



Subud Australia

Mental Health Policy

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Background and Purpose

The Subud organisation has a responsibility to ensure appropriate support and care is available for members with mental health and related problems. This policy aims to assist the Subud community exercise its duty of care to members.

Members can suffer from a range of mental health problems, including:

Anxiety	Multiple Personality Disorder
Depression	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Suicide	Grief / Loss
Obsessive Compulsive Disorders	Dementia / Alzheimer's
Bipolar Disorder (extreme mood swings)	Drug and Alcohol Addiction
Schizophrenia	Eating Disorders (e.g. Anorexia, Bulimia)
Psychosis	Anger

This policy has been developed in consultation with:

- Members with professional mental health qualifications or experience in mental health
- Members who have mental health and related problems
- Members who are carers
- Helpers
- National Committee
- Other interested members

Key Issues

1. Many members and applicants are affected by mental health and related problems
2. There is need for education and raising awareness in the Subud community of mental health issues and their treatment
3. Members need to have mental health problems handled by professional practitioners
4. Many Subud members have professional mental health qualifications and/or experience
5. Helpers have a pastoral role in the spiritual care of members
6. The Subud community needs to provide better support and care to:
 - members with mental health and related problems
 - family and friends of members with mental health and related problems
 - helpers and members interacting with members with mental health and related problems
7. This is a complex issue to address. This document is only intended to provide guidelines. Flexibility will be needed as what works for one person may not be appropriate for another

1. Members and applicants affected by mental health and related problems

'The brain can go wrong like any other part of the body' Howard Beeton, WA Dept. Health

"It is estimated that 23% of the total Australian adult population are affected by one or more mental disorders in any given year" National Mental Health Report 2007

Helpers and members need to:

- be informed on mental health issues and this Subud Policy
- be aware of the extreme sensitivity of many people with mental illness
- be aware that in general, it is advisable not to open applicants while they are affected by a serious mental health or related problem
- be aware that in general, it is advisable that Subud members who become affected by a serious mental health or related problem do not to participate in the latihan, for the present.

Recommendations

- Members and applicants with a mental health or related problem should be encouraged to seek advice from mental health professionals.
- Local groups should be encouraged to offer appropriate care to affected members or applicants.
- Local Helpers' groups need to liaise nationally with each other and with the National Helpers, to ensure that the situation of specific members with mental health problems is known.
- Remember to respect the privacy of individuals and to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality.

2. Education and Raising Awareness

Educating and raising awareness in the Subud community of mental health issues will play a key role in ensuring that members with mental health and related problems receive appropriate care and are not stigmatised.

Recommendations

- Local Groups obtain information about:
 - Mental health conditions (e.g. brochures from local Health Departments etc.)
 - Local services (e.g. contact details of emergency mental health response teams)
 - Support groups (e.g. GROW, Beyond Blue*)
- Workshops / Training
 - Members undertake Mental Health First Aid Course¹ in local area
 - Conduct Mental Health workshops at congress (to explore this in the Subud context)
- Publications
 - Articles from members about their experiences
 - Use Subud Australia website www.subud.org.au to share information and provide links to mental health sites
- Develop guidelines for dealing with mental health affected members

* Examples include:

www.beyondblue.org.au (The National Depression Initiative)

www.grow.net.au (12 step recovery-focussed program for mental health)

www.sane.org (Sane Australia is a national charity working for a better life for people with mental illness)

3. Members and applicants need to have mental health and related problems handled by professional practitioners

Subud members need to understand, acknowledge and respect the skills and benefits of current mental health practice.

Subud members need to acknowledge and support any professional treatment being undertaken by members with a mental health or related problem.

4. Subud Members with professional Mental Health expertise and/ or experience

There are Subud members with qualifications and/or experience in the following areas:

- Psychology /Behavioural Sciences
- Counselling
- Medicine
- Alternate / Complimentary medicines

A register of Subud professionals has been developed which identifies their areas of expertise and their willingness to provide advice on specific mental health problems

Recommendations

- Make the Register of Specialists available on the Subud Australia Website www.subud.org.au and through the National Office
- Encourage people to liaise with contacts on Register of Specialists when dealing with mental health issues in the Subud community

5. Pastoral Care

It is currently understood best practice that people suffering from mental health problems need:

- Professional Mental Health treatment
- Caring family/friends
- Practical community support

Each case is unique and Group members need to work together to gain understanding of which member(s) should be involved and what support is needed at the time for the mental health affected member and their family/friends.

