

Disaster Mental Health Counseling

MHA CREDENTIAL COURSE



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Welcome

Congratulations on your decision to undertake training in this specialized field of mental health. We're thrilled to be joining you on this journey.

Throughout this program you'll deep-dive into the theory and practice of disaster mental health counseling, enhancing your clinical skills and evidence-based knowledge to serve in disaster-affected areas.

You'll learn the history, theories, and interventions associated with disaster mental health counseling, with a special focus on applying a cultured-centred approach when working with vulnerable populations. You'll be guided through a journey in working with disaster-affected clients, including how to prepare (pre-impact), what do you when you have been deployed (from arrival arrangements through to community interventions and working with multidisciplinary teams), and what to do when you return home.

The course includes illustrations, interviews and case studies to help you understand the applications of what you're learning into real-life scenarios, drawn from over 25 years of experience by your course facilitator, Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji.

Before you get started, please continue reading below. This course guide provides important information, instructions and resources you'll need to access and progress through the course.

All the best with your learning.

Kind regards,

Pedro Gondim

CEO, Mental Health Academy.

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PS If you need any assistance whatsoever, just contact our friendly support team via help@mentalhealthacademy.net and we'll reply as soon as possible.

Why Disaster Mental Health Counseling?

What does it mean to be caught up in a disaster, and why might the survivors need extra support?

This course will help you:

- 1. Deeply comprehend the magnitude of trauma for survivors of disasters
- 2. Enhance your capacity for empathy
- 3. Give you confidence to work with disaster survivors, knowing that you are clinically prepared to do so
- 4. Embolden you to take up opportunities for helping that will provide not only memorable moments to last a lifetime, but also engender a more profound self-awareness on both psychological and spiritual levels
- 5. Feel able to seek out opportunities for helping that will be deeply fulfilling.

On February 7, 2009, Tony Thomas and his wife, who ran a hotel outside of Melbourne (Australia), spotted smoke in the west. Then they saw fire. It came roaring at them at 100 km an hour. Thomas recalled that, "It was like the gates of hell. There is no other way to describe it... We were choking. We only had large tea towels which we were wetting down constantly and wrapping around our faces so we could breathe". Luckily, he and several others managed to defend his home, and the family, plus the guests, survived. Many did not.

The Black Saturday bushfires in Australia killed 180 people, leaving hundreds more injured and nearly 8,000 displaced, with more than 2000 homes destroyed. An estimated one million animals died. The royal commission inquiry later put the financial cost of the disaster at AUD \$4.4 billion. The Beyond Bushfires report, which surveyed more than 1000 people affected, found evidence of significant mental health issues, including depression, PTSD, and severe psychological distress: all of these rates significantly higher than what would be expected in the general population.

Life changes forever for disaster survivors, and they often need massive support to cope and to begin anew. When you read this story (or similar tragedies, such as the 2005 Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, or the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic crisis), what happens inside you? For many counselors and others in the helping professions there is - along with a good measure of emotion choking the throat - a deep determination not to live life merely watching the misfortunes of fellow human beings and doing nothing to alleviate their suffering. But, given your current skills and knowledge, how can you help in the best way possible?

Your Course Facilitator

Professor Cirecie A. West-Olatunji, Ph.D., is an internationallyrenowned expert in trauma and disaster mental health counseling - with over 25 years' experience working with disaster-affected clients and communities.



Click here to view a full list of Dr. West-Olatunji's publications & presentations.

Cirecie A. West-Olatunji, Ph.D., serves as Professor in the Counseling program at Xavier University of Louisiana (United States) and Director of the XULA Center for Traumatic Stress Research. She is a past president of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the Association for Multicultural Counseling & Development (AMCD). Dr. West-Olatunji has initiated several clinical research projects that focus on culture-centered community collaborations designed to address issues rooted in systemic oppression, such as transgenerational trauma and traumatic stress. Dr. West-Olatunji has conducted commissioned research under the auspices of the: National Science Foundation, American Counseling Association, Kellogg Foundation, federal Witness Assistance Program, Spencer Foundation, the American Educational Research Association, and the African-American Success Foundation.

