West Coast First Aid for Anxiety
Wilderness & Urban

Course Description

This course provides training for first aiders responding to individuals experiencing anxiety symptoms, and is adapted for those working both in urban and in wilderness settings. While we may maintain certification in first aid training, such programs tend to focus on physical health while neglecting support for mental well-being. In practice, professionals may encounter mental health challenges in their work with clients at least as often as physical accidents or injuries.

Anxious responses in clients, ranging from nervousness or worry to physiological symptoms and panic attacks, are a common encounter in the field, be they related to a pre-existing mental health diagnosis or simply a response to a new experience. Learners will be provided with an orientation to what anxiety is, how it works in the body, assessment tools, connection to outside resources, and supportive intervention strategies for field use.

This course has been originally designed for those having a professional, but not therapeutic, duty to others in wilderness settings. However, it is adapted to those working in urban settings as well, and will be of value to anyone who may encounter anxiety; in recreational, personal, or Good Samaritan contexts.

Instructor

Donetta Cooper (Daye Cooper)
- M.A. Counselling (2018)
- M.A. Anthropology (2010)
- Clinical Counsellor working in child, youth, and adult mental health
- Level Three Guide and Executive Director, Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of B.C.
- 16 years of experience as a professional wilderness guide

Prerequisites

- No specific academic prerequisites. A working knowledge of English is required.
- Designed with wilderness professionals in mind, and widely applicable to urban settings.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the learner will be able to:
- *"Help someone not have anxiety ruin their trip"*
- Identify what anxiety is and how it works in the body
- Differentiate field-manageable anxiety symptoms from other conditions
- "Prepare the Toolbox": demonstrate interpersonal skills for mental well-being
- Utilize specific anxiety interventions to support symptoms in the field
- Identify and respond to a suspected panic attack

- Access external support resources for themselves and their clients

Course Topics / Content
- Introductions
    - Ice breakers, road map, group guidelines
    - Scenarios, experience, and tools we already have
- What is anxiety?
    - Neurological, physiological, diagnostic, and emotional perspectives
    - Glimpse at evidence-based anxiety treatments available
- West Coast and nature-based supports:
    - What's already working
    - Glimpse at research on the mental health benefits of self-care & outdoor activity
- Prepare the Toolbox: Skills for supporting mental well-being
    - Grounding, listening, reflecting
- Assessment for Anxiety Symptoms
    - Differential diagnoses
    - "Lizard Brain vs Wizard Brain"
- Interventions
    - Specific intervention tools for use in field contexts
- External Resources
- Scenarios / Roleplays
- Course Feedback

Resources & Materials
- WFA-A Key Concepts and Interventions laminated pocket guide
- Activity handouts
- Certificate of completion

Logistics
- This is an 8-hour course, including breaks. Most open-enrollment courses run 8:30am-12:30pm, with bio and reflection breaks.
- Please come rested and bring a notebook, pen or pencil, and a personal tea mug.
- Exploration of mental health topics can be challenging or triggering for learners. Self-care is emphasized during this course. You are encouraged to let the instructor know ahead of time if you anticipate some of the course material might be personally challenging. You are also encouraged to practice self-care throughout the course and take a personal break when you need to.
- Cost for 2019 is $130. A 40% discount is available for teachers, youth workers, community volunteers, and certified wilderness guides. This includes herbal tea, light healthy snacks, and workshop materials.
- Pre-registration is required.