



Mental Health First Aid and Psychosocial Risk Management

3 days

21 training hours

08:30 to 16:45 daily

23 scheduled dates

Stress, trauma, financial pressure and burnout affect performance and safety just as physical hazards do, and they remain largely unaddressed on most sites. This course equips workplaces to assess psychosocial risk and to respond to a colleague in distress with practical mental health first aid. The approach is grounded in the pressures faced by African workforces, including exposure to violence, retrenchment fears and community hardship.

Course objectives

This programme builds the practical capability to plan, control and evaluate the work it covers, to a standard the delegate's own organisation can rely on. By the end of the 3 days, delegates should be able to:

- Recognise common mental health conditions and signs of distress at work.
- Assess psychosocial hazards such as workload, harassment and trauma exposure.
- Apply a mental health first aid approach to support a colleague in crisis.
- Have a supportive conversation and guide someone toward professional help.
- Reduce psychosocial risk through workload, culture and management practices.
- Protect responder wellbeing and maintain appropriate confidentiality.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, delegates will be able to:

- Explain the importance of mental health and psychological wellbeing in the workplace.
- Identify workplace factors that contribute to psychosocial risk.
- Recognise warning signs that call for immediate attention or referral.
- Open a supportive conversation in an appropriate and respectful way.
- Use the appropriate referral and escalation pathways.
- Identify organisational measures that reduce psychosocial risk.
- Protect their own wellbeing while supporting colleagues in distress.
- Recognise common mental health conditions and the signs of emotional distress.
- Assess psychosocial hazards arising from workload, work relationships, organisational change and workplace culture.
- Apply a practical mental health first aid approach when supporting a colleague.
- Listen effectively, without judgement and without attempting to diagnose.
- Support an employee while holding professional boundaries and confidentiality.
- Explain how leadership, workload management and workplace culture prevent psychosocial harm.

Who should attend

This programme suits anyone responsible for employee wellbeing, workplace safety, people management or psychosocial risk: senior, departmental, operations and line managers, supervisors and team leaders, human resources managers and officers, employee relations and organisational development practitioners, wellness and employee assistance programme coordinators, occupational health practitioners, health and safety and SHEQ officers, and workplace mental health first aiders, peer supporters and wellness champions. It is also useful to those involved in organisational change, restructuring and retrenchment, workplace conflict, trauma response and critical incident management.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY LEVEL

No previous mental health qualification is required. The programme is written for workplace personnel who may encounter employees in psychological distress, and it builds practical workplace skills rather than clinical ones. Delegates should be familiar with their own organisation's human resources, wellness and escalation arrangements, since the referral pathways covered on day three are applied to those.

Course modules at a glance

Module	Topic	Main competency
01	Understanding mental health in the workplace	Treating wellbeing as a workplace safety matter
02	Common mental health conditions	Recognition of the conditions seen at work
03	Recognising signs of distress	Early identification of a colleague in difficulty
04	Workplace stress and its causes	Understanding where the pressure comes from
05	Understanding psychosocial hazards	Identification of psychosocial hazards
06	Assessing psychosocial risk	Structured psychosocial risk assessment
07	Introduction to mental health first aid	Knowing the role and its limits
08	Responding to someone in distress	A safe and appropriate first response
09	Supportive conversations	Confident and respectful conversations
10	Referral and professional support	Correct referral and escalation
11	Confidentiality, boundaries and ethics	Ethical handling of personal information
12	Reducing psychosocial risk at source	Organisational risk reduction
13	Responder wellbeing	Self protection and sustainable support
14	Practical case studies and integrated exercise	Applied judgement in realistic situations
15	Developing a workplace psychosocial risk action plan	A plan the delegate can implement

The 3 day programme

Each training day runs 08:30 to 16:45 with morning and afternoon breaks and a lunch break. Timings can be adjusted to suit an in house group or a client's shift pattern.

Day 1: Mental health in the workplace and psychosocial risk

Time	Session	Key topics	Activity
08:30 to 09:00	Registration and introduction	Introductions, expectations, course overview, delegate experience of workplace pressure	Delegate introductions
09:00 to 10:15	Module 1: understanding mental health in the workplace	Mental health and psychological wellbeing; mental health as part of workplace health and safety; mental health against mental illness; effects on performance, productivity and safety; stigma and misconceptions; the roles of managers, supervisors, human resources and employees	Group discussion on stigma in the delegates' own workplaces
10:15 to 10:30	Tea break		
10:30 to 11:45	Module 2: common mental health conditions	Anxiety and anxiety related symptoms; depression and depressive symptoms; stress related conditions; trauma and trauma responses; burnout and prolonged workplace stress; substance use concerns; sleep difficulty and fatigue; how symptoms vary between individuals	Reviewing behaviour and performance changes that signal a condition
11:45 to 12:30	Module 3: recognising signs of distress	Emotional and psychological warning signs; changes in behaviour, attendance and performance; social withdrawal; irritability; changes in concentration and decision making; signs that someone is overwhelmed	Identifying warning signs from short workplace vignettes
12:30 to 13:15	Lunch		
13:15 to 14:15	Module 3 continued: ordinary pressure against situations needing intervention	Distinguishing ordinary workplace stress from distress requiring a response; recognising when someone needs additional support; thresholds for escalation	Sorting scenarios by whether they need intervention
14:15 to 15:00	Module 4: workplace stress and its causes	Sources of workplace pressure; excessive workload and unrealistic deadlines; long working hours; workplace conflict; bullying and harassment	Mapping the main pressure sources in the delegates' workplaces
15:00 to 15:15	Tea break		
15:15 to 16:15	Module 4 continued: pressures facing African workforces	Job insecurity and retrenchment concerns; financial pressure; exposure to violence and traumatic events; organisational restructuring and change; work and life pressures; community and social hardship	Group discussion on local pressures and their workplace effects
16:15 to 16:45	Practical activity and day one review	Workplace scenarios analysed for mental health concerns, warning signs, possible workplace causes, appropriate initial responses and situations requiring escalation	Scenario analysis exercise