Her publications include two co-authored books: Counseling African Americans and Future Vision, Present Work, several book chapters, and over 50 articles in peer-reviewed journals. In addition to national presentations, Dr. West-Olatunji has delivered research papers in throughout Africa, Europe, the Pacific Rim, and the Americas. Additionally, she has provided consultation in a PBS initiative to create a children's television show focusing on diversity through KCET-TV in Los Angeles, CA ("Puzzle Place"). Dr. West-Olatunji has coordinated disaster mental health outreach projects in post-Katrina New Orleans, southern Africa to investigate illness as disaster to work with HIV-AIDS infected and affected individuals in South Africa and Botswana, and in post-earthquake Haiti (Port-au-Prince area). Dr. West-Olatunji has also led a People-to-People delegation to India with a focus on Disaster Mental Health Counseling, Dr. West-Olatunji has developed a model for culture-centered disaster mental health counseling that she has delivered to mental health professionals in Thailand, India, England, Ireland, China, and Haiti.

Course Outline

Your Course is delivered entirely online and accessible on-demand, 24/7. The course is divided into 4 modules, each containing 6 units.

Each of the 24 units includes a video lecture, a requisite reading (journal article), an assessment, and other learning resources - such as handouts, supplemental readings, etc. Following is a breakdown of the course content.

CORE RESOURCES



Lecture Handouts

24 x Video Lectures &



24 x Requisite Readings (Journal Articles)



24 x Online **Multiple-Choice Assessments**

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES



Downloadable Articles & Industry Reports



Case Studies, Illustrations & Real-**Life Stories**



Links to Videos and Further Online Learning



Module 1

Introduction to **Disaster Mental Health Counseling**

This module provides an overview of the key terms and concepts associated with disaster mental health counseling.

Special attention is paid to working with culturally diverse individuals and other vulnerable client populations. Topics include the goals and mission of culture-centered disaster mental health counseling (C-DMHC) as well as the types of clients typically served in C-DMHC work. A review of the limitations of current DMHC approaches is provided and a rationale for C-DMHC is discussed.

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS MODULE YOU WILL HAVE

- Increased knowledge about the history of disaster counseling and the mental health issues that result from experiencing disasters
- Enhanced knowledge about models of disaster counseling
- Increased self-awareness about cultural considerations when assessing and treating affected individuals.

Module 1: Introduction to DMHC Unit Descriptions

Goals and Mission of Disaster Counseling

> This unit provides an overview of the goals and mission of disaster mental health counseling (DMHC), along with a definition of key terms and concepts. Dr. West-Olatunji explains the types of clients that participants might encounter, and which segments of the population are likely to be more vulnerable. She also discusses the roles and characteristics of mental health service providers for disaster-affected individuals, families, and communities.

Stages and Characteristics of **Disasters**

> This unit explores the stages and characteristics of disasters. Dr. West-Olatunji briefly introduces you to the various types of natural and humanmade disasters and explains their relationship to the presenting symptomology. Disaster can manifest as illness, so health epidemics are covered as well. Particular attention is paid to differentiating between different trauma terms, post-disaster.

Types of Disasters and Reactions

This unit offers a detailed examination of the types of disasters and the emotional/ psychological responses associated with each; these are discussed in the context of normative reactions to disasters. Particular attention is paid to grief and loss issues for disaster-affected individuals.

Disaster Counseling Training Models

This unit gives an overview of conventional disaster mental health counseling approaches, including psychological first aid, critical incident stress debriefing, and a six-step crisis intervention model. Dr. West-Olatunji also identifies the crisis intervention techniques of cognitive-behavioral exercises, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and psychopharmacological treatments.

Culture-centered Disaster Mental Health Counseling

> This unit increases your knowledge about a psycho-social model for disaster mental health counseling (DMHC). Acknowledging the limitations of existing models, Dr. West-Olatunji proposes a culture-centered approach instead. Dr. West-Olatunji's C-DMHC training model and its benefits are discussed in detail.

