

COVID-19 & STIGMA



What is stigma?

Stigma is stereotyping people based on myths and understandings, always negative, hurtful, and it can be dangerous. It can make it difficult for someone with mental illness to come forward for help.

Stigma often emerges when there is uncertainty and the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented.

In these times, we all need to monitor our mental wellness to ensure we avoid stigmatizing others.



The impact of stigma

Effects on self-esteem because of feelings of blame and guilt.

Individuals may begin to believe what others think of them is true and view themselves negatively. This may lead them to isolate from their support system.

They may avoid treatment for their physical health, mental health, and/or substance use problem.

They may have feelings of hopelessness and self-doubt about ability to get better.



How to reduce stigma

Create a stigma free zone / safe space to have conversations about mental health.

Engage in conversation on mental health and illness without fear of discrimination with your family, friends and trusted colleagues.

Words matter, language matters. Avoiding negative language (such as referring to someone in derogative terms like crazy, stupid, idiot, snap out of it etc.) only adds to feelings of negative self-worth.

As a person with mental health concerns:

- talk to a trusted colleague, a family member or a friend,
- seek treatment,
- don't allow self-doubt and shame to stop you from seeking help.

As a friend/family member or colleague:

- don't judge, actively listen, ensure confidentiality,
- connect your friend to the supports they need to maintain their mental wellness (e.g. Doctor/ Peer Support),
- promote work/home separation and access to effective treatment options.

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