

The logo for actlaw society, with 'act' in orange, 'law' in white, and 'society' in grey, all in a sans-serif font on a dark blue rounded rectangle.

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2024 Intensive Conference

BRINGING THE BALANCE

13 – 14 MARCH 2024 | NOVOTEL CANBERRA



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Insights in Mental Wellness: Exploring Challenges in the Legal Field

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Mental Health in the Law



Suicide & Mental Health Statistics - AIHW

Suicide & self-harm monitoring data

Over 3,249 deaths by suicide occurred in Australia in 2022

Equates to 8.9 lives lost by suicide every day.

Males are 3 to 4 times more likely to take their own life than females

Females are more likely to attempt suicide than males or be hospitalised for intentional self-harm than males

There is no evidence that suspected deaths by suicide have increased in recent years

Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people

Over one-third of deaths in Australians aged 15-24 were due to suicide in 2021

The highest proportion of deaths by suicide occur during mid-life

There is an increase of death by suicide rates are highest among middle aged and older males

Results of a birth cohort analysis show trends in suicides have changed over time

Using linked data, the estimated suicide risk is higher among those with fewer years of education

Approximately 75% of people had a usual residence in NSW, VIC, or QLD. The highest jurisdictional death by suicide rate was living in NT

Lifeline Statistics

- **40,674** Life changing calls answered by our crisis supporters
- **146** new crisis supporters inducted
- **3612** callers having suicidal thoughts and struggling to keep safe
- **18,521** (approx.) hours of crisis support
- **11,000** volunteers in
- **41** locations



Lifeline Defined Canberra

Lifeline Canberra exists to support people in crisis and change the lives of those experiencing thoughts of suicide.

For over 50 years, our highly skilled volunteers have provided 24/7 support via our local 13 11 14 Crisis Support Service.

Every week we lose more than one Canberran to suicide and, every day Lifeline Canberra telephone crisis supporters prevent the loss of many more.

Lifeline Canberra is a leading charity in the ACT, setting the benchmark for suicide prevention and community-wide awareness for mental health advocacy.



Definitions

(Mental health, mental illness, who can diagnose illness)

- **Mental health** refers to a state of well-being in which individuals can cope with the normal stresses of life, to be able to work productively, and to contribute to their communities. It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social aspects of one's life, influencing how we think, feel, and behave.
- **Mental illness** on the other hand, refers to a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking and behaviour, leading to significant distress and impairment in daily functioning. These conditions can include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and many others.
- **Diagnosis** of mental illness is typically conducted by mental health professionals including psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and psychiatric nurse practitioners. These professionals assess symptoms, conduct evaluations, and utilise standardised diagnostic criteria to determine the presence of mental health disorders and, develop appropriate treatment plans.
- **It is important** to seek help from qualified professionals if experiencing symptoms of mental illness, as early intervention and treatment can significantly improve outcomes and quality of life.



Four C's and how this places us at risk in environments

- In the context of mental health in the workplace within the law society, the Four C's framework – Capability, Compatibility, Capacity, and Commitment plays a crucial role in fostering a supportive and conducive environment.
- **Capability** involves providing adequate resources and training to employees, including mental health awareness programs and access to professional support services.
- **Compatibility** ensures that workplace policies and practices align with mental health regulations and, accommodations mandated by the law society.
- **Capacity** refers to the organisation's ability to effectively manage workloads and provide reasonable adjustments for employees with mental health conditions.
- **Commitment** entails demonstrating a genuine dedication to promoting mental well-being, such as through proactive measures to reduce stigma, support open dialogue, and provide ongoing support for employees' mental health needs by addressing these.
- The four C's can create a workplace culture that prioritises mental health, complies with legal requirements, and supports the well-being of its members.

Risk Factors

Biological
Biochemistry
Hormonal
Physical Health

Historical
Childhood Experience
Family History
Trauma



Psychological
Response to Stress
Attitudes/Beliefs
Thinking Patterns

Social
Social Support
Life Events
Workplace and
Relationships

Mental health continuum for changes in behaviour

The mental health continuum for changes in behaviour typically includes a range of states from mentally healthy to experiencing mental health challenges.

