

## **STIGMA**

Did you know that nearly two thirds of all people with a diagnosable mental health condition do not seek treatment?

Can you imagine if only one out of every three of your friends sought help for a broken arm?

Stigma is what keeps many people from seeking the help they need. We are discovering that the negativity and misunderstanding that often surrounds mental illnesses can create fear and cause shame, which in turn causes unnecessary pain and confusion.

What is Stigma?

Stigma goes far beyond the misuse of words and information, it is about disrespect. Stigma is commonly defined as the use of stereotypes and labels when describing someone. Stereotypes are often attached to people who are suffering from a mental illness. The simple fact is that no one fully understands how the brain works and why, at times, it works differently in different people. Our society tends to not give the same acceptance to brain disorders as we do to other organ disorders, say, heart trouble. The stigma surrounding these misunderstandings can limit opportunities, it can increase feelings of loneliness, and it can cause many other unfortunate outcomes. Stigma must, and can, be exposed and overcome. Everyone must know that it is OK to ask for help.

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