

World Mental Health Day 2021:
“Mental Health in An Unequal World”

Toolkit for UN Organizations



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Prepared by
Mental Health Strategy Team

Foreword

World Mental Health Day is recognized every year on 10 October. At the United Nations, Mental Health Day is celebrated throughout the month of October, with panel discussions, events and activities across the UN System. For us, World Mental Health Day is simply not a one-day event. It provides us with the opportunity to have important conversations about the mental health and well-being of our personnel, as well as to take action and provide support wherever is needed.

Three years after the launch of UN System Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, World Mental Health Day is an opportunity to commit again to the importance the UN places on the mental health and well-being of its personnel. It will also be an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in the past three years, and ensure progress continues to be made in the coming years.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many personnel have experienced a decline in their mental health and healthy habits. Due to this, the development of mental health initiatives has been prioritized and new resources to help personnel take care of themselves and others have been launched.

During the month of October 2021, the Mental Health and Well-being Strategy Team, along with system-wide partners, will carry out a series of events and activities focusing on this year's theme, "Mental Health in an Unequal World" to raise awareness and launch a call for action to protect UN populations at risk of poor mental health.

We are asking every UN Organization to take action to raise awareness about mental health, celebrate the progress made to create a workplace that enhances good mental health, promote and disseminate resources around workplace mental health and wellbeing, and consider how they can support those more at risk of poor mental health.

This toolkit is prepared to support UN organizations to undertake activities over the month of October and beyond, to promote mental health in the workplace and acknowledge the impact of an unequal world on everyone's mental health.



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World Mental Health Day Campaign 2021

World Mental Health Day is marked every year for global mental health education and awareness. The World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) announced the theme for World Mental Health Day 2021 which is '*Mental Health in an Unequal World*'. This theme was chosen by a global vote including WFMH members, stakeholders and supporters because the world is increasingly polarized, with the very wealthy becoming wealthier, and the number of people living in poverty still far too high.

2020 highlighted inequalities due to race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, and the lack of respect for human rights in many countries, including for people living with mental health conditions. Such inequalities have an impact on people's mental health.

This theme, chosen for 2021, will highlight that access to mental health services remains unequal, with between 75% to 95% of people with mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries unable to access mental health services at all, and access in high income countries is not much better. Lack of investment in mental health disproportionate to the overall health budget contributes to the mental health treatment gap.¹

The 2021 World Mental Health Day campaign '*Mental Health in an Unequal World*' will enable us to take actions to reduce inequalities and encourage practitioners to share what they know about mental health inequality and practical ideas to tackle it.

At the United Nations, the campaign will extend throughout the month of October, and we are encouraging activities across the whole month. The following four topics have been identified and will be explored during the month of October:

- Supporting good mental health in the UN System
- Supporting LGBTQI+ personnel
- Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations
- Support Personnel with A Mental Health Condition

This toolkit is prepared to support UN organizations to get involved in the activities organized for World Mental Health Month and to help them promoting the available resources; it also provides guidance on how to ensure that successful World Mental Health Month activities are organized in each organization. In the toolkit you will find:

- UN system resources (events, learning material, comms package)
- Guidance for organizing your own event (Checklists, comms material, activities ideas)
- Links to our Trello Board, where all material is stored and ready to be downloaded.

¹ <https://wfmh.global/2021-world-mental-health-global-awareness-campaign-world-mental-health-day-theme/>

What UN System resources are available to assist you?

a. UN System Panel Discussions

Weekly events:

- **Week 1 (4-8 Oct): Supporting good mental health in the UN System**
Address the issues that perpetuate mental health inequality locally and globally
- **Week 2 (11-15 Oct): Supporting LGBTQI+ personnel, event in collaboration with UN Globe**
How everyone can flourish equally in an unequal world
- **Week 3 (18-22 Oct): Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations**
Reduce sources of mental health problems
- **Week 4 (25-29 Oct): Support Personnel with A Mental Health Condition**
Reduce stigma and discrimination due to mental health problems



A calendar of events, with links and additional information will be published in our [Trello board](#).

b. Communication package

All communication material can be found in our [Trello board](#). What will you find there?

- ✓ Broadcast messages
- ✓ Intranet articles
- ✓ Calendar of events
- ✓ Sample flyers
- ✓ MS Teams backgrounds
- ✓ Email signature
- ✓ Social media posts
- ✓ And much more!

c. Resources you can promote

UN System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy Resources

- [Strategy - full](#)
- [Strategy summary](#)
- [Supporting others – Factsheet](#)
- [Living and working with mental health condition – Factsheet](#)
- [Self-care – Factsheet](#)
- UN System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy [recorded events](#)

Resources from the “Lead and Learn” programme:

Factsheets for Managers and Leaders

Factsheet 1: Why is mental health and well-being important?

[Arabic](#) | [Chinese](#) | [English](#) | [French](#) | [Russian](#) | [Spanish](#)

Factsheet 2: How can you improve mental health and well-being?

