

## Eliminating Stigma



Use the **STOP** criteria to recognize attitudes and actions which enable stigma to exist.

Ask if what you hear (and say):

**S**tereotypes people with mental illness - by assuming that someone is a particular way, or that you know something about them because they have a mental illness,

**T**rivializes illness/individuals with an illness,

**O**ffends with insults, jokes, comments,

**P**atronizes those with an illness, assuming they are not as good, or as capable as other people.

If your actions or attitudes, or those of others, are in conflict with the **STOP** criteria, take action!

- **Educate** yourself and others to make changes
- **Speak out**, challenge myths, stigmatizing words or actions
- **Advocate** for change
- **Support** or become involved with programs working to make change
- **Treat everyone with dignity**, stigma does not survive where there is respect.



**YOU can make a difference**

*"It is an odd paradox that a society, which can now speak openly and unabashedly about topics that were once unspeakable, still remains largely silent when it comes to mental illness. What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candour, more unashamed conversation about illnesses that affect not only individuals, but their families as well."*

- Glenn Close

### Learn the Facts

For general information visit the Mental Health & Wellness Collection at the Norfolk County Public Library, Simcoe branch or visit [www.ncpl.ca](http://www.ncpl.ca) for books, videos and DVDs on mental illness/health, addiction and recovery.



Reviewed and recommended web sites:

- [www.anxietycanada.ca](http://www.anxietycanada.ca)
- [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)
- [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- [www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca](http://www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca)
- [www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)
- [www.mooddisorderscanada.ca](http://www.mooddisorderscanada.ca)
- [www.problemgambling.ca](http://www.problemgambling.ca)
- [www.ptsdassociation.com](http://www.ptsdassociation.com)
- [www.schizophrenia.on.ca](http://www.schizophrenia.on.ca)
- [www.suicideprevention.ca](http://www.suicideprevention.ca)



Pamphlet provided with support from:



For additional information or pamphlets contact:  
Community Addiction and Mental Health Services

**Wellness & Recovery Centre 1-877-909-4357 x2**

# Eliminating STIGMA

of mental illness



People living with a mental illness and their families report that the effects of stigma are often worse than living with the illness itself.

## STIGMA HURTS!



Community Addiction and Mental Health Services of Haldimand and Norfolk

**Achieve Mental Health  
Wellness & Recovery Centre**

Dedicated to the enhancement of our community through the provision of addiction and mental health services that promote and support wellness.

## What is Stigma?

We all hold beliefs that form the basis of our attitudes and judgments and they impact how we react to and interact with others. Concern arises however when the foundation for our beliefs may be faulty, rooted in misinformation or myths yet our reactions continue to be



based on these beliefs. Stigma represents the negative attitudes and behaviours we demonstrate toward a particular circumstance, quality, or person. Historically, stigmas have existed based on....gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, religion, mental illness.

There are three components to stigma:

- **Stereotypes** - widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea, a myth, of a particular type of person or thing.
- **Prejudice** - preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience, but on a stereotype
- **Discrimination** - the prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or issues

### Mental Illness Stigma in Action .....

- Everyone with a mental illness is violent
- I need to be careful around anyone with a mental illness because they are violent
- I will not rent them an apartment, they are mentally ill and I have to protect myself.

## Stigma, Really?

A Globe and Mail survey of Canadian adults indicated that:

- Almost half of Canadians believe that diagnosed mental illness is just 'an excuse for poor behaviour and personal failings'
- One in 4 Canadians is afraid of being around someone suffering from a serious mental illness
- 42% said they would no longer socialize with a friend diagnosed with mental illness

Can you imagine anyone having these same attitudes about any other medical condition?



## Myths and Facts



Many common and widely held myths about mental illness are the fuel for stigma to exist. Myths give rise to stereotypes about mental illness with devastating outcomes. Enhancing mental health literacy - the knowledge, beliefs and abilities that enable the recognition, management and prevention of mental illness and/or mental health challenges - will also eliminate mental illness myths and the resulting stigmas.

Reducing the stigma of mental illness can be as simple as  
**LEARNING LISTENING & LOOKING.**

## Impact of Stigma

People living with a mental illness report that stigma is often worse than the illness itself.

Where stigma exists:

- Individuals in need of help are reluctant to seek help
- Access to services, resource is denied or compromised
- Family and personal relationships are strained, or individuals shunned
- Limited expectations, opportunities for those living with a mental illness

Stigma impacts many facets of daily life.... job, home, community and undermines being acknowledged, valued, respected.

## Words Matter

Words are a powerful tool and careful thought needs to be given to the words we choose to use. Negative terms such as crazy, are hurtful and demeaning and have the power to create fear among those who may need to seek out support but will avoid doing so because of the way they may be labeled or perceived.

Identifying a person by their illness devalues them and reduces them to a cluster of symptoms rather than a person.



# Eliminate Stigma . . . Stigma Hurts