

RE: Mental Health First Aid for Adults

I attended this all day training on July 15<sup>th</sup> this year. The facilitators were Tim Malone and Kathryn Henderson. The program is interactive and lively, emphasizing and modelling our need to be physically and mentally active, socially engaged, and to continue to learn throughout our lives.

I went with the intent to evaluate the program, to make sure that Nannette and I aren't duplicating resources as we develop our dementia-training program, but I learned far more than I imagined I would.

- I was surprised by the extent of mental health problems in the USA ...it is the leading cause of disability, followed by heart disease and cancer.
- Suicide prevention is a focus of Mental Health First Aid; I didn't realize suicide is a growing problem
- ALGEE is the acronym for First Aid Steps when you're facing someone in crisis
  - Access for Suicide or harm
  - Listen, nonjudgmentally
  - Give reassurance and information
  - Encourage professional help
  - Encourage self-help and support strategies
- I saw the distinction between mental disorders and the disease of dementia
- I learned how All of us are affect by mental disorders...The audience of participants were often triggered by something the facilitators explained ...The audience needed to talk about how they have experienced mental disorders, from friends, families, from themselves.

I admired Tim and Kathryn as they, time after time, had to redirect the program away from the audience's need to tell their stories.

- I came to realize how each of us, at one time or another, have experienced mental disorders...a divorce, a death of a loved one, loss of a job...many of life's events cause thinking disorders. RECOVERY is the goal.
- The big take away from Mental Health First Aid for Adults is similar to what Nannette and I offer in the dementia training...The ALGEE steps gives us an outline of what we can do to help, instead of reacting negatively to someone's outburst and making a situation worse. In Savvy Caregiver, we borrow from the master of nonviolent communication, Marshall Rosenberg who said, "Don't just do something, stand there."

Be with the person, don't react. Respond thoughtfully, by observing and listening. Naturally, if the person is in danger or suicidal, we would call 911. Simply listening, giving assurance, encouraging a person seek professional help and other support can defuse a mental health crisis. My summary is a small speck of what you need to learn. Please take this training.

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/> Find a Course near you! –Jan Molnar-Fitzgerald, Chair