# My Whole Self: Book club

We all deserve to feel valued and empowered to be our whole self at work. When people feel psychologically safe, teams can unlock innovation and excellence.

Brought to you by Mental Health First Aid England®, My Whole Self is the campaign for workplace culture change. We want organisations to empower employees to bring their whole self to work. That includes background, sexuality, religion, gender, health and mental health.

By bringing together diversity and inclusion with health and wellbeing, we can drive positive transformation in workplace mental health and performance. At MHFA England®, we believe wellbeing and productivity fuel one another. We know teams that feel safe and connected work better together.

Everybody has a story to tell, and this activity empowers employees to share one story about their whole self, if they feel comfortable to do so, in a speed dating style event. This activity is called My Whole Self Book Club.

**Suitable for:** Groups – online or in person

**Time:** One hour, depending on the size of your team if you have a big team, consider breaking into smaller groups

**Materials:** Reading list and book club rules (contained within this guide)

Activity

Invite people to choose one aspect of their whole self to share with their colleagues at the My Whole Self Book Club. These are your **storytellers**.

Ask your storytellers to fill in the **reading list** with their name and topic they would like to talk about at the My Whole Self Book Club. This could be anything from ‘I am a singer’ to ‘I have OCD’ to ‘I am a Christian’.

If using an online video platform to host the event, make sure all participants feel comfortable using it. We recommend that each conversation last for no longer than 10 minutes, that you have a maximum number of **listeners** (6 per group), and that you allow at least a 5-minute break between each meeting for storytellers.

Circulate **the reading list** and our **book club rules** with attendees (your **listeners**) by email a few days ahead of the event. This is to give people time to sign up for a ‘story’, and to ensure that everyone taking part knows how to keep themselves, and others, safe at the event. **We recommend ensuring that a MHFAider®, or a member of your HR team, is available during the event for support.**

While there is no set structure for this conversation, we have a few tips to help you get started. We recommend that the storyteller begins with a short summary of their chosen topic. Once they have finished, listeners can begin to ask questions.

Book club rules

My Whole Self encourages conversations around aspects of someone’s ‘Whole Self’, this may include conversations around challenging topics. It is very important that guidelines are put in place to ensure everyone is safe and comfortable. Please share these guidelines with the readers and storytellers ahead of time.

1. Before starting the event, remind storytellers and listeners that, unless stated, all conversations at the My Whole Self Book Club are confidential. Details of any of the stories should not be discussed outside of the event without the storyteller's consent.
2. Ensure that the number of listeners is not overwhelming and check that the storyteller is happy with the amount of people involved.
3. If you have a member of your HR team or a MHFAider available, make sure their contact details are known to attendees.
4. You can use our set phrases below if you are feeling uncomfortable when listening to, or sharing a story:

**Storytellers and listeners can stop at any time if they feel overwhelmed by the content of the story. They can respectfully say ‘that is everything for today. Thank you for listening’ and the session will come to a close.**

**If a storyteller is uncomfortable answering a question, they can decline to answer it. They can express this is by saying ‘that part is just for me, but what I can tell you about is...’**

Reading list

Everybody has a story to tell and MHFA England is encouraging workplaces to empower their employees to share one story about their whole self, if they feel comfortable to do so. This activity is called My Whole Self Book Club.

**Date:**

**Time:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Storyteller** | **Topic** | **Time** | **Video call link/location of conversation** | **Listeners (max. six)** |
| *e.g. Simon* | *I am a singer* | *10.10 –**10.20* | *[Teams invite]* | 1.2. |
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