

Anti-Stigma: Do You Know the Facts?

Stigma is not just a matter of using the wrong word or action. Stigma is about disrespect. It is the use of negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness. Stigma is a barrier. Fear of stigma, and the resulting discrimination, discourages individuals and their families from getting the help they need. An estimated 22 to 23 percent of the U.S. population experience a mental disorder in any given year, but almost half of these individuals do not seek treatment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002; U.S. Surgeon General, 2001).

The educational information on this fact sheet encourages the use of positive images to refer to people with mental illness and underscores the reality that mental illness can be successfully treated.

DO'S

Do you know that an estimated 44 million Americans experience a mental disorder in any given year?

Do you know that stigma is not a matter of using the wrong word or action?

Do you know that stigma is about disrespect and using negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness?

Do you know that stigma is a barrier that discourages individuals and their families from seeking help?

Do you know that many people would rather tell employers they committed a petty crime and served time in jail, than admit to being in a psychiatric hospital?

Do you know that stigma can result in inadequate insurance coverage for mental health services?

Do you know that stigma leads to fear, mistrust, and violence against people living with mental illness and their families?

Do you know that stigma can cause families and friends to turn their backs on people with mental illness?

Do you know that stigma can prevent people from getting access to needed mental health services?



U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration

For information, contact SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center

P.O. Box 42490 • Washington, DC 20015 • 800-789-2647 • <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>

DO'S

Do use respectful language.

Do emphasize abilities, not limitations.

Do tell someone if they express a stigmatizing attitude.

DONT'S

Don't portray successful persons with disabilities as super human.

Don't use generic labels such as retarded or the mentally ill.

Don't use terms like crazy, lunatic, idiot, manic-depressive, slow functioning.

OEL99-0004
02/03