[Arabic](#) | [Chinese](#) | [English](#) | [French](#) | [Russian](#) | [Spanish](#)

Factsheet 3: Thriving as a manager and leader

[Arabic](#) | [Chinese](#) | [English](#) | [French](#) | [Russian](#) | [Spanish](#)

Podcasts for Managers and Leaders

Episode 1: Mental health and well-being for managers and leaders

[Arabic_](#) | [Chinese_](#) | [English_](#) | [French_](#) | [Russian_](#) | [Spanish_](#)

Episode 2: What can help you thrive?

[Arabic|](#) [Chinese_](#) | [English_](#) | [French_](#) | [Russian_](#) | [Spanish_](#)



A list of resources is also available in our [Trello board](#)

What Can You Do in Your Organization?

a. Organize your own event

- Hold a World Mental Health Day Event on one of the weekly themes outlined above (See guidance on how to organize an event in Annex 1 and 2).

b. Share information

- Share resources on mental health and wellbeing, available in all UN languages.
- Send broadcast messages about World Mental Health Day/Month to all personnel.
- Draft intranet articles on World Mental Health Day/Month.
- Include posters, infographics, email signature, in your internal communications.
- Use MS Teams background during the month of October.
- Use social media resources to raise awareness and reach all personnel.



All communication material can be found in our [Trello board](#).

c. Other Activities

- Share messages from managers talking about their roles in creating an environment that support wellbeing and mental health.
- Share some general wellbeing tips and resources from the UN webpage, e.g. Headspace
- Do an online/offline role play with your team (see instructions on annex 4)
- Do a Mindfulness exercise (see Instruction on annex 5)
- Send out a Call for action and ask colleagues to share “How are you really?” through sending pictures, short stories or poems around their mental health
- Organize a virtual coffee chat / speed dating to check-in with another colleague on how they are doing, really
- Do some wellness together, e.g. prepare a face mask, share tasty recipes, share funny pictures and good memories
- Have a virtual cookie baking class together
- Invite to a skill-sharing session on hobbies, e.g. painting, cooking or other
- Invite your colleagues to share one thing they are grateful for, proud of, looking forward to.
- Invite your team to get active and have an on- or offline dancing/yoga/stretching session together – raise awareness with this on how being active is key to improve one’s mood (cheat tip: you can do a YouTube tutorial together as well, e.g. from Headspace or Yoga with Ariane)
- Invite your colleagues to have an offline weekend/day and detach from internet – have a sharing of thoughts the week after
- Come together with your colleagues and research on mental health services/resources in your region

Annexes

Annex1: Things to Consider When You Plan for Events and Activities

Develop your planning tool

- ✓ Identify events dates, activities, roles and responsibilities, actions and deadlines.
- ✓ Conduct regular meeting to ensure clarity of roles.
- ✓ Track progress and identify any challenges.
- ✓ Identify speakers, and coordinate contacting them early enough.

Prepare the communication campaign package

- ✓ Flyer for your main events
- ✓ Social posts, to announce about your events and messages
- ✓ Internal emails to announce and invite
- ✓ Intranet announcements (10-7 days before the event)
- ✓ Intranet articles (post-event to share objectives achieved and summary of the event) with photos (if applicable)
- ✓ Post-event social post (if applicable)

Prepare and test needed logistics

- ✓ Identify platform (MS Teams, Webex, Zoom) and access rights. Is the event for your organization only or there will be external guests?
- ✓ Make sure speakers are comfortable with the platform and its technical aspects. Organize a prep. meeting with speakers to test IT.
- ✓ Assign roles and tasks distribution- prior and during the event.
- ✓ Prepare backup plan.
- ✓ Test apps and tools to use during the event (Slido, Mentimeter, etc.)
- ✓ Make sure the event is recorded

Annex 2: Sample Concept Note for Online Event

Overview:

[Add relevant info]

Objectives:

- I. [Add relevant info]
- II. [Add relevant info]

Themes to be explored:

- I. [Add relevant info]
- II. [Add relevant info]

Event details and logistics:

Name:

Organizers/hosts:

Platform:

Target Audience:

Speakers:

Facilitator:

Proposed Date/Time:

Event recorded: y/n

Run of show (sample):

8:55 - 9:01	Opening slide
9:01 - 9:15	Opening remarks by xxx
9:15 – 9:30	Presentation by xxx
9:30 – 9:55	Q&A segment
9:55 – 10:00	Closing remarks by xxx
10:00 - END	Closing Slide

Include event flyer (see samples available on the [Trello board](#))

Annex 4: Activity Idea – Role play



“All are equal, but some are more equal than others.”

George Orwell, Animal Farm

Instruction for Role Play “One finger up...”

Setting:

- Time needed: 45-60 minutes
- In-office or via virtual meeting possible with videos on or raising hand function

Topics:

Equal opportunities, discrimination, poverty, disability

Learning Objectives:

- Promotion of empathy
- Sensitization for unequal distribution of opportunities
- Raising awareness of the possible, individual consequences of belonging to certain social minorities or cultural groups

Preparation:

- Select diverse roles depending on the number of participants (see below)
- Assign randomly each participant one role with the explanation that the participants should try to understand their role, that it does not matter that they have so little information and that their own fantasy is important.

