**
"no one gets through life without some sorrow and misfortune"
- 6 CULTIVATE OLD FASHIONED VIRTUES**
LOVE
COMPASSION
HUMOR
LOYALTY
- 7 DONT EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM YOURSELF**
gap between expectation and ability = feeling of inadequacy
- 8 FIND SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOURSELF TO BELIEVE IN**
self centered egotistical people score lowest in any test measuring HAPPINESS

Sketchnote by: Tanmay Vora ~ QAspire.com ~ @tnvora

The "8 Factors of Happiness" identified by the Duke University study provide valuable insights for facilitators delivering a suicide prevention and early intervention programme. Understanding and incorporating these factors can enhance the programme's effectiveness and support participants in developing resilience and a positive outlook on life.

1. **Lack of Suspicion and Resentment:** Facilitators should encourage participants to let go of grudges and foster forgiveness. Holding onto negative emotions can

exacerbate mental health issues and hinder recovery. We explore this in our programme as letting in and letting go to cultivate positive mental and emotional wellbeing.

2. **Not Living in the Past:** It is essential to help participants focus on the present and future rather than dwelling on past mistakes or failures. This shift can reduce depression and anxiety, fostering a more positive mindset.
3. **Not Wasting Time and Energy on Things You Cannot Change:** Facilitators can guide participants to accept circumstances beyond their control and focus on actionable steps. This approach can alleviate feelings of helplessness and empower individuals to make positive changes.
4. **Staying Involved with the Living World:** Encouraging social connections and community involvement is crucial. Isolation can worsen mental health conditions, whereas active participation in community life provides support and a sense of belonging.
5. **Refusing to Indulge in Self-Pity:** Facilitators should help participants recognise that self-pity is counterproductive. Encouraging a mindset of resilience and self-compassion can lead to better coping strategies and overall mental well-being.
6. **Cultivating Old-Fashioned Virtues:** Promoting values such as love, compassion, humour, and loyalty can improve interpersonal relationships and provide emotional support. These virtues are foundational to building a supportive and empathetic community.
7. **Not Expecting Too Much from Yourself:** Facilitators should stress the importance of realistic expectations and self-compassion. Setting unattainable goals can lead to feelings of inadequacy, while achievable goals foster a sense of accomplishment and confidence.
8. **Finding Something Bigger than Yourself to Believe In:** Encouraging participants to find purpose and meaning beyond themselves can enhance their sense of fulfilment and decrease egocentric stressors. This can involve community service, spiritual practices, or advocacy for causes they are passionate about.

By integrating these factors into the programme, facilitators can create a supportive environment that promotes mental health, resilience, and long-term happiness among participants.

Module 2

PROGRAMME FIDELITY

1. Licence Agreement

It is Fundamental to the role of a Senior Ambassador to thoroughly read their Licence Agreement; you must recognise that you are committing to and agreeing to abide by the obligations, guidelines, policies and procures. Senior Ambassadors recognise that they are now representing FME and understand poor compliance will result in FME taking appropriate actions as per outlines in the licence agreement.

2. The Programme PowerPoint

Following the programme PowerPoint presentation is the best route to achieving the learning outcomes for the programme.

Can I use my own slides and videos?

Sometimes, whilst we don't encourage this, you may continue to submit your video or idea to FME for consideration for inclusion.

Must I use all the slides?

No, you don't need to show all the slides, although some slides are essential and required. You do however have to meet all the learning outcomes and the slides offer the easiest route to achieving that.

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3. Programme Resources

Senior Ambassadors are provided with a delivery guidebook, PowerPoint presentation, Branded Lanyard, Pop-up Stand, Workbooks, certificates, Hands of Connections Pins and Pocket cards. These resources are standard, and each delivery of the programme should be standard practice to distribute.

Online Delivery

If you are working online, you will either post your registered participants their physical resources after the session or you will be requesting that FME issues e-participant kits.

- E-participant kits must be pre-ordered with FME and once FME
- It is important to forward plan as FME can only forward participants resources once payment has been received for those resources.

