



Mental health and journalism: How journalists can responsibly report on it and take care of themselves

Course Dates: June 27 to July 31, 2022

Instructors: Kim Brice, Mar Cabra and Stephanie Foo

About the course

Welcome to the Knight Center's new MOOC, "**Mental health and Journalism: How journalists can responsibly report on it and take care of themselves,**" organized by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, with support from the Carter Center and in collaboration with The Self-Investigation. During this five-week massive open online course, which will be held from **June 27 to July 31, 2022**, students will learn how to take care of their mental health in a stressful industry, as well as how to report on mental health issues with greater accuracy and empathy. Watch the video below and read on for more details, including instructions on how to register.

Goal

For the next five weeks, you will learn:

- Why maintaining your physical and mental health is fundamental to sustaining good journalism and avoiding burnout
- Key tools that will empower you and your team to relate to technology in a healthier way

- Strategies to support a culture of mental well-being in your work routine and in the newsroom
- How to responsibly report on mental health issues with empathy, accuracy and balance, reducing stigma and discrimination

Who can enroll? (Who is this Course for?)

This course is for employed or self-employed journalists and also for newsroom leaders, such as editors and managers, who are interested in sustaining their own physical and mental health and in reporting on mental health issues.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

- Understand the importance of self-care and how to protect your mental health
- Know how to regulate your stress levels under pressure
- Set boundaries and work with your digital devices and tools in a healthier way
- Recognize signs in colleagues who might be struggling and how can you be of help
- Discern what are the best strategies to work towards culture change in the newsroom
- Report on mental health issues in a way that decreases the stigma
- Adapt best practices to your reporting on mental health

Tools/Applications Required

No special tools or applications are required.

How the course works

First of all, note that this is an asynchronous course. You can log in to the course and complete activities throughout the week at your own pace, at the times and on the days that are most convenient for you. There are no live events scheduled at specific times.

Despite its asynchronous nature, there are still structures in place for the duration of the course.

The material is organized into five weekly modules, which will be released week by week. The first three modules focus on how to take care of your well-being at an individual, team and industry

level, as well as demystifying key mental health challenges. They are taught by stress management trainer and coach Kim Brice and digital wellness expert Mar Cabra from The Self-Investigation, a foundation dedicated to sustaining good journalism by sustaining journalists' well-being. Stephanie Foo, a journalist and author of the book “What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma,” will teach the last two modules. She will empower you to report more responsibly on mental health issues. Each module will cover a different topic through videos, presentations, readings and discussion forums. There will be a quiz each week to test the knowledge you've gained through the course materials. The weekly quizzes, and weekly participation in the discussion forums, are the basic requirements for earning a certificate of participation at the end of the course.

This course is very flexible, and if you are behind with the materials, you have the entire length of the course to complete them. We do recommend you complete each of the following before the end of each week so you don't fall behind:

- Video lectures and expert interviews
- Readings and handouts/exercises
- Participation in the discussion forums
- Quizzes covering concepts from video lectures and/or readings

The contents of this course will cover sensitive mental health topics. We will be covering these issues in thoughtful and destigmatizing ways, but please take care of yourself while watching the course videos if these topics are triggers for you.

The course is divided into five weekly modules (Course outline)

Introduction Module

- Welcome video
- 2-3 suggested readings which provide resources on self-care for journalists and how to work remotely in a healthier way. You'll also get access to a style guide for mental health reporting.

Module 1: The facts about stress and mental health - we are all potentially at risk! (June 27 - July 3, 2022)

How can we take care of our mental health? This module equips you with some basic theory, facts, and tools about stress and other common mental health issues and what to do to address them. You will learn how to be more aware of when your physical and mental health is at risk and how to take better care of yourself under pressure. This module will also provide you with some basic concepts that are fundamental to mental health reporting.

This module will cover:

- Healthy versus unhealthy levels of stress
- How to manage your stress levels at work
- Key concepts that are fundamental to preserving your well-being and to mental health reporting
- Basic self-care skills and burnout prevention in the newsroom

Guest speakers:

- **Caroline S. Clauss-Ehlers**, professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology and the Ph.D. Program in Clinical Psychology in the School of Health Professions at Long Island University, Brooklyn. She's also a former Rosalynn Carter Fellow for Mental Health Journalism and currently serves as an advisory board member for this program.

Module 2: Working and collaborating in a healthier way in the digital world (July 4 - 10, 2022)

How can we stay healthy in an always-on culture? In this module you'll get the facts about how digital technology could harm your physical and mental health if not used correctly. We'll also cover why it's essential to your well-being to set boundaries with yourself and with others in the newsroom. You'll learn practical tips and tools about how to work remotely and how to have efficient digital communications as a team. Finally, we'll also address the increasingly common issues of vicarious trauma and online harassment.