Where To Go From Here

This unit begins with a case illustration of a disaster outreach endeavour and then reviews the material presented in the first five modules. One of the outreach participants provides testimony about that experience. Dr. West-Olatunji concludes with a recommendation for next steps in increasing competence as a culturally competent disaster mental health counselor.



Module 2

Preparing to Serve (Pre-impact)

This module presents an overview of how mental health professionals prepare for deployment prior to entering a disaster-affected area.

Special attention is given to working with culturally diverse individuals and other vulnerable client populations. Topics include increasing awareness of counselor bias, understanding environmental stressors and strengths, and historical trauma and traumatic stress. A review of the limitations of current DMHC approaches is provided and a rationale for C-DMHC is discussed.

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS MODULE YOU WILL HAVE

- Increased knowledge about use of a psychosocial approach to disaster mental health
- Augmented knowledge about traumatic stress for disaster-affected populations
- Increased self-awareness about cultural considerations when assessing and treating affected individuals.

Module 2: Preparing to Serve (Pre-impact) **Unit Descriptions**

Entering Communities

This unit provides a rationale for integrating service learning into counselor training and infusing advocacy into professional identity. Dr West-Olatunji elaborates on the value of service learning in increasing multicultural counselor competence when working with diverse populations.

Counselor Bias

This unit treats the topic of Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC). Issues of cross-cultural competence are briefly discussed, and transcultural theory is introduced as a framework for working with diverse clients. In addition, Dr West-Olatunji explains multicultural counseling principles and describes counselor resistance to advancing multicultural counseling competence.

Environmental Stressors & Strengths

> This unit details various types of environmental stressors impacting socially and culturally marginalised populations. Dr West-Olatunji describes the signs and symptoms of traumatic stress experienced by disaster-affected children, adolescents, and adults. She concludes with a presentation of the issues related to empowerment and resilience in individuals and communities.

Historical Trauma

This unit specifically focuses on historical and intergenerational trauma. Dr West-Olatunji discusses trauma and systemic oppression as well as the socio-cultural factors influencing presenting issues post-disaster. Resilience is mentioned in the context of traumatic stress and the steps of a culture-centered model of intervention are named.

C-DMHC: Goals and Mission

This unit allows you to increase your knowledge about C-DMHC, a psychosocial approach to disaster mental health counseling. Dr West-Olatunji focuses on the specific interventions associated with this model and proposes the benefits of a culture-centered approach.

Where To Go From Here

This unit offers a case illustration of a disaster outreach endeavour and then reviews the material from the first five modules. Dr West-Olatunji presents the "What's in your backpack" exercise as a reflection for pre-deployed counselors and counselors-in-training. She concludes with a recommendation for next steps toward increasing competence as a culturally competent disaster mental health counselor.



Module 3

Working with Disaster-affected Clients

This module provides an overview of the on-theground activities associated with disaster mental health counseling.

Special attention is paid to working with culturally diverse individuals and other vulnerable client populations. Topics include what to do upon arrival at the deployment site as well as how to engage in assessment and triage of disaster-affected clients. A review of the do's and don'ts of working in interdisciplinary teams is also provided, along with an explanation of clinical supervision issues during deployment. Finally, Dr West-Olatunji engages a comprehensive discussion of the interventions used with the C-DMHC approach.

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS MODULE YOU WILL HAVE

- Increased knowledge about assessment and triage for disasteraffected clients
- Augmented knowledge about working in interdisciplinary disaster response teams
- Enhanced knowledge about culture-centered disaster mental health counseling (C-DMHC) interventions.

Module 3: Working with Disaster-affected Clients **Unit Descriptions**

Deployment Site Arrival

This unit provides a rationale for integrating service learning into counselor training and infusing advocacy into professional identity. Dr West-Olatunji elaborates on the value of service learning in increasing multicultural counselor competence when working with diverse populations.

Assessment and Triage

This unit treats the topic of Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC). Issues of cross-cultural competence are briefly discussed, and transcultural theory is introduced as a framework for working with diverse clients. In addition, Dr West-Olatunji explains multicultural counseling principles and describes counselor resistance to advancing multicultural counseling competence.

