

“The training helped me know when I was getting stressed out and needed to take a step back.”

I have friends and family who have had mental health issues. These relationships made me think that I didn't know how to speak to them, how to help them in any way, where to point them for advice. That's where I get my interest in the Scotland's Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) Training, which I completed two years ago, and a refresher course recently. I then did Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) on the back of bumping into an old friend who expressed suicidal feelings, and not having the words to respond.

The training has helped me personally. Work can be stressful, and the SMHFA training helped me know when I was getting stressed out and needed to take a step back. It has helped me to help myself. It has also helped me to notice when some of the younger men at work are struggling. Usually there is a lot of banter, but if they are quiet, I can see that something is up. When that happens I feel comfortable asking them if everything is alright – it doesn't take much to ask. ASIST was a very good course, well structured, although heavy going. It has made me feel I could be more prepared if I saw someone standing at a bridge looking down for example – it makes feel that I could help them in any way I could, and that I feel comfortable starting that conversation.

“The training helped me recognise the symptoms she was experiencing.”

Work is very team orientated, and there is a supportive atmosphere. In speaking about the training, my colleagues have seen that everyone would benefit from it. Most people have been affected by mental health or suicide in some way. The SMHFA course is being added to the health and safety check list, and it is hoped that everyone will be trained in it. The training has helped me pick up when someone is wanting to talk about something. The other week, for example, a tradesman at our house ended up pouring out his troubles with this divorce.

The training has helped me in my personal life as well. Two weeks after I did SMHFA, I realised a friend was very unwell. I managed to take her into a local health centre, and from there she was taken straight to Murray Royal Hospital, as she was psychotic. The training helped me recognise the symptoms she was experiencing. After I finished ASIST training, I was able to support a friend who was bereaved by the loss of his brother. I was worried about another friend from statements he made about “not being able to go on”. I felt confident asking the question as to whether he felt suicidal. He said it was just an off the cuff remark, and was also able to reassure me by telling me about positive steps he was taking and things he had going well in his life. Being able to ask the question and discuss things made me confident he did not have any plans in place to take his life.

Anyone can be pretty much guaranteed to know someone who has a mental health issue. Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training is so worthwhile. These are free courses – they are on your doorstep – and they are very beneficial. You don't know, but this course may be enough to save another person's life. It will also help you with your own wellbeing as well.

“I feel comfortable asking them if everything is alright – it doesn't take much to ask.”

If you are affected by any issues raised in this case study or are worried about someone, please contact the Samaritans on 116 123, Breathing Space on 0800 838587 or NHS 24 on 111. In an emergency call 999. For information about mental health and suicide, visit www.suicidehelp.co.uk or download the Suicide? Help! app by searching in your app store.

To find out about training opportunities please email MHTraining@pkc.gov.uk