- To pre-order resources you will purchase these online from the FME shop or you will request an invoice from FME. The number of resources purchased will be added to your account which will be held and updated by FME.
- After you deliver your online course, you will email FME a list of your participants emails addresses via the [CONLL E-Participant Pack Request Form](#)
- FME will email your participants their certificates and PDF's directly and within 1-week of receiving your [CONLL E-Participant Pack Request Form](#)

4. ID Codes

Connections Link Life Lead Ambassador ID Numbers

- When setting up your programmes always have the two relevant ID numbers written up on a flip chart or on the branded template for your participants to see to help them complete their forms.
- Everyone will have a unique facilitator number.
- Everyone will have a personal organisation number to use if facilitating independent workshops for your own organisation.
- If you are delivering on behalf of another organisation e.g. EA Critical Response Team, West Wellbeing etc you will require the ID of that organisation.
- You must ensure that you contact FME if you have not been issued with your ID numbers. You can do that through the [FME Submit A Question & Idea Form](#)
- You can see the list of Organisation ID's which is updated on the [Connections Link Life Facilitators Members Area](#)

5. Programme Forms

Participant Evaluation Forms

Evaluations are a required part of the delivery programme. Senior Ambassadors are responsible for the group having access to and able to complete this form. The use of the correct facilitator's codes means all data obtained for the sessions you deliver can be requested by you or by your organisation.

Completion of the evaluations ensure that the course can maintain standards and meet the needs of the community. Evaluations are also important for the longevity of the course, the data gathered during this part of the programme ensures FME have the information needed for future development and funding.

Being enthusiastic about the evaluations within your group means you are representing FME with pride. Demonstrating and reassuring your participants that completing the form can be done with ease and that in completing this means FME can continue to develop and deliver programmes like this in our communities.

Senior Ambassador Report

As a Senior Ambassador you have a responsibility to complete a report following your delivery of the programme, this is a requirement in your role and ensures that standards are maintained and monitored. You must complete the information with accuracy and truthfulness.

6. Course Presentation Length

The Connections Link Life training consists of 6 topics, these are typically delivered during a 3/3.5hour session, alternatively this can be delivered over 6 weekly or daily sessions, or in two sessions. All 6 topics need to be covered and explored to complete the training.

7. Participant Numbers

This course can be delivered to groups of 4-40 participants.

8. Participant Suitability

When determining participant suitability for taking part in Connections Link Life suicide prevention and early intervention programme, facilitators should be aware that individuals who display early signs of suicidal ideation or who are at an elevated risk due to factors such as mental health disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety), recent traumatic events, or significant life stressors may not be suitable at present for this training.

Individuals who are currently experiencing acute crises or severe mental health conditions that require intensive, specialised psychiatric care are not suitable for this programme. This is because their needs exceed the scope of early intervention strategies and necessitate more immediate, intensive medical attention and stabilisation in a clinical setting.

Suitable participants are those who are open to engaging with the programme's various components which explore the challenges, vulnerabilities and protective factors in relation to suicide and emotional distress. They should be open to exploring the Connect 4-Ways Model designed to provide immediate support and equip individuals with a connection to safety.

Identifying appropriate participants ensures the safety of individuals, it also ensures those who can actively participate safely gain from the programme and obtain skills to support them on their helping journey.

9. Delivery Environment

Connections facilitators create an environment where participants feel ready to learn. Creating space for people to become emotionally and physically ready to begin learning the course content. Think about the layout of the chairs or tables and ensure the space is comfortable and the group can see you and the presentation.

As a Senior Ambassador you are required to set up a table at these events if you are delivering for FME, this consist of a tablecloth, pop-up stand Box frame character strength, hands of connection pins and collection box.

You may also want to display useful and relevant books, your own organisational merchandise, Connections Pins and a Collection Box to donate if they choose to.

10. Recommended Facilitator Resources

Connections Link Life Presentations

- Connections Link Life Facilitators & Senior Ambassadors are required to work from the most recent versions of the content which will continue to evolve.
- Facilitators are required to delete and remove older versions of the presentation once they are formally retired and are no longer supported by FME.
- You can download the newest version of the presentation from the FME Members Area: [Connections Link Life Facilitators Members Area](#)

11. Promotional Materials

Branding

We have worked hard to create a curriculum that is not strictly bound to a PowerPoint presentation and script and one that enables you to bring the type of practitioner that you are to the curriculum to deliver it. We want your voice to bring this work to your people. We want you to take ownership of the methodology and we want your people to gain maximum benefit from receiving a standardised suicide prevention curriculum, and evidence-based content to support that curriculum, in the way that is most appropriate for them.

Whether you are an artist, sports coach, youth worker, therapist, or business trainer, you will be able to bring this curriculum to your group in the most appropriate way for you and your learners.

The risk we have taken is that as you bring yourself to the curriculum, the brand of Connections can become a little vulnerable. We are therefore asking all Connections Facilitators to act as guardians for this work, honouring the IP, years of work openly shared, years of investment in research and field practice upon which Connections Programmes exist. We are asking that you display the brand at all workshops and help aid your participants feel like this is a Connections Programme.