○ Here are some examples

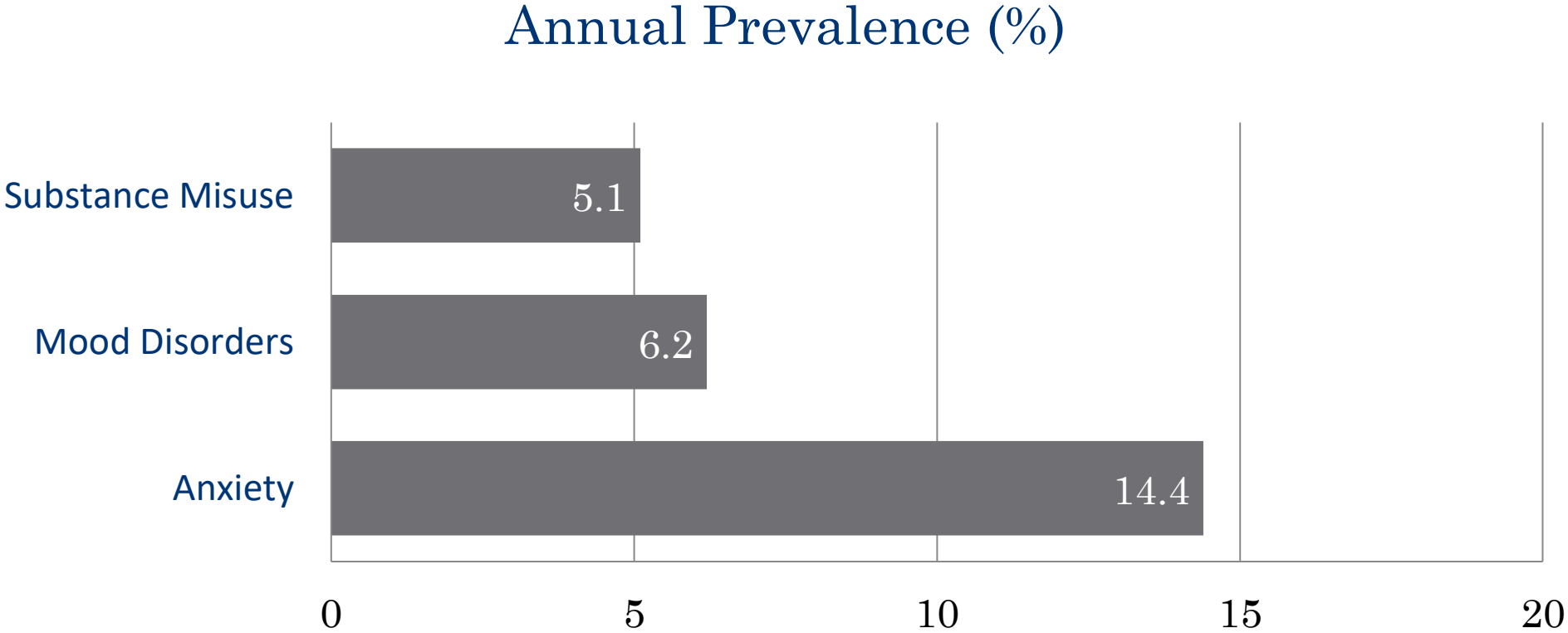
- **Mentally Healthy:** Individuals in this state typically exhibit behaviours consistent with good mental health, such as maintain regular routines, engaging in enjoyable activities, maintaining healthy relationships, and effectively managing stress.
- **Reacting:** This state involves experiencing mild to moderate stressors or challenges that may temporarily impact behaviour. Behaviours may include irritability, changes in sleep patterns, decreased motivations, or difficulty concentrating.
- **Injured:** Individuals in this state may be experiencing more significant mental health challenges, such as heightened stress, anxiety, or depression. Behaviours may include withdrawal from social activities, changes in appetite, increased substance use, or difficulty coping with daily responsibilities.
- **III:** This state represents individuals experiencing severe mental health issues that significantly impact daily functioning and well-being. Behaviours may include self-harm, suicidal ideation, severe mood swings, psychosis, or extreme withdrawal from others.
- **Recovering:** This state involves individuals actively engaging in treatment or self-care practices to improve their mental health. Behaviours may include attending therapy, practicing self-care routines, seeking social support, and actively working towards recovery goals.
- **Flourishing:** Individuals in this state have achieved a high level of mental well-being and are thriving in various aspects of their lives. Behaviour may include a strong sense of purpose, resilience in the face of challenges, positive relationships, and a sense of fulfillment.

