

## **Mental Health Awareness in a Creative World**

Trainer: Nicki Nalton, Bradford District and Craven Mind

### **Dates, times and venue:**

Wednesday 1st October,	10:00 – 15:00,	BDC Mind, Kenburgh House
Thursday 2nd October,	16:00 – 20:00,	Online
Tuesday 7th October,	12:00 – 17:00,	BDC Mind, Kenburgh House
Monday 13th October,	10:00 – 15:00,	BDC Mind, Kenburgh House
Wednesday 22nd October,	12:00 – 17:00,	BDC Mind, Kenburgh House

**Purpose:** To equip artists with practical awareness and basic skills to compassionately and safely respond to members of the public or other artists/creatives who may be experiencing mental distress in an exhibition or performing environment. This training aims to build confidence, reduce stigma, and promote a supportive atmosphere.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

#### **1. Equip and Enable:**

- Define mental health, mental illness and understand common misconceptions.
- Recognise subtle and overt signs of mental distress.
- Understand the impact of art on emotional states and how it might trigger distress.
- Apply basic, safe de-escalation and communication techniques.
- Know when and how to discreetly involve staff or emergency services.

#### **2. Empower**

- Understand the importance of personal boundaries and self-care in these situations.
- Develop a brief action plan for managing such incidents.

#### **3. Keep Safe**

- Safeguarding

- Signposting
  - Course evaluation
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## **Session Outline:**

### **Hour 1: Understanding Mental Health (60 mins)**

- **1.1 Welcome & Introductions (10 mins)**
  - Trainer and participant introductions.
  - Brief icebreaker: "One word that describes how you're feeling right now"
  - Review learning objectives and ground rules (confidentiality, respect, no judgment).
  - **Activity:** "Myth vs. Fact" quick quiz on mental health to open discussion.
- **1.2 What is Mental Health? (15 mins) - Group Discussion**
  - Defining mental health as a continuum.
  - Brief overview of common mental health challenges (anxiety, depression, serious mental illness, panic attacks) – focussing on *signs*, not diagnosis.
  - Discussing the prevalence of mental health issues in society (1 in 4 statistics).
  - **Discussion:** How might stigma prevent people from seeking help or expressing distress?
- **1.3 Art and Emotional Impact (15 mins) - Group Activity.**
  - How art can evoke strong emotions (positive and negative).
  - Specific to artists: How your work, with its themes and visual language, might resonate deeply or even trigger distress for some viewers.
  - **Group Activity:** Brainstorm examples of art/exhibitions that have a strong emotional impact. Discuss how this impact might vary for individuals.

- **1.4 Identifying Signs of Distress (20 mins) - Breakout Groups to cover one topic per group (use flipchart paper for each topic) and share back to whole group**
    - **Behaviours** - visible signs: agitation, pacing, muttering, tearfulness, withdrawal, sudden changes in behaviour, unusual loudness/quietness.
    - **Body language** - on-verbal cues, eye contact, grooming, unusual clothing for the environment.
    - **Language** - disjointed speech, repetition, expressing hopelessness or paranoia.
    - Emphasis on *observing* rather than *diagnosing*.
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- **Hour 2: Safe Engagement & Communication (60 mins) - Introduce Conversation Toolkit.**
- **2.1 Personal Safety and Risk Assessment (15 mins) - Group discussion**
  - Prioritising your own safety and the safety of others.
  - Recognising escalating vs. de-escalating situations.
  - Maintaining a safe distance; never blocking exits.
  - When *not* to approach alone (e.g., overt aggression, weapons).
- **2.2 De-escalation Principles (15 mins)**
  - Remain calm and composed.
  - The "ALGEE" approach, Approach, Listen, Give Support, Encourage
  - Use a soft, even tone of voice.
  - Non-threatening body language (open posture, hands visible).
  - Avoid direct confrontation or argumentative language.
  - **Mini-Role Play/Demonstration:** Trainer demonstrates calm vs. agitated body language and tone.
- **2.3 Effective Communication – Supportive Conversations (30 mins) - Small Groups of two.**

- **Active Listening:** Paying full attention, nodding, reflective statements ("It sounds like...").
- **Validation:** Acknowledging their feelings without necessarily agreeing with their interpretation ("I can see you're very upset," "It must be difficult").
- **Empathy:** Trying to understand their perspective.
- **Simple, Clear Language:** Avoid jargon, speak slowly.
- **Offer Practical Support:** "Would you like some water?", "There's a quiet bench over here."
- **What to Avoid:** Judging, arguing, diagnosing, promising things you can't deliver, touching without permission.
- **Practice Exercise:** Pair work - participants practice active listening and validation using scenarios.

### **Hour 3: Scenario Practice & Action Planning (60 mins) - Role Play or Group Discussion**

- **3.1 Case Study: "Fragmented Reflections Exhibition" (45 mins)**
  - Present/handout the case study
  - Initial Assessment of situation – Individually
  - To intervene or not – Group
  - Approach and Communication – Role Play in small groups or group discussion
    - **Role-play:** Participants take turns playing Maya, Ms. Vance, and Staff. Focus on the approach, initial conversation, and discreet hand-off.
  - Debrief after each role-play, focusing on what went well and areas for improvement.
- **3.2 Involving Staff and Emergency Services (15 mins)**
  - **Crucial Step:** When and how to discreetly alert venue staff (e.g., eye contact, pre-arranged signal, quiet word).
  - Information to convey to staff (what you observed, what you said/did).

- Understanding the role of staff (they are often the primary responders and have protocols).
- When to consider emergency services (immediate danger to self or others, severe psychosis, unresponsiveness).
- Importance of knowing the venue's specific procedures and key contacts.

#### **Hour 4: Resources & Self-Care (60 mins)**

- **4.1 Establishing Boundaries as an Artist (15 mins) - Group Discussion**
  - Your role is to support and connect, not to provide therapy or ongoing care.
  - Why maintaining professional boundaries is important for your own well-being and for the individual in distress.
  - How to gracefully disengage after handing over to staff.
- **4.2 Self-Care for Artists (15 mins)**
  - Recognising the emotional toll of witnessing distress, especially if your art is emotionally resonant.
  - Strategies for self-care: debriefing with colleagues, talking to a supervisor/friend, mindfulness, creative outlets, setting boundaries around your work.
  - Importance of not taking on the burden of others' distress.
  - **Discussion:** What are some healthy coping mechanisms specific to creatives?
- **4.3 Developing a Personal Action Plan (15 mins) - Individually.**
  - **Individual Activity:** Participants will fill out a short template:
    - "If I observe distress, my first step will be..."
    - "My discreet signal to staff is..."
    - "Key local mental health support numbers I'll remember are..."
    - "One thing I will do for my own self-care after a difficult incident is..."
    - "My Wellbeing Support Person is..."
  - Opportunity for participants to share their plans if comfortable.
- **4.4 Safeguarding & Signposting (15 mins)**
  - What is Safeguarding?

- When to Signpost.
- **Local Resources (Bradford District):**
  - NHS 111 (non-emergency medical advice).
  - The Samaritans (116 123 - confidential support, 24/7).
  - BDC Mind (local services).
  - Crisis teams/Mental Health Access Hubs
  - Arts-specific mental health charities (e.g., if any specific to visual arts).
- Providing information cards/handouts with key helplines.
- Emphasise *signposting* – guiding them to help, not being the help themselves.
- **4.5 Q&A and Wrap-Up (15 mins)**
  - Open forum for any remaining questions.
  - Reiterate key takeaways.
  - Session evaluation QR code and forms and Thank You.