- Use the Connections Logo
- Use the Connections Resources
- Name the Programme: Connections Link Life, Connections Help Life, Connections Support Life
- If you are not using the power point, then think about how you can make a display to help create the Connections vibe and brand. A display table, some bunting, posters, a pop-up stand.

12. What to do when you have tried everything, but your IT fails

To ensure you are prepared for IT failures and can avoid this type of thing happening we recommend that you have the most up to date version of the programme downloaded onto your device, it is also recommended that you have this downloaded onto a USB.

If you have an issue logging onto the Members area or downloading the files you need, get in contact with us via email at: hello@freshmindseducation.com and we will try to get back to you as soon as possible.

Module 3

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

1. PHA quality standards for services promoting mental and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention

Improving mental health and wellbeing and reducing levels of suicide in the population of Northern Ireland is a key priority for the Public Health Agency (PHA). Quality improvement is a common goal and is central to the development of health and social care services. Improving quality is focused on three main areas integral to the modernization and reform agenda:

- Setting minimum standards to strengthen services, practice and improve outcomes for service users.
- Improving governance arrangements and improving the way in which service providers across all sectors manage their business.
- Improving the way in which service providers are held to account for the services they provide. (Source: PHA Quality Standards for Services Promoting Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention, Jan 2015, p. 4)

What is a standard?

The PHA defines quality standards as an essential level of quality to ensure safe and effective practice against which performance can be measured. Standards are designed to encourage and support improved services. It is important that standards do not become outdated and therefore these will be regularly monitored, reviewed and updated drawing on the best up-to-date evidence available.

Using the standards

The standards will be used to measure quality by providing a framework to assess your organisation or service against. The document is divided into several sections, each of which relates to a specific area of work

Each section contains:

- Several defined standards, i.e. explicit statements of expected quality;
- An explanation of what the standards mean;
- Examples of how you can evidence that your organization meets the standard.

It is important to note that not all sections within the standards may be relevant to your organisation or service.

Who do the standards apply to?

The standards apply to all organizations providing mental and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention services which are funded by the PHA.

PHA may also apply these standards as appropriate to other health and social wellbeing themes or other elements of PHA business.

Please note that all references to practitioners, therapists, counsellors, volunteers and staff within these standards, includes paid, unpaid and voluntary staff.

Core Standards Criteria:

- Management and organisational governance

- Employment and volunteering structures
- Organisational practice and service delivery
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Communication processes

Additional standards Criteria:

- Training
- Self-harm services
- Counselling
- Complementary therapy
- Bereavement

Public Health Agency: 12-22 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BS.

Telephone Number: 0300 555 0114 (local rate)

The PHA would like to acknowledge the work of the CLEAR project in the development of the quality standards framework.

2. Work within your capacity and remit

STANDARD: Suitability

You will need a brief description of the background and needs of the group for whom you are organising the talk or workshop for. It is useful to be aware of any mental health concerns or recent bereavement experienced by the group confidentially in advance. This type of information will help you to discuss the appropriateness of the planned session and enable you to modify the content.

The timing of the programme - why now, is this the right time for this type of programme or is the need something else? For example, if a group has been bereaved by suicide is it a bereavement support session they require or something else?

Participation needs always be voluntary when exploring emotive issues. This means that no rewards are offered for attending and no punitive measures put in place for not attending.

The time of day, time in the week that you have planned to deliver the training - is there support available for the participants if they need support in the hours and days after the programme? There are different supports available mid-week e.g. school, GP etc and these supports are not available at the weekend.

The duration of the talk or workshop needs to be appropriate to the needs of the group.

STANDARD: Child Development

A young person may appear to be understanding and coping with a suicide prevention session; however, it is important to remember that because they are still growing and developing there are certain risks that you take when you organise young people to come to talks and workshops which trigger an emotional response.

It is not appropriate to mix wide age groups of young people to discuss self-harm and suicide e.g. 12yr olds and 19yr old young people will have different experiences, thoughts, questions and language which will be expressed during a session.

The youth leader and parent/guardian must feel confident that the young person is developmentally able to cope with talking about the content you are planning for.

STANDARD: Age

Evidence clearly demonstrates that half of diagnosed lifetime mental ill-health cases begin before the age of 14, and 75% before the age of 18. Connections Programmes can be part of a wider mental health programme and it can be delivered for young people across post primary age ranges. We would encourage you to target mainly children and young people aged 13yrs+, however there are times, depending on the needs of some children and young people that this curriculum can be adapted sensitively and brought to yr 8's and yr 9's by a suitably qualified professional within the scope of their professional remit.