This module will cover:

- Setting digital and physical boundaries to reduce stress and frustration at work
- Experiencing why multitasking is bad for your brain and learning how to be more productive through deep work

- Best practices when working remotely
- How to prevent vicarious trauma and deal with online harassment

Guest Speakers:

- **Amy Blankson** is the CEO of the Digital Wellness Institute and the bestselling author of *The Future of Happiness*. A member of the UN Global Happiness Council, Amy focuses her work on how to cultivate happiness in a digital era. She is a graduate of Harvard College and Yale School of Management, a Fellow of the World Innovation Organization, and is a contributor to Harvard Business Review and Forbes.
- **Shaunelle Curry** is the Founder and CEO of Media Done Responsibly, a media and digital literacy organization that works to amplify humanity-centered and socially responsible media. She is a Professor of TV, Film, and Media Studies, Journalism, and Pan-African Studies at California State University-Los Angeles and serves as the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the global Digital Wellness Institute. Shaunelle envisions a world in which our humanity evolves as swiftly as our technology.
- **Nina Hersher** is Co-founder of the Digital Wellness Institute and author of the bestseller, *Your Playbook for Thriving in the Remote Work Era*. As a pioneer of the Digital Wellness movement, her work has been featured at Spotify, The King Abdulaziz Center, Dolby, and in publications including The Stanford Social Innovation Review, Al Jazeera, and Voice of America.
- **Nadine Hoffman** is the International Women's Media Foundation Deputy Director. As an expert in journalism safety, she has spearheaded the organization's expanding safety and security work, overseeing the creation of physical and digital safety training opportunities as well as growing emergency assistance efforts. She began her career as a reporter in Boston before transitioning to non-profit work.
- [Dean Yates](#) is a former Reuters foreign correspondent and has just finished writing a book about healing from PTSD and moral injury. Dean covered the Iraq War, the Boxing Day tsunami and the Bali Bombings. He was also head of mental health at Reuters until he left the company in early 2020.

Module 3: Raising awareness and generating a healthier working culture: normalizing mental health and well-being in the media (July 11 - 17, 2022)

There continues to be stigma and discrimination around mental health issues. Within newsrooms, there's a belief that you cannot be a reliable and good journalist if you have mental health challenges. This module focuses on what you can do to support your colleagues, raise awareness in the newsroom, and integrate well-being into company policies.

This module will cover:

- How to introduce conversations about mental health in your newsroom
- How to influence the integration of well-being into company culture

Guest speakers:

- **Hannah Storm and John Crowley**, the co-directors of Headlines Network, which creates connections and drives conversations towards improving mental health in the media and communications industries. Over the last two decades they have led newsrooms, journalism safety charities and run news sites. Both are qualified mental health first aiders and bring knowledge and lived experience around mental wellbeing.
- **Tanmoy Goswami** publishes Sanity, an online newsletter that publishes independent mental health journalism for independent minds. He is also an advisor to a pioneering initiative to rate the quality of suicide reporting in India's English newspapers, and a jury member for the country's first award for responsible media reporting on suicide.
- **Sisi Wei** is the Co-Executive Director at OpenNews, where she envisions and executes transformative initiatives for journalism, especially for journalists of color and local journalists. As part of her work, Sisi founded the DEI Coalition For Anti-Racist, Equitable, And Just Newsrooms in 2020, and launched the DEI Coalition Slack space in March 2021.

Module 4: How to Tell Stories that Build Empathy, Not Pathology (July 18 - 24, 2022)

Instructor: Stephanie Foo

This module describes the dangers of pathologizing mental health conditions, explores the idea that mental illness is a social construct, and suggests general storytelling practices that build nuance and empathy.

This module will cover:

- The long-term impact of trauma on our brains and bodies

- How mental “illness” is in many ways a social construct, and how it can come with real advantages
- Learning about how pathologizing mental health conditions prevents people from healing, and how to prevent pathologizing and stigmatizing in your work
- Storytelling tips for creating nuanced, empathetic hopeful work

Module 5: How to Care For Your Subjects (July 25 - 31, 2022)

This module delves into how we can respect and care for our subjects and their communities in our reporting process, in order to keep them safe.

This module will cover:

- How to research mental health conditions ahead of time, and basic tips on respectful terminology
- Best practices for interviewing someone with a mental health condition
- How to communicate and collaborate with your subject and their community
- The ethics of how to care for your subject’s mental health before and after your story comes out

Guest Speaker:

- **Alia Dastagir**, a reporter for USA Today and a former Rosalynn Carter Fellow for Mental Health in Journalism. In 2020, she won the American Association of Suicology’s Public Service Journalism Award for her responsible coverage on suicide.

Certificate of Completion

A certificate of completion is awarded by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas to attest to the participation in the online course.

There's no form to apply for the certificate of completion. At the end of the course, the Knight Center team will verify all students and all activities required to qualify for the certificate of completion.

After verifying that students have met the course requirements, the Knight Center will send students a message confirming that they have met the requirements and are eligible for the certificate.

To be eligible for the certificate of completion, students must:

- Listen to the weekly video classes and read the weekly readings.
- Complete weekly quizzes with a minimum score of 70%. (You can retake the quizzes as many times as needed. Only the highest score will be recorded.)
- Create OR reply to at least one discussion forum each week.

There are no formal credits of any kind associated with this certificate. The certificate is issued by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas only to certify participation in the online course.