

TOPIC BRIEF

Despite the prevalence of mental illnesses, a mental health stigma still exists. Almost 20% of adults in the U.S. experience mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression. In teenagers and young adults, mood disorders are the third most common cause of hospitalization, and suicide is the second leading cause of death. Unfortunately, negative attitudes and incorrect information towards mental health, often portrayed by social media or projected onto the society from a young age, delay people from receiving help, thus furthering the cycle of stigma. This is not only a form of stereotyping and discrimination, but also a barrier resulting in over 60% of people reluctant to seek familial support or professional help. Surveys indicate that accepting, acknowledging or asking for help is embarrassing and isolating for people who have mental health illnesses. This stigma can be challenged by reducing the prejudice around mental health issues and discrimination towards people who suffer from mental illness by changing the public attitude and view of mental health illnesses through education and honest, compassionate, and Informed conversations.

ACTIVITY

Discuss the validity of these common myths of mental health.

Mental illnesses are rare.

Medication is the only way to heal mental health illnesses.

People with mental health illnesses are a burden to society.

People never want to talk about depression, or don't have time to.

People who have mental health are violent, dangerous and need to be hospitalized.

Therapy is only for people who suffer from severe mental health illnesses.

People with mental illnesses should just be happier and get over it.

Getting good grades, getting into college, getting a job is more important than mental health. Mental health can wait.

QUESTIONS

Scenario: Another friend privately comes to you and admits that he is legitimately thinking about harming himself. But, he makes you promise that you won't tell anyone this. What are, if any, your next steps?

What are some resources that you know of that can help yourself, or a friend who is suffering from a mental health issues?

What does mental health stigma mean to you? How is this stigma perpetuated?

RESOURCES

If you know of someone who is struggling with mental health, talking about harming themselves or people around them, please do not hesitate to utilize these resources.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: 1-888-333-2377

Youthline: 877-968-8491

Crisis Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741