

## Awareness and Outcomes-Based Training - What's the difference?

**Awareness:** the knowledge or perception of a situation or fact.

*Consciousness, recognition, realization, cognizance, perception, apprehension, understanding.  
Grasp, appreciation, acknowledgement, knowledge.*

**Outcomes:** the way a thing turns out; a consequence.

*Result, after-effect, aftermath, conclusion, sequel, follow-up, product, end product.*

There are (broadly speaking) two kinds of mental health training services; awareness-based (the majority of programmes) and outcomes-based. Psychological First Aid is an outcomes-based programme - read on to find out why.

Awareness and outcomes-based training both have their place in the mental health landscape - but without identifying which is needed (awareness or outcomes), the development of needs-based training serves no real purpose in achieving a desired result.

Measuring the results of training is imperative - and outcomes-based training allows us to do just that.

With awareness training, people become more aware of a need or an issue - but then what happens? What do they do next to make a tangible difference? When you choose outcome-focused training, your team learns how to do something they couldn't do previously, delivering a measurable result.

## Why the shift to outcomes-based training?

In the context of this article, the use of awareness training has failed to achieve the results people had hoped for, other than helping people be aware of mental health. For decades we have seen a plethora of 'Mental Health Awareness' training programmes and promotions, which have highlighted numerous issues that need actions/outcomes.

The hoped for result, reducing the impacts of mental ill health, hasn't occurred. In fact, these impacts continue to increase, and the demand placed on mental health services continues to overwhelm the system.

However, the call is still for more awareness training and information to be made available, which doesn't provide any meaningful outcomes.

A shift to outcome-based training is the next logical step in achieving a measurable result and reducing the impacts of mental ill-health.

**Awareness** training has a role and a purpose, highlighting to the general public issues that need addressing in some way. However awareness training does not, in the context of wellness, provide the next steps: a desired outcome.

We are aware that we want to:

- Reduce the stigma around mental health
- Reduce depression
- Reduce suicide
- Reduce bullying
- And many more...

But how?

Answering “but how” requires actions.

When developing the PFA program, the key was to focus on desired **outcomes/actions**, utilising the knowledge gained by members of the public via awareness programs.

Focusing on an outcome, tools can be applied that enable people to turn their awareness into a positive, desired outcome.

### **Achieving outcomes through empowering individuals**

PFA training enables outcomes to be achieved by utilising the ‘I’ word.

- “I can reduce depression by...”
- “I can reduce suicide by...”
- “I can reduce the impact of stigma by...”
- “I can help myself and others before it becomes a problem by...”
- “Completing a PFA program will enable me to reduce the financial impact of anxiety in my workplace by....

I’m sure while reading, this you can recall all the growing problems our community is grappling with regarding mental ill health. This awareness might be matched with the thought that “but I

can't influence the growing issue".

**The reality is, you can.** Undertaking outcomes-focused training that provides practical tools and strategies will enable you to turn awareness into action.

Now that you are aware of the differences between Awareness and Outcomes, when contemplating needs-based training, it's up to you to decide what it is that you want to achieve.

Ask yourself: "If an Outcome is a solution, and Awareness is simply identifying the problem, what is it that I really want to achieve?"