



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK 2026

Volunteering is more than just giving your time; it's about creating change, inspiring growth, and leaving a lasting impact. Every effort, no matter how small, contributes to a greater purpose. As you embark on this journey, remember that true leadership is rooted in service, and the knowledge you share today can shape the future of many.





WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Ofentse Youth Wellness!

Thank you for joining us in our mission to bring mental health awareness to high school learners across South Africa. Your commitment to breaking stigma and supporting young people is what makes our work possible. This handbook is your comprehensive guide to volunteering with us.

It contains everything you need to know; from our story and values to practical facilitation techniques and safety protocols. Mental health awareness saves lives. By volunteering with us, you are a part of creating safe spaces where learners can talk openly about their struggles, learn coping strategies, and understand that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Every workshop you facilitate, every conversation you have, and every learner you reach makes a real difference. We are honoured to have you on this journey with us. Let us shape stronger minds for brighter days – together.

Enjoy!





Summary

The name **Ofentse** means "victory" or "triumph" in Setswana. It represents our belief that every learner can triumph over mental health challenges when given the right support, tools, and understanding.



Vision

To cultivate a generation of empowered, resilient, and mentally healthy young people in South Africa who understand that mental wellness is essential to living fulfilling lives.



Mission

To bring mental health awareness, education, and support directly to high school learners across South Africa through free, accessible, and impactful workshops that create safe spaces for honest conversations about mental wellness.



Our Core Values

EMPOWERMENT

We believe in empowering learners with knowledge, tools, and confidence to take charge of their mental wellness.

COMPASSION

We approach every learner with empathy, understanding, and respect for their unique experiences.

INCLUSIVITY

We create safe, judgment-free spaces where all learners feel welcomed and valued.

EVIDENCE-BASED

Our programs are informed by research, best practices, and expert guidance in mental health and youth development.

ACCESSIBILITY

Mental health support should be free and available to all learners, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

INTEGRITY

We operate with transparency, honesty, and ethical principles in all our activities.

BREAKING STIGMA

Mental health support should be free and available to all learners, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

COLLABORATION

We partner with schools, mental health professionals, and organizations to maximize our impact.



What we do

Our Primary Program: Mental Health Awareness Workshops

We conduct free, interactive mental health awareness workshops in high schools across South Africa. These workshops:

Educate learners about:

- What mental health is and why it matters
- Common mental health challenges
- The mind-body connection
- Breaking stigma and myths

Equip learners with:

- Practical coping strategies for stress and anxiety
- Emotional regulation techniques
- Self-care practices
- Crisis resources and when to seek help

Empower learners to:

- Support peers who may be struggling
- Speak up and seek help without shame
- Build resilience and emotional intelligence

Workshop Formats In-Person Workshops:

- Conducted at schools during school hours
- 60-90 minute sessions
- Interactive discussions, activities, and Q&A
- Small to large group settings

Online Workshops:

- Digital sessions via video conferencing
- Accessible to learners across geographic locations
- Same quality content as in-person sessions



OUR IMPACT

We have directly reached over

720+

high school learners through our interactive mental health awareness workshops

Every single workshop is

100%

free to schools and learners, removing all barriers to accessing mental health education.

Within 3 years, our goal is to reach

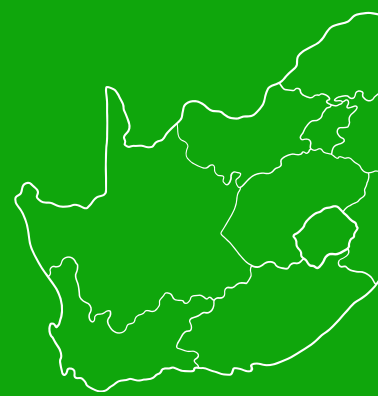
50 000

learners annually, making Ofentse Youth Wellness the leading youth mental health awareness organisation in South Africa