Understanding the mental health continuum helps individuals and communities recognise and respond to changes in behaviour, providing appropriate support, and resources based on the level of need.


Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.

- World Health Organization -

Top 3 Mental Illnesses in Australians



	HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
Changes in Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal mood fluctuations • Calm • Confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritable • Impatient • Nervous • Sadness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Anxious • Pervasive sadness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily enraged • Excessive anxiety/panic • Depressed mood, numb
Changes in Thinking and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good sense of humour • Takes things in stride • Ability to concentrate and focus on tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaced sarcasm • Intrusive thoughts • Sometimes distracted or loses focus on tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitude • Recurrent intrusive thoughts/images • Constantly distracted or cannot focus on tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noncompliant • Suicidal thoughts/intent • Inability to concentrate, loss of memory or cognitive abilities
Changes in Behaviour and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically and socially active • Present • Performing well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased activity/socialising • Procrastination • Occasional performance issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance • Tardiness • Decreased performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal • Absenteeism • Can't perform duties/tasks
Physical Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal sleep patterns • Good appetite • Feeling energetic • Maintaining a stable weight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble sleeping • Changes in eating patterns • Some lack of energy • Some weight gain or loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restless sleep • Loss of appetite • Some tiredness or fatigue • Fluctuations or changes in weight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot fall/stay asleep • No appetite • Constant and prolonged fatigue or exhaustion • Extreme weight gain or loss
Changes in Substance Use and Addictive Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited alcohol consumption, no binge drinking • Limited/no addictive behaviours • No trouble/impact due to substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular to frequent alcohol consumption, limited binge drinking • Some to regular addictive behaviours • Limited to some trouble/impact due to substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent alcohol consumption, binge drinking • Struggles to control addictive behaviours • Increasing trouble/impact due to substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular to frequent binge drinking • Addiction • Significant trouble/impact due to substance use



What is Vicarious Trauma?

- Vicarious trauma, also known as secondary trauma or compassion fatigue, refers to the emotional and psychological stress experienced by individuals who are exposed to the trauma experience of others, such as therapists, social workers, journalists, or first responders.
- It occurs when individuals empathise deeply with those they serve or support, leading to symptoms to those of the primary trauma survivors.



What is moral injury?

- Moral injury is a psychological concept that refers to the emotional and existential distress individuals experience when their deeply held moral beliefs and values are violated or compromised.
- Unlike trauma, which typically involves physical harm or threat to life, moral injury arises from actions or events that transgress one's moral code, resulting in feelings of guilt, shame, or betrayal of one's principles. It often occurs in contexts such as military combat, healthcare setting or within institutions where individuals witness or participate in morally challenging situations.
- Moral injury can manifest as profound inner conflict, loss of meaning or purpose, and struggles with self-forgiveness. Addressing moral injury often involves acknowledging and processing the moral dilemmas experienced, seeking social support, engaging moral repair activities, and finding ways to reconcile personal values with lived experiences.



How to ask someone
if they're ok?



Having Healthy Conversations

- Approach the person
“I would like to talk to you about this.”

- Share your observations
“I noticed that...”
“I’m worried about...”

- Ask open-ended questions
“What’s going on?”
“What has changed for you?”

- Listen without judgement
“I see...yes...hmm”

- Be calm and objective



- Acknowledge the person
“I’m hearing that...”
“It sounds like you feel ...”

- Encourage them to find their own solutions
“What would help right now?”

- Check in often

- Take appropriate action(s)

- Reassure the person
“I’m here to support you.”

Let's Talk About You

Self-care is not only an act of love for oneself
but also a vital step towards preventing
suicide.

By nurturing our mental, emotional, and
physical well-being, we build resilience and
create a stronger foundation to face life's
challenges.

Questions

Do you have any questions?

Presenter: Carrie Leeson

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