We all need to develop a deeper understanding of the interface between spiritual experience and mental unwellness. There is a difference between spiritual crises and a mental illness. It is sometimes difficult to recognise the difference between these conditions.

We need to respect the privacy of members and understand the principles of confidentiality and disclosure when interacting with members.

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- Encourage helpers and members to develop listening skills
- Encourage members to undertake a Mental Health First Aid¹ Course
- Encourage Groups to develop/discuss procedures for managing the privacy and confidentiality of members

¹ Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The course was developed to help people provide support for someone with a mental health problem and to improve the mental health literacy of the Australian Community (see Appendix and visit site at <http://www.mhfa.com.au/>)

6. The Subud Community Providing Support and Care

Testing

Helpers need to be aware that, testing could be harmful rather than helpful, depending on the nature of the member's mental health problems. There is a risk of increasing or prolonging a mental health episode if inappropriate testing is conducted while the member is actively affected by a mental illness. Special latihans and testing with the family and carers can be very helpful.

Helper 'Burnout'

There is the risk for 'helper burnout' where one helper is 'targeted' by the member with a mental health problem for support and the helper becomes overwhelmed and exhausted by the level of support they are trying to provide.

Similarly, a group of helpers may begin to feel worn out in cases where a member continually seeks testing about their problems and is unable or unwilling to follow-up on the receiving due to their mental health condition.

Helpers need to ensure they are looking after their own well being. This could include having special latihans and involving National Helpers.

Community Support

Living with a mental health problem or being a family member or friend of someone with mental health problems can be hard work a lot of the time, and support is often needed appropriate to the particular condition (i.e. with the aging population there will be special communication and support needs for members with Alzheimers)

Safety

Whilst respecting the confidentiality of mental health affected members, if the possibility of public or personal safety is at risk, the committee and members should be informed of the situation.

Recommendations

- Offer a regular, special latihan to friends and family of affected member
- Encourage friends and families to develop a support group for themselves (e.g. National website, list server etc.)
- At congresses:
 - Be inclusive and ensure members with mental health problems feel welcomed and have opportunities to participate
 - Have a contact buddy at Congress for members with a mental health problem
 - Have a Mental Health First Aid service available at Congress (e.g. use members from the register of mental health specialists)
- Group Helpers and Committee are kept informed of any 'nomadic' members with mental health issues

7. Summary

Providing appropriate support to our members is a complex and difficult area to address.

- We need to adopt a long term approach and recognise that it will be a continual process of learning.
- We need to continue to raise awareness and increase understanding of mental health in the Subud Community obtain so that we can appropriately deal with this issue.
- We are unlikely to find immediate solutions that 'fit' all cases – therefore we need to adopt a flexible attitude and recognise that what works for one individual, might not be appropriate for others.

This policy is a living document which needs to be reviewed and developed collaboratively by the National Committee, National Helpers, Members with Professional expertise and other concerned members over time.

APPENDIX

The Mental Health First Aid Program (Information from <http://www.mhfa.com.au/>)

While people often know a lot about common physical health problems, there is less knowledge of mental health problems. This can result in stigmatising attitudes and prevents people from seeking appropriate help early. It also can prevent appropriate support to friends and family members in the wider community, simply because they do not know how.

The course was developed in 2000 in order to help people provide initial support for someone with a mental health problem and to improve the mental health literacy of the Australian Community.

Participants receive a course manual and also a certificate at the completion of the course. Those who have completed the course have been very positive about the knowledge and skills they have acquired.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses are conducted in every state and territory of Australia. These participants have been very varied, including teachers, nurses, case managers, support workers, social welfare staff, employment agencies staff, personnel staff, members of the general public, and staff of many Commonwealth State and Local Government Departments.

In March 2005, three culturally and linguistically modified MHFA courses were launched for Croatian, Vietnamese and Italian communities in Australia. A specialised MHFA course for Aboriginal communities in Australia will be launched in October 2006.

Course Information

The Mental Health First Aid Course is designed as a 12 hour course. The delivery format is flexible.

The course covers the mental health crisis situations of:

- Suicidal behaviour/thoughts
- Panic attack/Acute stress reaction
- Acute psychotic behaviour

The on-going mental health problems covered are:

- Depression
- Anxiety disorder
- Gradual onset psychosis
- Substance misuse

Cost

Your local instructor can inform you of their individual fees. Click on the link below to find the contact details of an instructor in your area.

Location of Courses

The course can be conducted wherever an instructor can travel! For more information, download the PDF version of our brochure.

How to Arrange a Course

Contact any of the MHFA instructors listed on the Instructor page. Most instructors are willing to travel but need expenses covered.