Role Play:

- Every participant should be aware of his role and the following statements due to its role without sharing it with the group.
- Now read the 10 statements aloud:
 1. **You have the feeling that you can express your opinion freely and that the others take you seriously:**
 2. **You are not afraid to get into a police control.**
 3. **Your medical care is secure.**
 4. **You look optimistically into the future.**
 5. **You can learn the profession you want.**
 6. **You can fall in love with whoever you want.**
 7. **You are not afraid to fall asleep at night.**
 8. **You have access to the Internet.**
 9. **You know where to turn when you need advice and help.**
 10. **In the place where you live, you need not be afraid of war or natural disasters.**

- If a participant can affirm a statement, they may raise one finger.
- After each statement, take a break so that the participants have time to react and to look around to be able to compare their position.

Evaluation

1. Ask the participants to not share their role profiles first
2. Ask how the participants felt during this game.
Possible questions:
 - What was it like to take raise one more finger or not?
 - What prevented you from raising a finger?
 - Who felt particularly disadvantaged?
 - Which human rights were not guaranteed or in danger for individuals?
3. Now ask participants to read out their role card.
 - How easy/difficult was it to invent and play your role?
 - Was it possible to imagine the person well?
 - What needs to be done to achieve greater equality and justice?

Role Profiles

- You are an unemployed, single parent mother in Denmark.
- You are a 21-year-old US American man, who is in a wheelchair.
- You live in South Africa, are middle-aged and HIV positive.
- You are a 19-year-old refugee from Afghanistan and recently in Greece arrived.
- You are a Peruvian construction worker. You have lost an arm at work and find no more work.
- You are a 19-year-old soldier in China
- You are a 16-year-old blind student in Australia, which for one year is happy with her boyfriend.
- You are an illegal immigrant from Albania and live unrecognized in Austria.
- You are a deaf 9-year-old girl in Cuba.
- You are a 14-year-old girl from Angola, who was seriously injured in a mine accident. You have lost both legs and will never have more children.
- You survived a fire. Since then, your face is strongly scarred and your Friends do not recognize you. You live in Nepal.
- You are a boy with a mental disability in India and are daily taken from the school bus and stay after school until 16 o'clock in a day care center.
- You are a 14-year-old girl in Eritrea, often have headaches and see the world around you around very blurry.
- You are a 16-year-old Brazilian woman, have a 1-year-old child and live on the street.

Annex 5: Activity Idea- Mindfulness exercise

Instructions

Invite your colleagues to a short mindfulness exercise online or offline.

Share the six meditation tips and the benefits of regular meditation practice. Ask for questions and then facilitate the guided meditation. You can read the suggested breathing exercise instruction, start a [Headspace meditation](#) or [Mindfulness Session recording](#) or realize own ideas.

Have some minutes to reflect on the exercise and sharing experiences. Introduce your colleagues to Headspace for further guided meditation sessions.

6 tips on how to meditate for beginners

1. Start small – 5 deep breathes already can have a calming effect
2. Just sit - you don't need a special environment or equipment to do it
3. Follow your breath
4. Thoughts come and go
5. You can do it anywhere – integrate it into your daily life, while waiting for the train, while brushing teeth, during lunch break
6. Practice with instruction first

Meditation benefits

- Meditation clears your mind – to meditate means taking a breath from the daily troubles
- It helps you to stay calm – it increases the awareness of your present moment
- To meditate is to inspire positive emotions – practicing loving-kindness meditation helps to cultivate compassion towards yourself and others
- It helps you to focus - a focused mind helps you to be more creative and in touch with your innate problem-solving skills
- It helps to achieve a greater sense of self-awareness
- To meditate can help to improve sleep - meditating can help put you in a deeply relaxed state - a prerequisite to falling asleep

Guided breathing meditation

- Find an upright but at the same time comforting position, your spine is straight. Soften your gaze and get aware of the space around you. Whenever you are ready, take some deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth...
- With the next exhalation close your eyes and start to breathe in and out through your nose in its natural rhythm...
- Settle into your body position and to whatever surrounds you, all the sensations and sounds. Take a moment to wander through your body, notice any spots of comfort or discomfort – without judging but simple observing...
- Without thinking too much about it remember yourself why you are sitting here, meditating, observing what is going on within yourself. And just with a sense of what this is, bring the attention to your breath now. Observe where in your body you can feel the breath. Try to pick up the rhythm of your breathing, the expanding and falling sensation of your chest and abdomen...

- Continue to watch your breath in that way. Whenever your mind wanders, bring yourself back to the current moment, to this exercise. Without judging, simply observing...
- Let go of any focus at all now...
- Now start to focus on your breathing again... with inhaling be aware of the present moment, with exhaling let go of any thoughts in your mind...
- Deepen your breath, breathe in through the nose, and loudly out through your mouth...
- Start to move your fingers and toes, give yourself a gentle stretch, and do some intuitive movements.
- Keep your eyes closed for a few more breathes and whenever you are ready open your eyes and come back.