

MaRS PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Sept 19, 2026

Overview

What is mental health?

Entrepreneur mental health:

- What the party brings to us
- What we bring to the party

Entrepreneur Mental health business plan

On the spot quick review

Q&As

What is mental health?

- Quote women from my survey
 - -mental health means finding ways to deal with the stress of life and business.
 - -Mental health means having the **mental bandwidth** to think clearly.
 - -Mental health means that **my mind is working *for* me**, not against me.
 - -Mental health means I can show up as the leader, partner, friend, spouse, parent that I **truly** want to be
- Ask participants what does mental health mean to them

Entrepreneur mental health: what the party brings to us and what we bring to the party

- what the party brings to us:
 - Working conditions > breakdown
 - Freeman: what we found is that 100% of entrepreneurs experience stress

- 7 factors
 - Isolation
 - The hustle
 - VUCA > BANI
 - Barriers to support
 - Link self-worth > success
 - (predisposition)
 - Invisible amplification
- What we bring to the party:

Freeman 2015 research: over 1000 entrepreneurs.

a) Predisposition (7th factor):

- 38 percent who have one or more truly diagnosable mental health conditions, and those tend to include ADHD, mood-related issues, behavioral addictions like you know work addiction, and then obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is pretty common.
- of that 38% maybe half or even more had mental health issues before they were entrepreneurs, because people with these mental health issues can be attracted into entrepreneurship
- around the margins of that, people also experience anxiety when things aren't going well, as well as depression and burnout
- 3% and that's the number of entrepreneurs in our studies who have already attempted to take their own lives

Interestingly:

- Freeman: the solutions that are really needed are not more therapists.

BDC and Freeman continue surveys of Canadian entrepreneurs and generally speaking, the data doesn't change significantly over the years.

Solutions

Freeman

Emotional runway just like cash runway: Some of the most preventative, proactive things you can do to maintain that reservoir of vitality that we're talking about are free. basic well-being practices will go a long way.

Humans are social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. And if you just check in with all of those categories. Are you in a good place in each of those boxes? You're being true to yourself as a human.

- sleep,
- nourish relationships,
- have a sense of identity beyond the business,
- maintain and manage sleep-wake cycles and circadian rhythms,
- nature exposure
- outdoor physical activity
- have your eyes open when you go into it. Don't be surprised if it fails. diversify your personal risk.

Depersonalize (identity beyond the business)

Freeman: It is not true that *you* are either a success or a failure when your business is either a success or a failure. *It's not that you are succeeding, your business is succeeding for the moment in this very dynamic environment that can change.* Your businesses exists in a very dynamic

ecosystem and you shouldn't take their success or failure personally. Business success is 50% luck."

Keep in mind that what you're really doing when you're building a business is testing hypotheses, just like a scientist. Your hypotheses are either right or wrong. You're just testing all the time, and failing is part of succeeding. Because of the trial and error learning that goes on in building a business, and so you just have to have an identity which is about you as a person.

Houssel: "Long tails drive *everything*. They dominate business, investing, sports, politics, products, careers, everything. Rule of thumb: Anything that is huge, profitable, famous, or influential is the result of a tail event.

Most of our attention goes to things that are huge, profitable, famous, or influential. And when most of what you pay attention to is the result of a tail, you underestimate how rare and powerful they really are....

when you embrace the idea that tails drive everything in business, investing, and finance, you find it perfectly normal for many things to go wrong, break, fail, and fall. It's all part of the game!"

Jess Manuszak "Mental illness is not a moral failing. Failure is not moral failing. It is just a side effect of effort. it's proof that we're dreaming at a scale that's worth our time." Jess Manuszak Founder of Failure Ball

3 principles

Soothe

Discharge

Nourish

- Climate anxiety and the feeling of urgency
- saying hello to and validating the fears
- separate self from mission;
- give up the fruits; principle of right action;
- spirituality: arc of the universe bends toward justice;

- Joanna Macy: <https://commonslibrary.org/learn-from-joanna-macy/>

Entrepreneur Mental health business plan

- concept
- lead and lag indicators
 - lead: 7 factors, 3 principles
 - lag: how you are doing (red and green flags)
- share
 - lag: doing well and doing poorly
 - lead: what affects you the most

How to use your plan

- Assess how you're doing
- Review what's working and what isn't
- Plan using the data above

On the spot quick review

- How are you doing?
- Which of the 7 factors has been affecting you?

Q&As

References:

7 Factors <https://shula.ca/entrepreneur-mental-health-7-challenges/>

3 Principles <https://shula.ca/three-principles-of-stress-relief/>

Worksheets <https://www.shula.ca/worksheets>

Entrepreneur Mental Health Plan (self-guided workshop)

<https://shula.ca/entrepreneur-mental-health-business-plan/>

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