STANDARD: Scope

Know your limits, it is vitally important to note that training as a facilitator of this Connections programme does not automatically qualify facilitators to have the experience, and skills to work with children and young people. It is therefore not appropriated for a trained Connections Facilitator to deliver this training with children and young people if they are not qualified to do so within the scope of their existing profession.

Context

Context is everything, this programme should only be delivered with young people as part of a wider mental health programme/project. It should never be delivered in isolation as a one-off workshop.

Safety

Adults working with young people need to have training in suicide intervention, either their own Connections Programme or equivalent. The Adults working with young people need to have the skills to contain and hold and respond to young people who might seek support because of the training.

STANDARD: Group Size

In large and small groups organisers need to be satisfied that they can offer appropriate support for any person who discloses the need for support for self-harm or suicide during the session or in the subsequent days and weeks after the session.

Regular group sessions

- Group size will always depend on the group age, known vulnerability, gender, the topic, the context and the support available to the group before and after the training.
- To encourage participation in the talk or training the following guidance is offered:
- Youth/Vulnerable adult group: Typically, 10 participants

- Adult Group: Typically, 15 participants
- As a rule, the more support a group can be offered on an ongoing basis the larger the group that may be accommodated.
- One facilitator/trainer will work with a small group and additional facilitators will be available to work with larger groups.
- For youth groups a group leader needs to be available in the room or accessible at any point if required.

Larger Events

- Connections Programmes work well when integrated into larger events. Large events have strengths and young people do benefit from connecting with other young people at youth events to discuss, learn and share peer to peer.
- Larger events can be organized, however at larger events there is an increased risk that a painful emotional response may go unnoticed. Such events require considerable planning in advance to bring about increased safety and follow-up support for each person attending.
- At larger events people who can offer support for that community should be present
- e.g. GP, available counsellors, ministry, teachers etc.

STANDARD: leaders / teachers

Experience has taught us that there can be an increase in disclosure for self-harm or suicide either during the session or in the subsequent days and weeks following the session. **It is therefore not safe practice to encourage young people to speak up and ask for help if those that they might speak too are not confident to respond.**

Appropriate training for youth leaders includes Connections Link Life, Help Life or Support Life, ASIST training or equivalent.

Those who are expected to respond need to know what is required of them. A self-harm and suicide prevention statement or policy will help guide staff and volunteers in these incidents.

At all sessions a suitably trained individual within the organization will be required to be present at the session and remain available to speak to and support a participant who is experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation during and after a session.

STANDARD: Promotion

The group need to know about the type of session you are planning for them before they arrive and can choose to attend or not to attend and that there will be no rewards or penalties for attending/not attending. Relevant permission/consent for attendance is in place.

All promotion of talks, training and events should carry a recognized 24hr helpline number, preferably this should be of an agency where all staff are trained and resourced to support crisis for emotional distress and suicide and offer follow-up support. For example, LifeLine.

STANDARD: Room / Space Set Up

Special considerations for emotional health work include ensuring comfort e.g. refreshments available, a quiet and private space which is the right size and suitable for the purpose. It is also important to ensure that the learning space is available for around 30mins following the session to enable the facilitator and leaders to support individual participants.

STANDARD: Methodology

Whilst this facilitator guide can be interpreted as prescriptive, it is meant to offer the user options on how you might communicate the key messages and meet the learning outcomes for learners. Where appropriate facilitators are supported to adopt participatory and experiential learning to enable the transformational learning process.

If you are including new materials e.g. videos, stories, text stories etc. then it is important to ensure that these are supported and agreed by Fresh Minds Education who will assess their suitability to be incorporated. Fresh Minds Education will share all suitably approved resources within the Connections Network for shared use.

Facilitators are also supported to share personal scenarios to achieve the learning outcome when safe and appropriate to do so and in line with the principles of confidentiality and respect and professional standards around appropriate disclosure.

STANDARD: Follow Up/Aftercare

The group has access to appropriate literature and web references for use after sessions. This involves the redistribution of 24hr helpline numbers and the accessible and public display of local support agencies.

The organizing agency will follow up with individual participants who disclose vulnerability for suicide or who have been identified by the facilitator as in need of a check-in.

Module 4

SUPPORT FOR SENIOR AMBASSADORS

1. Senior Ambassadors Members Area

The senior Ambassadors Area will be a crucial place for you to navigate and refer to regularly. This is where you will find recent updates, the course presentations, your user guides, PCBs, and any additional forms you may need.

2. Logging into the Members Area

Username

You will receive your own unique username when you attend, this is what you will use to access the members area in addition to your password.

Password

You will receive your own unique Password when you attend, this is what you will use to access the members area in addition to your username.

