

Course Syllabus

The logo for "All of Life" features the text "All of Life" in a dark, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, light-colored curved lines that form a partial circle, resembling a stylized 'O' or a protective shield.

Mindweather 101: *Navigating Mental & Emotional Distress*

I. Course aim: The purpose of this course will be to explore several key issues in the field of mental health where many different scientific opinions exist (thanks to new advances in recent years)—from the role of the brain/body and the nature of thoughts in mental disorder, to how to best respond to psychological distress and the role of family/friends. Rather than dictating how anyone should think, our goal is to carefully examine different ways of thinking about each of these issues – and what diverging views might mean for mental health problems and our hope for recovery.

As a public, community class, our target audience is anyone interested in learning more about severe emotional problems, including: (a) those facing these problems and (b) family members and other loved ones. By coming together to explore these questions, we aim to help all of us think more carefully about what's going on and how to respond thoughtfully and wisely.

What is NOT the course aim. This course does not aim or aspire in any way to function as "treatment" or "therapy" for a particular mental or physical problem. In other words, we do not clinically assess individual situations, diagnose conditions, or offer direct advice. Instead, like any course, this class offers broad information in hopes of supporting students in their own unique journey with loved ones and trusted professionals on the road to greater well-being.

II. Class participation: Although large online courses can feel impersonal and one-directional, we don't believe this has to be the case.

A. Communication. Throughout the course, we'll be asking questions at the end of each lesson and inviting your thoughts, feedback and insights. We do this because we're really fascinated to hear about your own experiences and appreciate your own take on the things we'll be discussing.

If questions arise during the class about your own health situation, we encourage you to talk with family members or, if it feels appropriate, contact a trusted mental or physical health professional. If you have questions about the class or its material that we haven't addressed or any class concerns you need to raise personally, you are welcome to e-mail Jacob Hess directly (jacob@alloflife.org) or our Mindweather Coach, Stephanie Ogden (coach@alloflife.org).

B. Class ground-rules. As a basic courtesy, please be on time and turn off your cell phone. (Just kidding). Keep your cell phone out and your pajamas on, for all we care. Snacks, tea, blankets...make yourself comfortable!

The only thing we would discourage is trying to get through all the lessons too fast...like in one big gulp. Like when checking out a good book or television show, give yourself time for things to digest. No rush! After all, you've got *All of Life*.

III. Reading & writing.

A. Assignments. In future classes (ADHD, Depression), we'll be encouraging you to try out different things in your own situation. This class is different. That means, no homework!

B. Note-taking. Since you can return to the content as often as you need, don't worry about trying to write down everything that you like. Instead, we would encourage you to write down your *own thoughts* about things that are shared: anything that strikes you as important or maybe things that you still have questions about.

C. Text for the week. With each lesson, we'll provide additional reading that is optional. This includes books, blogs, and websites for those interested in exploring a topic further.

IV. Class Schedule: After an introductory session that kicks off the class, 15 lessons follow, organized in four main sections. At the end, there is a short conclusion.

Section One. Making sense of the problem

Lesson 1. One way of understanding the brain's role.

Lesson 2. What we believe about the brain matters: Part one.

Lesson 3. A different way of understanding the brain's role.

Lesson 4. What we believe about the brain matters: Part two.

Lesson 5. Just being there.

Lesson 6. Different ways of thinking about recovery.

Section Two. Approaching the problem

Lesson 7. One way of responding to mental distress.

Lesson 8. Can making it go away, make it worse?

Lesson 9. Another way of responding to mental distress.

Lesson 10. Surrounded with gentle acceptance.

Lesson 11. So what does this approach mean for mental and emotional pain?

Section Three. Paying attention to thinking

Lesson 12. One way of thinking about thinking.

Lesson 13. Re-thinking thinking.

Section Four. Broadening the conversation about mental health

Lesson 14. Exploring the range of contributors to mental disorder.

Lesson 15. Acting on the full range of options.