Working in Interdisciplinary Teams

This unit details various types of environmental stressors impacting socially and culturally marginalised populations. Dr West-Olatunji describes the signs and symptoms of traumatic stress experienced by disaster-affected children, adolescents, and adults. She concludes with a presentation of the issues related to empowerment and resilience in individuals and communities.

Clinical Supervision

This unit specifically focuses on historical and intergenerational trauma. Dr West-Olatunji discusses trauma and systemic oppression as well as the socio-cultural factors influencing presenting issues post-disaster. Resilience is mentioned in the context of traumatic stress and the steps of a culture-centered model of intervention are named.

Culture-centered Disaster Mental **Health Counseling Interventions**

> This unit allows you to increase your knowledge about C-DMHC, a psychosocial approach to disaster mental health counseling. Dr West-Olatunji focuses on the specific interventions associated with this model and proposes the benefits of a culture-centered approach.

Where To Go From Here 6

> In this unit, Dr West-Olatunji reviews the first five units of module 3, reminding students about the main topics covered, including: aspects of deployment site arrival, assessment and triage, working in interdisciplinary teams, clinical supervision, and culture-oriented DMHC interventions. Her case illustration of her own preparation for taking a team to an outreach experience reveals the comprehensive planning and preparation that is necessary for a successful deployment.



Module 4

Moving Toward Recovery (Post-impact)

This final module provides an overview of the key terms and concepts associated with disaster mental health counseling.

Special attention is paid to working with culturally diverse individuals and other vulnerable client populations. Topics include the goals and mission of culture-centered disaster mental health counseling (C-DMHC), as well as the types of clients typically served in C-DMHC work. A review of the limitations of current DMHC approaches is provided and a rationale for C-DMHC is discussed.

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS MODULE YOU WILL HAVE

- Increased knowledge about daily routine of culture-centered disaster mental health counseling
- Augmented knowledge about prevention of compassion fatigue
- Enhanced knowledge about social justice and advocacy in disaster mental health counseling

Module 4: Moving Toward Recovery (Post-impact) Unit Descriptions

The Routine

This unit provides an overview of the daily routine of conducting disaster mental health counseling outreach to individuals, families, and communities. Dr West-Olatunji outlines the theoretical basis for culture-centered disaster mental health counseling and discusses the seven steps of the C-DMHC approach.

Taking Breaks

This unit centers on the need to incorporate "downtime" during disaster deployment. Dr West-Olatunji also discusses the need for connecting with community members as a resource in taking breaks. Overall, she provides specific tools for mental health and wellness during the deployment period.

Interventions in the Trenches

This unit goes into detail about the manner in which interventions are provided during deployment. Dr West-Olatunji extensively discusses the topics of organising communitywide interventions, intervening with appropriate and responsive strategies, and delegating to highly resilient community members.

Compassion Fatigue

This unit specifically focuses on compassion fatigue (CF) issues. Dr West-Olatunji explains the symptoms of CF and what protective factors are known. Included is a brief discussion of preparation and prevention prior to disaster deployment. She concludes with a look at compassion satisfaction.

Returning Home

This unit increases participants' knowledge about the use of personal counseling and clinical supervision in preventing and mitigating the effects of disaster mental health service provision. Topics include: the need for rest and relaxation, the role of social interaction, debriefing with team members, and dissemination of knowledge.

Where To Go From Here

This final unit offers a case illustration of a disaster outreach endeavour and then reviews the material presented in the first five units. There are links to two audio testimonials from outreach trips that Dr West-Olatunji led. She concludes with a recommendation for next steps in increasing competence as a culturally competent disaster mental health counselor.

Credential & Certificate

Upon successful completion of all 24 mandatory assessments, you'll be issued with an MHA Digital Badge and a CE Certificate of Attainment



Course Duration

The total duration of this course is 31 hours. This is based on a calculation of the number of hours required to read all requisite articles, watch video lectures and complete the online assessment components.



Digital Credential and CE Certificate

Upon successful completion of all 24 assessments, you'll be issued with an MHA Disaster Mental Health Counseling Digital Badge and a CE Certificate of Attainment.