WHAT DELEGATES TAKE AWAY FROM DAY 1

- A working understanding of mental health as part of workplace health and safety.
- The ability to recognise the conditions and warning signs most often seen at work.
- A view of the pressures driving distress in the delegate's own workforce.
- A clearer line between ordinary workplace stress and distress that needs a response.

Day 2: Psychosocial risk assessment and mental health first aid

Time	Session	Key topics	Activity
08:30 to 09:00	Day one recap	Review of mental health awareness, warning signs and sources of pressure	Question and answer session
09:00 to 10:15	Module 5: understanding psychosocial hazards	What a psychosocial hazard is; psychosocial risk against physical workplace risk; workload and work intensity; working hours and fatigue; role ambiguity and lack of control; workplace relationships and conflict; bullying, harassment and discrimination; poor communication; lack of organisational support; job insecurity; organisational change; exposure to traumatic events; remote and isolated working	Hazard identification walkthrough
10:15 to 10:30	Tea break		
10:30 to 11:30	Module 6: assessing psychosocial risk	Principles of psychosocial risk assessment; identifying hazards and the employees affected; assessing likelihood and impact; gathering employee feedback; reviewing workplace data and trends; identifying high risk environments; developing controls; monitoring effectiveness	Working through a risk assessment method
11:30 to 12:30	Module 6 continued: practical risk assessment	A simplified psychosocial risk assessment covering hazard identification, employees affected, existing controls, risk factors, additional controls, management responsibilities and follow up	Exercise: complete a psychosocial risk assessment for a workplace scenario
12:30 to 13:15	Lunch		
13:15 to 14:15	Module 7: introduction to mental health first aid	What mental health first aid is; its purpose and its limits; the role of the first responder; what a first aider can and cannot do; recognising when someone needs immediate assistance; staying calm; approaching a distressed colleague; creating a safe environment; listening without judgement; holding boundaries	Discussion of the boundary between support and treatment
14:15 to 15:00	Module 8: responding to someone in distress	Starting the conversation; using appropriate questions; active listening; showing empathy; avoiding judgement and unsuitable advice; recognising when someone is overwhelmed; knowing when to seek assistance; referral and escalation pathways	Demonstration and structured practice
15:00 to 15:15	Tea break		

Time	Session	Key topics	Activity
15:15 to 16:15	Module 8 continued: practical role play	Approaching a distressed colleague, opening a supportive conversation, active listening, responding to emotional distress, holding boundaries and identifying when referral is required	Role play in pairs with observer feedback
16:15 to 16:45	Role play debrief and day two review	What worked, what did not, and what delegates found difficult	Facilitated debrief

WHAT DELEGATES TAKE AWAY FROM DAY 2

- A completed psychosocial risk assessment for a realistic workplace scenario.
- A clear understanding of what mental health first aid is and where it stops.
- Practised experience of approaching and listening to a colleague in distress.
- Confidence about when a situation must be referred rather than handled alone.

Day 3: Support, referral and psychosocial risk reduction

Time	Session	Key topics	Activity
08:30 to 09:00	Day two recap	Review of psychosocial risk assessment and the first aid response	Question and answer session
09:00 to 10:00	Module 9: supportive conversations	Preparing for a difficult conversation; choosing the time and setting; opening the conversation; listening and asking well; showing empathy; managing emotional responses; responding when someone does not want to talk; avoiding stigma; confidentiality; boundaries; following up. The framework is observe, approach, listen, support, refer and follow up, with the emphasis on initial support rather than diagnosis or treatment	Structured conversation practice
10:00 to 10:15	Tea break		
10:15 to 11:00	Module 10: referral and professional support	The limits of workplace mental health first aid; when professional assistance is required; internal support mechanisms; employee assistance programmes; occupational health services; human resources and wellness support; external professional services; emergency escalation; urgent and high risk situations; documenting concerns appropriately	Mapping the delegate's own referral pathways
11:00 to 11:45	Module 11: confidentiality, boundaries and ethical considerations	Confidentiality at work; what may and may not be shared; appropriate information handling; professional boundaries; avoiding diagnosis and treatment; respecting employee autonomy; when confidentiality must be limited because of an immediate safety concern; escalating through the right channels; protecting employee dignity	Ethical dilemma discussion
11:45 to 12:30	Module 12: reducing psychosocial risk at source	Reviewing excessive workloads; managing unrealistic deadlines; resource allocation; working hours and fatigue	Identifying work design changes that reduce risk