3. Resources

The resources created for the Connections Link Life have been carefully and thoughtfully compiled so that a facilitator will be able hit all the learning outcomes of the programme, and learners will receive training and learning that meets the standards of FME, if the Seniorr Ambassador follows the manual, use the presentations, explore the metaphor and topics, and work through the recorded scenarios.

The resources have been created so that you can also cater to the group you are delivering to, there are several additional scenarios for your group to explore that explore, addition, self-injury, rural settings, and youth centric. There is opportunity to expand on the topics, working through them creatively, or going deeper into the underpinning knowledge.

The workbook has been created to align with the presentation, it follows the 6 topics and is a resource that learners can follow along with the session and look back to recap the learning, topics and how they can help someone save their own life. There is scope for learners to self-reflect on their own emotional and mental wellbeing and explore how they can cultivate a life worth living.

The Pocket cards are a brilliant resource to keep focused when working through the Connect-4 Ways Model, the card also directs you to the possible Supports that an individual may need.

4. Keep Safe Website pages

FME have 3 areas on our websites:

- Keep Safe Everyone: <https://freshmindseducation.com/help-services-information/>

- Keep Safe Veterans and Veteran Families:
<https://freshmindseducation.com/veterans-help-services-and-information/>
- Keep Safe Youth <https://fmelostvoices.com/support/>

These three pages are all linked to one another for the user to easily move between the different signposting and support.

5. Newsletters

Our Senior Lead Ambassadors write a range of blogs on various subjects, these are shared with different groups including our Senior Ambassadors, these blogs explore a range of topics that may be useful knowledge and learning for you as a Senior Ambassador and for your delivery as these topics or themes may be present in your groups.

6. Connections Approved Facilitator Directory

If you would like to deliver the programme on behalf of FME at open to public events please let us know, you can fill in the **Personal Profile Proforma** and let us know the areas in which you would be willing to deliver, this is a great help to us as the programmes are cascaded across the whole of Northern Ireland and we would love to have Senior Ambassadors willing and able to deliver in their areas.

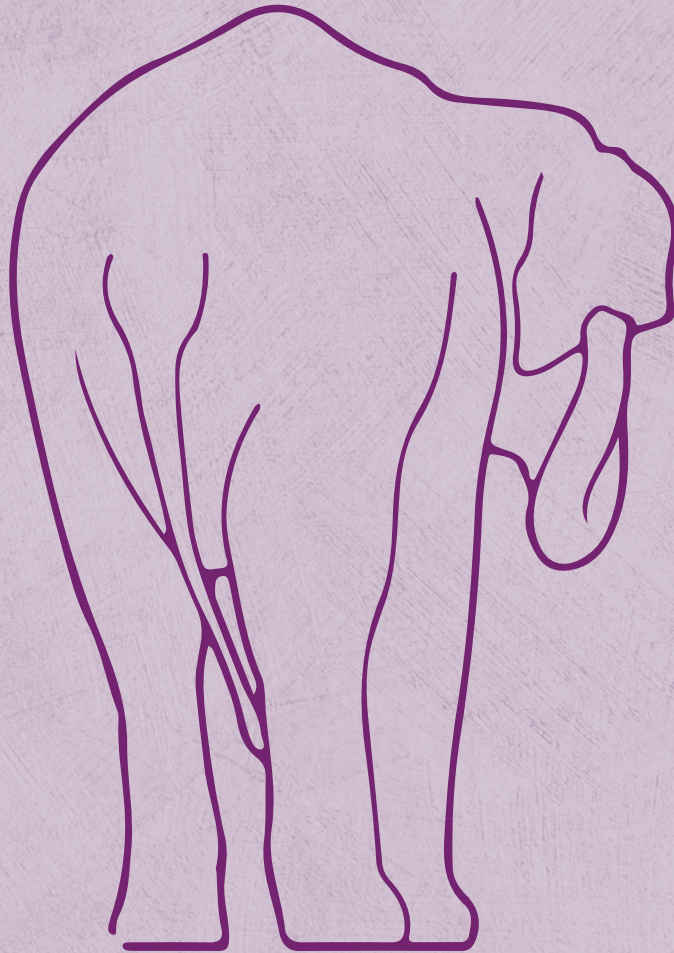
7. Facebook Group

There is a Facebook group that you can opt into called **Connections Ambassadors Hub Facebook group**, you can find this by scanning the QR code in your manual. This offers a way to keep connected to your peer facilitators and keep connected with FME updates. This group helps acts as a hub for senior ambassadors to have an extra layer of peer support.



CONNECTIONS

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