Mental health spectrum



VOLUNTEER ROLES & OPPORTUNITIES



There are many ways to contribute to our mission. Here are the main volunteer roles:

Workshop Facilitators

What You'll Do:

- Conduct mental health awareness workshops at schools
- Lead discussions and activities
- Answer learner questions
- Create safe, engaging learning environments

Ideal For:

- Psychology students or graduates
- Educators or youth workers
- Anyone passionate about mental health and comfortable speaking to groups

Communications & Marketing

What You'll Do:

- Manage social media accounts
- Create awareness campaigns
- Design graphics and materials
- Write blog posts and articles
- Promote workshops and volunteer opportunities

Ideal For:

- Social media enthusiasts
- Marketing or communications professionals
- Graphic designers
- Writers

Administrative and Training Support

What You'll Do:

- Assist in providing training to incoming volunteers
- Maintain volunteer records and databases
- Handle administrative correspondence

Ideal For:

- Organized detail-oriented individuals
- HR or administrative professionals
- Those passionate about capacity building

Regional Coordinators

What You'll Do:

- Coordinate workshops in your city/region
- Build relationships with schools
- Recruit and support local volunteers
- Organise logistics (venue, materials, scheduling)

Ideal For:

- Experienced facilitators ready for leadership
- Strong organizers and communicators
- People with connections to local schools

Provincial Coordinators

What You'll Do:

- Manage social media accounts
- Create awareness campaigns
- Design graphics and materials
- Write blog posts and articles
- Promote workshops and volunteer opportunities

Ideal For:

- Social media enthusiasts
- Marketing or communications professionals
- Graphic designers
- Writers

Partnerships, Fundraising & Research

What You'll Do:

- Write funding proposals and grant applications
- Analyse workshop feedback and data
- Conduct research on youth mental health

Ideal For:

- Research students or graduates
- Data analysts
- People with corporate or non-profit experience
- Monitoring & evaluation specialists

At Ofentse Youth Wellness, you will be supported every step of the way with training, resources, and a collaborative team environment. Our mission is to empower young people with the tools and support they need to thrive mentally, emotionally, and socially. We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds and experience levels; what matters most is your passion for youth wellness and commitment to creating positive change.



EXPECTATIONS & COMMITMENTS

As a valued member of our volunteer team, we believe in creating a mutually respectful and productive partnership. To ensure we can deliver quality programs and support to the youth we serve, we ask that all volunteers uphold the following standards. These expectations help us maintain a professional, reliable, and supportive environment for everyone involved.



Commitment:

- Honor your time commitments
- Give advance notice if you can't fulfill a responsibility
- Stay active and engaged



Professionalism:

- Represent the organization professionally
- Arrive prepared and on time
- Communicate clearly and respectfully



Learning:

- Complete all required training
- Stay updated on policies and procedures
- Continuously improve your skills



Alignment:

- Uphold our mission, vision, and values
- Follow our Code of Conduct
- Prioritize learner safety and well-being