A Digital Badge is a form of Digital Credential (also known as 'micro-credential') that can be verified/validated online. A digital badge signals your achievement to potential employers and stakeholders, as they are able to verify your learning/skill acquisition outcomes in real-time, over the web.

In addition to your MHA DMHC Digital Badge, you'll receive a downloadable CE Certificate of Attainment highlighting the 31 CE hours you've completed.

Both Digital Badge & Certificate of Attainment can be used to demonstrate your course completion and learning achievement.

How to Complete Your Course

Once you have reviewed this Guide and are ready to tackle your first unit, we suggest following this 6-step workflow (repeating it for each unit).

6-Step Workflow		Modules			
l	Download and read the requisite article. This will set the stage for watching the video lecture.		2	3	4
2	If you like to take hand notes, download and print the lecture's handout (i.e. presentation slides). If you prefer to write electronically, start a document.				
3	Watch the video lecture, stopping (use the pause button) whenever you need to take notes or reflect on certain concepts.				
4	Complete the assessment for that unit. If you do not pass in your first try, don't worry – you can review your responses and re-submit new answers.				
5	Take on the activities suggested in the "Next Steps" slide of each video lecture. These activities will vary from lecture to lecture, and may include writing reflections, engaging in discussions with colleagues, completing checklists, and more.				
6	Interact via the course's Private Facebook Group (click here to access). You can use this forum to engage in relevant discussions with other course participants and your course facilitator. If you don't have a Facebook account, we recommend creating one specifically for this purpose.				

Assessment Methods

The course includes 24 multiple-choice, online assessments. To advance (i.e. unlock access) to the next module, you must complete the multiple-choice assessments for each of the 6 units within the module you're currently in.

For successful completion of an assessment, you must attain a minimum 80% pass rate. As the assessment is competency-based, if you don't pass in your first try, you will have the opportunity to review, save and re-submit your answers.

Supplemental Learning Resources

Most units and video lecture handouts include links to supplemental learning resources. These include articles, short videos, audio interviews, photo montages, and more.

Although these resources are not part of the core program, they were hand-picked to expand your knowledge and understand the complex context that surrounds disaster mental health counseling. As such, we recommend that you review them.

After Completion

Through the MHA Learning Portal, you'll have lifetime, unrestricted access to all core course resources* – so you can refresh your knowledge at any time. You will also have continued access to the private Facebook Group – this medium will be used as a networking hub for mental health professionals and to share industry updates, outreach opportunities, invitations to special events, and other information on disaster mental health counseling.

*Core course resources include your requisite readings, video lectures and handouts, and assessments. Some supplemental resources are accessible outside of the MHA portal, and may not be continually available in the future.



Questions & answers to help you navigate through the program.

How are course content and learning materials delivered?

Your course materials will be accessible online via the MHA Learning Portal (i.e. website). Course materials include journal articles, handouts and other downloads, video lectures, and online (multiple-choice) assessments. You will be able to access these materials and learning tools from most computer systems and mobile devices. Technical support will also be available in case you experience any difficulty accessing course resources.

What is the duration of the course?

The total duration of this course is 31 hours. This is based on a calculation of the number of hours required to read all requisite (i.e. core) articles, watch video lectures and complete the online assessment components. It does not include additional time required to read/watch/access supplemental learning resources.

What are the assessment requirements for this course?

The course includes 24 multiple-choice, online assessments. To advance (i.e. unlock access) to the next module, you must successfully complete the multiple-choice assessments for each of the 6 units within the module you're currently in. For successful completion of an assessment, you are required to attain a minimum 80% pass rate. As the assessment is competency-based, if you don't pass in your first try, you will have the opportunity to review, save and re-submit your answers (there are no re-attempt limits).

What Certification do I get upon completion of this course?

When you complete this course, you'll be issued with an MHA Disaster Mental Health Counseling Digital Badge and a CE Certificate of Attainment. A Digital Badge is a form of Digital Credential (also known as 'microcredential') that can be verified/validated online. A digital badge signals your achievement to potential employers and stakeholders, as they are able to verify your learning/skill acquisition outcomes in real-time, over the web. In addition to your MHA DMHC Digital Badge, you'll receive a downloadable CE Certificate of Attainment, which can also be used as proof of completion and printed (if you would like to display it in your office/workspace).