Time	Session	Key topics	Activity
12:30 to 13:15	Lunch		
13:15 to 14:00	Module 12 continued: leadership, culture and organisational support	Supportive leadership and manager awareness; effective communication; early identification of concerns; constructive feedback; psychologically safer workplaces; addressing bullying and harassment; reducing stigma; employee assistance programmes; wellness initiatives; peer support structures; return to work support	Group work on organisational interventions
14:00 to 14:45	Module 13: responder wellbeing	Recognising responder fatigue; emotional boundaries; compassion fatigue; secondary stress; managing personal reactions; knowing when to step back; seeking support; building personal resilience; preventing burnout among workplace support personnel	Personal boundary setting exercise
14:45 to 15:00	Tea break		
15:00 to 16:00	Module 14: practical case studies and integrated exercise	Scenarios covering severe workplace stress, burnout, trauma after a critical incident, financial pressure, conflict between employees, bullying and harassment, job insecurity during restructuring, a manager concerned about an employee, and a colleague needing referral	Group case study: risks, first response, referral and follow up
16:00 to 16:45	Module 15: workplace psychosocial risk action plan and close	Key psychosocial risks in the delegate's workplace; existing controls; gaps; immediate actions; management responsibilities; employee support mechanisms; referral pathways; awareness initiatives; monitoring and review	Individual action plan, course review and close

WHAT DELEGATES TAKE AWAY FROM DAY 3

- A structured approach to supportive conversations that can be used the next day.
- The delegate's own referral and escalation pathways, written down.
- Practical organisational measures that reduce psychosocial risk at source.
- A workplace psychosocial risk action plan the delegate takes back with them.

How the course is taught

The programme is run as practical, competency based training rather than a series of presentations, so delegates rehearse the tasks they are expected to perform in their own working environment. Methods used include:

Facilitator led presentations

Workplace examples

Group discussions

Case studies

Practical exercises

Psychosocial risk assessment exercises

Role play and simulated conversations

Scenario based problem solving

Group activities

Individual reflection

Workplace action planning

How delegates are assessed

Formative assessment

- Group discussions and workplace examples
- Case study analysis
- Scenario based problem solving
- Individual reflection

Practical assessment

- Analysing workplace scenarios for warning signs and appropriate first responses
- Completing a simplified psychosocial risk assessment
- Approaching a distressed colleague and opening a supportive conversation in role play
- Working through integrated workplace case studies
- Producing a workplace psychosocial risk action plan

Certification

- Delegates who complete the programme receive a BMC Training certificate of attendance, subject to the attendance and course requirements.

Dates, venues and fees

The programme runs at 23 scheduled dates across the BMC Training network. Every date below is open for registration.

Dates	Venue	Days	Fee per delegate
28 to 30 Sep 2026	Durban	3 days	R13,000
29 Sep to 1 Oct 2026	Pretoria	3 days	R13,000
30 Sep to 2 Oct 2026	Windhoek	3 days	US\$1,500
5 to 7 Oct 2026	Gaborone	3 days	US\$1,500
6 to 8 Oct 2026	Maseru	3 days	US\$1,500
7 to 9 Oct 2026	Mbabane	3 days	US\$1,500
12 to 14 Oct 2026	Lusaka	3 days	US\$1,500
13 to 15 Oct 2026	Harare	3 days	US\$1,500
14 to 16 Oct 2026	Lilongwe	3 days	US\$1,500
19 to 21 Oct 2026	Blantyre	3 days	US\$1,500
20 to 22 Oct 2026	Mozambique	3 days	US\$1,500
21 to 23 Oct 2026	Nairobi	3 days	US\$1,500
26 to 28 Oct 2026	Dar es Salaam	3 days	US\$1,500
27 to 29 Oct 2026	Kigali	3 days	US\$1,500
28 to 30 Oct 2026	Kampala	3 days	US\$1,500

Dates	Venue	Days	Fee per delegate
2 to 4 Nov 2026	Accra	3 days	US\$1,500
3 to 5 Nov 2026	Lagos	3 days	US\$1,500
4 to 6 Nov 2026	Cairo	3 days	US\$1,500
9 to 11 Nov 2026	Mauritius	3 days	US\$1,500
10 to 12 Nov 2026	Dubai	3 days	US\$1,500
11 to 13 Nov 2026	Online	3 days	US\$900
8 to 10 Dec 2026	Johannesburg	3 days	R13,000
9 to 11 Dec 2026	Cape Town	3 days	R13,000

Fees are per delegate. South African venues are priced in rand; other locations and live online in US dollars. Fees exclude 15% VAT where applicable. Group bookings of three or more delegates from the same organisation qualify for a reduced rate. This course is also available as in house training, delivered at your own site on dates that suit your operation.

To book or request a quotation

Email registration@bmctrainings.org, WhatsApp +27 68 540 3736 or call +27 12 012 6265. Full course details and the live calendar are at www.bmctrainings.org.