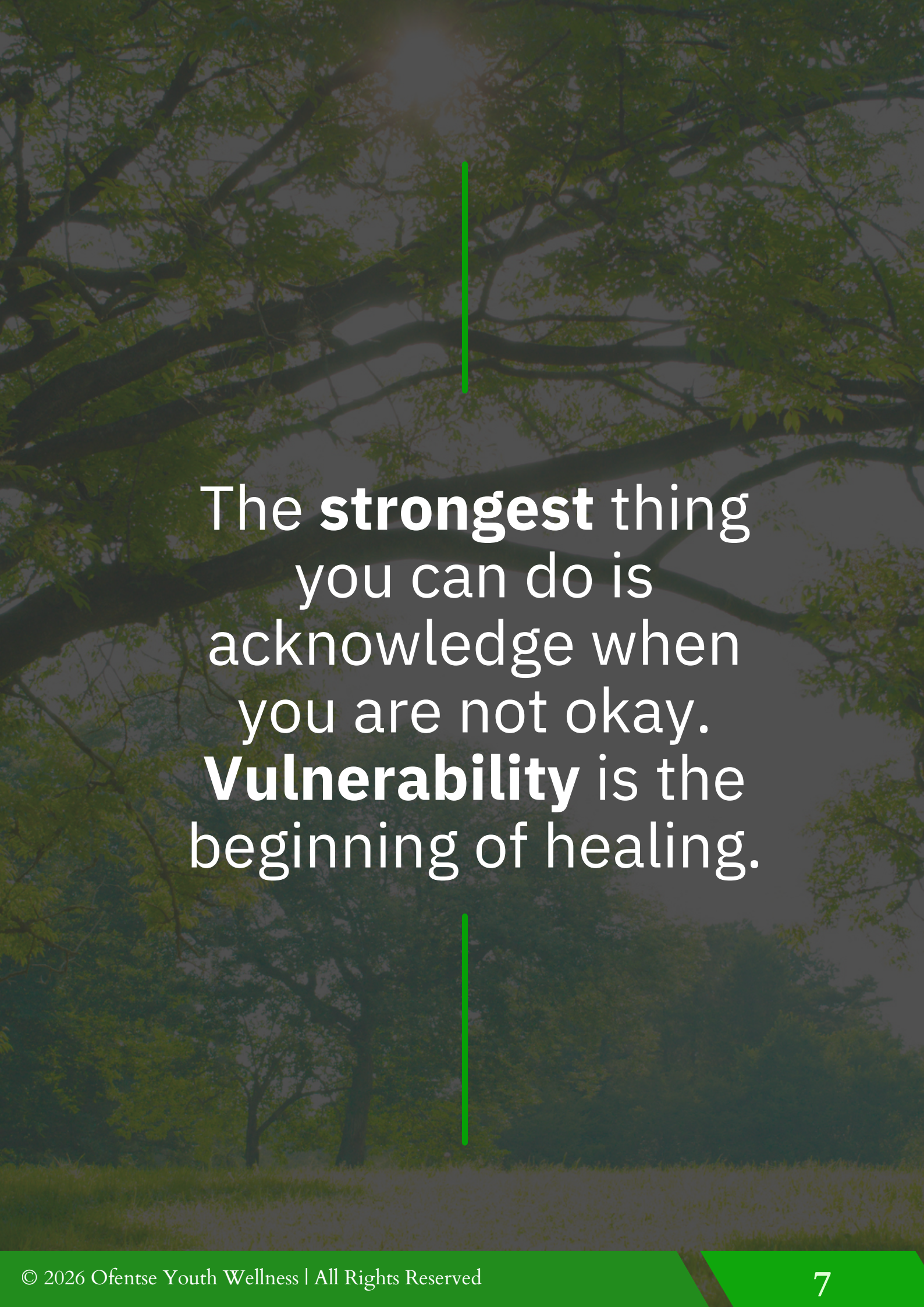
Collaboration:

- Work well with team members
- Share ideas and feedback constructively
- Support fellow volunteers



Integrity:

- Maintain confidentiality
- Report concerns promptly
- Act ethically in all situations



The **strongest** thing
you can do is
acknowledge when
you are not okay.
Vulnerability is the
beginning of healing.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A VOLUNTEER

We value and respect every volunteer who contributes their time and talents to Ofentse Youth Wellness. Just as we have expectations of our volunteers, we are committed to ensuring you have a positive, safe, and fulfilling experience. You have the right to work in an environment that supports your growth, protects your wellbeing, and recognizes your contributions.