How is the MHA Digital Badge different from a traditional CE Certificate?

Digital badges are a form of electronic portfolio to track and showcase your educational achievements. When you are issued with a digital badge, you'll receive a unique URL (link) that includes information about your achievement – such as the duration of a course you completed, the organisation that issued the badge, and what you had to do to receive it (e.g. complete assessments). Unlike a CE Certificate, information in your digital badge is verifiable **online and in real-time**, making it a more reliable source of data for prospective employers. Badges can also be more easily shared online and integrated to your website, digital professional profile (e.g. LinkedIn account), etc.

Will my MHA Digital Badge be recognised by employers?

Digital credentials are becoming increasingly more popular among employers and traditional educational institutions, such as Universities. Some of the world's biggest companies, such as Microsoft, and respected education providers, such as Harvard University, already issue digital credentials for their courses and workplace-related learning. Many experts believe that digital portfolios and digital credentials will eventually replace traditional CVs and provide learners with expanded opportunities to showcase their skills and educational achievements to prospective employers.

Will MHA offer other credential courses?

Yes. We're currently working on other credential courses focusing in different areas of mental health practice. We will update you via our e-newsletter and other email announcements once further courses have been developed.

Can I save course content for future reference?

Your course guide, requisite readings, handouts and other supplemental materials can be downloaded and saved to your local computer. Video content and assessments cannot be downloaded; however, they are accessible via the MHA Learning Portal at any time (including after you have successfully completed the course). All enrolled course participants will have lifetime access to requisite course learning materials.

What are the system requirements for watching videos?

Our video platforms are compatible with all up-to-date browsers (Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Opera, and Edge) and operating systems (Windows, Mac and mobile devices), and most residential internet connections should be more than adequate to watch the videos. If you experience any difficulties accessing video content, you can contact us for support at any time.

Do I need a Facebook Profile to join the discussion forum (i.e. Facebook Group)?

Yes, to access the forum and join in the group discussions, you will need a Facebook Profile. If you do not have a Facebook profile, we recommend setting one up to join the group, as it will enhance your learning experience and provide you with the opportunity to learn from and interact with your peers and course facilitator. While recommended, joining the Facebook Group is **not** a requirement to access and complete this course.

I live in a remote area with slow internet. Will I be able to access the lectures and other videos?

You may experience difficulties watching videos if your internet speed is slow. We recommend that you contact your Internet Service Provider (ISP) to devise a solution. If that's not possible, you may wish to consider allocating time for travel, so you can access video content using a more appropriate connection (there will be approximately 10 hours of video content throughout the course).

What is your course refund policy?

This course includes a 14-day money back guarantee that empowers you to try the program entirely risk-free. If within 14 days of your enrollment and before completion of the first module* you're not entirely thrilled with the high level content you have access to, just email us to help@mentalhealthacademy.net and we'll give you your money back. No questions asked.

*Refund eligibility criteria: You will not be eligible for a full refund if: 1) You have completed all six assessments for Module 1 and, 2) Your cancellation/refund request is emailed 15 (or more) days after your enrollment date. Please see our Terms & Conditions for more details.

Can I copy and or share course learning materials and resources?

Courses materials are only to be used by the individual person that enrolled in the course. Sharing your course access details and resources constitutes a breach of copyright and may result in cancellation of your enrollment and ineligibility to access Certificates.

I'm an MHA member. How is this course different from what I can access with my membership?

MHA Membership Courses (available via our Catalog) are shorter, specific programs - with most courses ranging from 1 to 4 hours in duration. MHA Credential Courses are designed to provide a deep-dive, content-rich experience (30+ hours of learning) backed up by real-life case studies and illustrations. This particular program is the world's first and only credential course focusing on a culture-centered approach to disaster mental health counseling.



Need Support? Contact us and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Email: help@mentalhealthacademy.net Website: www.mentalhealthacademy.net