

## Purpose

To help staff support students or colleagues showing signs of mental distress in a safe, respectful, and culturally-appropriate way.

## School context indicators

- Sudden changes in behaviour, mood, attendance or appearance
- Crying spells, increased isolation at work or class, or refusal to pray
- Writing, speaking, or drawing dark, hopeless themes

## Recognising distress:

Mental health concerns can present as:

- Persistent sadness, anxiety, irritability
- Withdrawal from others
- Disrupted sleep or appetite
- Statements like "What's the point of anything?"
- Religious disconnection or guilt

## Example

A Year 10 student is crying in the prayer room, saying "I can't handle this anymore." Ask gentle, open questions, then validate and walk them to the counsellor or school wellbeing team.

## Steps for educators and staff

- **Approach gently in a safe space:** "You haven't seemed like yourself lately. Would you like to talk in the wellbeing room?" Choose a private, calm moment to express concern.
- **Listen Without Judgment:** Use non-verbal cues and affirming language. Use active listening. Don't try to 'fix' immediately.
- **Encourage Islamic Coping and Reassurance:** "Even the Prophet ﷺ felt sadness and stress. Struggling emotionally doesn't mean your imān is weak." Suggest prayer, du'a, or speaking to a trusted religious figure.
- **Encourage help-seeking:**
  - Link the student with the school psychologist, counsellor, or chaplain.
  - With consent, involve family sensitively
  - For staff: Refer to Afiya EAP.

# Mental Health First Aid for Muslim Schools

## Steps for educators and staff

- **Follow Up:** Check in regularly without pressuring the individual.
- **Faith-based encouragement (where appropriate):** Offer a du‘ā card or reminder from Qur‘an

*“And We have certainly created man and We know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than his jugular vein.” (Qur‘an 50:16)*

## Islamic Reflection

*The Prophet ﷺ said: “The believer to the believer is like a building, one part strengthens the other.” (Bukhari & Muslim)*

## Be Aware of

- Cultural or faith-related barriers to seeking help
- Gender sensitivity in support approaches
- Using inclusive, trauma-informed language

**Download the brief MHFA Guidelines for Muslim Schools at [www.afiya.au](http://www.afiya.au)**