Safe Environment:

- Work in safe, respectful environments
- Be protected from harassment, discrimination, or abuse
- Raise concerns without fear of retaliation



Training & Support:

- Receive proper training for your role
- Access resources and materials
- Get guidance from coordinators and leadership



Clear Communication:

- Know what is expected of you
- Receive updates and information
- Have your questions answered



Recognition:

- Be valued and appreciated for your contributions
- Receive certificates of service
- Be acknowledged for your work



Fair Treatment:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Have concerns addressed fairly
- Not be discriminated against



Boundaries:

- Say no to tasks outside your role
- Take breaks when needed
- Prioritize your own well-being

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

The foundation of everything we do



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

It affects:

- How we think, feel, and act
- How we handle stress
- How we relate to others
- How we make choices

Mental health spectrum



Understanding mental health requires first dismantling harmful misconceptions that persist in our collective consciousness. Mental health is not merely the absence of diagnosable mental illness, just as physical health is not simply the absence of disease.

It is not a binary state that some possess and others lack, nor is it a fixed trait determined at birth and unchangeable throughout one's lifetime. Perhaps most importantly, experiencing mental health challenges is not evidence of moral weakness, personal failure, or insufficient willpower.

These misconceptions perpetuate stigma and prevent individuals from seeking the support they need and deserve.

Mental health is manageable; with the right tools, knowledge, and support, we can actively nurture and improve our mental wellbeing.

WHY MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Mental health is not separate from the rest of a young person's life – it affects everything. When we understand this connection, it becomes clear why learning about mental health is essential for anyone working with youth.

Academic performance is one of the clearest examples. A learner struggling with depression might be highly intelligent but find it impossible to focus during class, remember what they studied, or feel motivated to complete homework.

The learner who seems disengaged or is underperforming might not lack ability or commitment, they might be using all their mental energy just to manage their emotional pain, leaving little left over for schoolwork. Without addressing what is happening with their mental health, no amount of academic support will be enough.

Beyond these immediate effects, teaching young people about mental health is an investment in their future. Young people who learn to recognize and name their emotions, understand when they need help, know how to ask for it, and develop healthy ways of coping will carry these skills into adulthood.

They become adults who can handle workplace pressure, maintain healthy relationships, and raise their own children with emotional awareness. In contrast, when mental health challenges go unaddressed in youth, they often lead to ongoing mental illness, substance abuse, relationship problems, and lower quality of life in adulthood. The work we do with young people now has effects that last throughout their lives.



YOUR ESSENTIAL ROLE

BRIDGING AWARENESS, COMPASSION, AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Thank you again for choosing to volunteer with Ofentse Youth Wellness. Your presence in the lives of young people matters more than you might realize. This section will help you understand how you fit into the broader picture of youth mental health support and how you can make the most meaningful impact.

Why Your Role Matters

Ofentse Youth Wellness conducts mental health awareness workshops in schools. As a volunteer, you will be part of a team that delivers these workshops to groups of learners. Your role is to present information, facilitate discussions, create a safe and open environment, and help normalize conversations about mental health.

These workshops are designed to educate young people about mental health, help them recognize signs of struggle in themselves and others, reduce stigma, and provide information about available resources and support systems. You are not providing therapy or counselling; you are delivering educational content that empowers learners with knowledge and awareness.

Why This Matters

Many young people have never had a structured conversation about mental health. They carry struggles in silence, unsure whether what they are experiencing is normal or where to turn for help.

Our workshops create space for these conversations. By presenting accurate information in an accessible way, you help learners understand that mental health is a normal part of being human, that struggling does not mean they are broken or weak, and that support is available.

The impact of this work extends beyond the workshop itself. When one learner gains the courage to seek help because of something they learned in your session, that is a life changed. When a young person recognizes warning signs in a friend and connects them with support, that is the ripple effect of awareness. When stigma decreases and conversations about mental health become more normalized in a school, that is systemic change beginning to take root.

Handling Disclosures and Questions

During or after workshops, learners may share personal struggles or ask questions about specific situations. This is a sign that they trust you and that the workshop is having an impact.

When this happens, listen with empathy and without judgment, validate their feelings and courage in speaking up, provide information about resources they can access, and encourage them to speak with a trusted adult, school counsellor, or mental health professional.

