

Event Organisation Guide on Mental Health Awareness



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Introduction

This guidebook was created with the intention to help organise events on mental health awareness. We address local coordinators and volunteers of the “Mind the Mind – To combat the Stigma of Mental Illness” in particular. It can also serve as a valuable resource to everyone who is interested in organising events on mental health awareness. The guidelines are general and can inspire students to start with the organisation process.

1. What kind of event?

The first question in the process of organising an event is about what kind of event you intend to organise. Here, we will present you several examples on how to raise awareness on mental health:

Presentations

EFPSA

As a general introduction, we strongly recommend you to give a presentation on EFPSA itself, displaying all its services and events. This gives a chance to encourage in particular, psychology students, to become involved in one of the teams in this student association. Very often, university students are unaware of the various volunteering possibilities.. We are happy to provide you with existing EFPSA presentation slides. This broad presentation can be linked to mental health awareness by presenting the Social Impact Initiative as a service of EFPSA with its focus on various campaigns, such as “Mind the Mind – To combat the stigma of Mental Health” or “Better Together”.

Mind the Mind

To present relevant volunteering opportunities in the field of mental health awareness, you could present the "Mind the Mind – to combat the stigma of mental illness“ – campaign as an example of a student-led campaign. We encourage you to use the existing Mind the Mind presentation and focus mainly on the “Get Involved”-part. Here, it is essential to point out the possibility to be involved as a local coordinator or volunteer.

Stigma of Mental Illness

To raise awareness on mental health and the stigma of mental illness, you could give a short presentation about various mental disorders, the prevalence and the impact of societal stigma. To create a presentation, you first need to look up resources on the internet or in the library. It might be helpful to focus on a certain aspect of the stigma:

- social (discrimination, marginalisation)
- institutional (human rights abuses on mentally ill people, access to mental health, discrimination on the workplace)
- self (fear, stereotype threat, isolation)

This form of presentation is self-directed and can be adjusted to your own interests in mental health. You could contact professors at your university or people working in the mental health sector for advice. While understanding the effects of the stigma, it is also important to show possible opportunities on how to get involved, such as European or local campaigns.

Interviews

Raising awareness on mental health can be done through various methods. One popular method is to conduct an interview that is related to mental health. You could contact social workers, local psychologists, researchers or any expert working in the field of mental health. It is also possible to conduct an interview with a person suffering from a mental illness and publish it anonymously.

Contact your potential interviewee with a short outline of your interview, the duration and the platform for its publication. There are various platforms for publication, such as local student newspapers, social media pages of campaigns or blogs. As the Social Impact Initiative of EFPSA, we offer you the opportunity to publish your interview on our own blog:

<http://mindthemindproject.blogspot.com/>

Round Table Discussions

This format allows you to lead a round table discussion and serves as an open space for various perspectives and opinions.

You should start this project by contacting experts on mental health for a round table discussion. Invite researchers, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists or people who experience mental illness and are able to share their experience.

After you have chosen a suitable location, prepare questions for all speakers on the table. Remember to ask relevant and open questions. An example is given below illustrating an analysis of OCD from different perspectives:

Example (1).

For person experiencing the mental illness:

What is OCD for you?

What are the biggest practical problems you encounter in your everyday life because of your mental illness?

How do the people around you react to your illness? Do you feel stigmatised?

Do you have some positive experience because of your mental illness or has it taught you anything important?

How can members of society provide support to people suffering with mental illness?

For professional:

What is OCD for you?

What are the ways to treat this mental illness?

What are the biggest improvements of people suffering from OCD and how do you as professionals contribute to that?

How can members of society provide support to people suffering with mental illness?

It is important that you involve your audience in this open discussion. Spare around 20 minutes at the end of the discussion for questions from the audience.

It is also possible to organise such a round table with just one person sharing their experience of mental illness and the story of recovering from this illness. Ask questions that you prepared in advance which focus on the support from their environment. It is important to point out what kind of behaviour from their friends and family helped them recover. Let them share their experience of stigma.

Student Clubs

For many students, volunteering is an integral part of student life. Most universities have active student clubs or associations that focus on various projects. You could think about starting your own student club or campus initiatives. These initiatives could focus on peer counselling or mental health education to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

Clinical Weekend

Clinical psychology is interesting to many students but often, general lectures do not include a variety of clinical topics. You could make a small Organising Committee and contact various experts in the field of clinical psychology (mental illnesses, minorities, sexuality, war stress, forensic psychology...), make a reservation on a lecture room and promote it well. You can set a two-day event with snack breaks and contact potential sponsors to get small thank-you gifts for the lecturers. You can also set a small participation fee - in the end you can get small gifts also for the participants. The event can be open to the general public but with an interest bigger than your lecture room you might want to set up application forms and give priority to psychology students or students dealing with mental health in their future line of work.

2. Occasions for events

For promotional purposes we advise you to frame your event in a certain way. Here is a list of occasions that can be used:

- Fresher's /Orientation Week
- Lectures, Seminars
- EFPSA Day
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Suicide Awareness Day

3. Location for events

Finding a suitable location might be one of the most difficult parts in the organisation process. It might be very helpful to approach existing student associations at your university and ask them whether you could use their venue. Below, you can find a list with possible locations that you could consider.

- university
- student associations
- common rooms of student dorms
- external organisations (local NGOs)

4. Funding of event

Depending on the scale of your event, the costs vary dramatically. Smaller events that take place in the university setting can usually be organised on a low budget. For promotional purposes, it might be helpful to print posters or flyers. You could ask your university or external sponsors whether they can provide you with some funding for printing costs. External sponsors can also provide you with materials that would improve the event (gifts for lecturers, snacks during the event, pens etc.). The Social Impact Initiative of EFPSA would also be able to reimburse you for the printing costs up to a certain amount. Please get in touch with us if you need any support.

5. Promotion of event

Universities usually encourage student activism so you could ask them to share invitations through their websites or email newsletters. Use social media pages and local student groups as channels for promotion.

6. Conducting the presentation

Your presentation on mental health awareness should particularly address the essential advice on opportunities to get involved. A short overview of possible actions can be found below:

- What can you?
 - talk openly about mental health
 - encourage friends to talk about it
 - educate yourself about mental health
 - send letters to politicians

- How can you get actively involved?

- Local Coordinator MtM, BT
- volunteering in EFPSA
- other local campaigns

7. Access to Mental Health

For all events on mental health awareness, we recommend you to provide all participants some guidance on how to get access to mental health institutions. Information about local helplines, psychological and psychiatric services can be printed on flyers or written on a presentation slide. This should usually be presented at the end of every event. Local Coordinator's of Mind the Mind already have a database with contact details of local services that we are happy to share with you.

8. Further Literature and Materials

EFPSA Social Impact Initiative

<https://www.efpsa.org/services/#social-impact-initiative>

Time To Change

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/get-involved-schools/school-resources>

AKA – NAMI Planning Guide:

<https://www.nami.org/getattachment/Extranet/NAMI-State-Organisation-and-NAMI-Affiliate-Leaders/Awareness/AKA/Activities-You-Can-Plan-or-Join/AKA-NAMI-Planning-Guide-FINAL.pdf>