If a learner discloses something that suggests they are in immediate danger or experiencing abuse, follow the protocols outlined in the Safety and Referral Policy. You are not expected to solve their problems, but you are expected to ensure they are connected with appropriate help.

The Bigger Picture

You are part of a movement to change how young people understand and talk about mental health. Every workshop you facilitate contributes to breaking down stigma, building mental health literacy, and creating communities where seeking help is seen as a sign of strength rather than weakness.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Anxiety	A mental health condition characterized by excessive, persistent worry or fear that interferes with daily activities and functioning.
Burnout	A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged or chronic stress, often resulting in reduced motivation and decreased performance.
Boundaries	Personal limits that define what is acceptable behavior and interaction, protecting one's physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	A therapeutic approach that focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns to improve emotional regulation and mental health.
Compassion Fatigue	Physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from the prolonged care of others, particularly those experiencing trauma or distress.
Confidentiality	The ethical and legal obligation to keep sensitive information private and only share it with authorized individuals on a need-to-know basis.
Coping Strategies	Healthy techniques and methods used to manage stress, difficult emotions, or challenging situations effectively.
Crisis	A situation or event that poses immediate risk to an individual's safety, mental health, or well-being, requiring urgent intervention.
Debriefing	A structured process of reflection and discussion following an event or session to process experiences, emotions, and learnings.
Depression	A mood disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest in activities that significantly impact daily functioning.
Disclosure	The act of revealing sensitive information, particularly when someone shares experiences of abuse, harm or safety concerns.
Emotional Regulation	The ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in a healthy and adaptive manner.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Empathy	The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person while maintaining appropriate boundaries.
Empowerment	Supporting individuals to gain control over their lives, make decisions, and advocate for themselves.
Facilitation	Guiding a group process or discussion to ensure productive and inclusive participation.
Flashback	Vivid, intrusive re-experiencing of a traumatic event as if it were happening in the present moment.
Grounding	Techniques to connect with the present moment, used to manage anxiety, panic, or dissociation.
Holistic Approach	Considering the whole person including physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.
Informed Consent	Agreement given after receiving comprehensive information about what is involved, including risks and benefits.
Intervention	Action taken to improve a situation or prevent deterioration, particularly in response to identified concerns.
Mental Health	Emotional, psychological, and social well-being affecting how people think, feel, and act.
Mindfulness	Paying attention to the present moment without judgment, often used as a stress-reduction technique.
Non-Judgmental	Approach that avoids criticism or blame, creating a safe space for open communication.
Panic Attack	Sudden episode of intense fear with physical symptoms such as racing heart and difficulty breathing.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, causing flashbacks, anxiety, and nightmares.
Referral	Directing someone to another service or professional for specialized support or intervention.
Reflection	Thoughtful consideration of experiences, actions, and their outcomes to inform future practice.
Resilience	Ability to bounce back from adversity, stress, or challenging circumstances.
Safeguarding	Protecting people from harm, abuse, or exploitation through prevention and responsive action.
Self-Care	Activities and practices that maintain or improve physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
Self-Harm	Deliberately hurting oneself as a coping mechanism for emotional pain or distress.
Stigma	Negative attitudes or discrimination toward people with certain characteristics such as mental illness.
Stress	Physical or emotional tension in response to demanding or challenging circumstances.
Trauma	Deeply distressing experience that overwhelms one's ability to cope, causing lasting adverse effects.
Trigger	Stimulus that provokes a strong emotional or psychological reaction, often related to past trauma.
Validation	Acknowledging and accepting someone's feelings, thoughts, or experiences as legitimate and understandable.
Vulnerability	State of being at increased risk of harm due to personal, social, or environmental factors.
Wellbeing	Overall state of physical, mental, emotional, and social health and life satisfaction.



FOR INQUIRIES, CONTACT US



www.ofentseyouthwellness.org



volunteering@ofentseyouthwellness.org

