

King saud university  
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## Stigma of mental illness



Doing by;

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# Stigma of mental illness

## \* Objective;

After this class the students should be able to;

- I identify what is stigma.
- I identify "why stigma surround mental illness"
- describe effects of stigma.
- Discus consequences of stigma.
- Apply ten thing to fight stigma.



# Outline;

- Introduction?
  - What is stigma?
  - Why does stigma surround mental illness?
  - What are the effects of stigma?
  - Consequences of stigma?
- Ten things you can do to fight stigma?



# Introduction;

Try to list all the terms you have heard referring to people with mental illness. Crazy, nuts, bonkers, one-brick- short- of-a-full-load, wacko, goofy, and mental are a few. Can you list others? What do all these terms have in common? They are all negative, insulting, & demeaning. When we talk about physical illnesses, we do not use such insulting terms. We would never call a person with diabetes an "insulin junkie" or "sugar fool", these labels are inaccurate, inappropriate, and unkind.

Simply talking about mental illness often causes people to laugh nervously, because mental illness has a stigma, or "mark of disgrace" in our culture. It is very common for people to have negative attitudes devaluing people with mental illnesses.



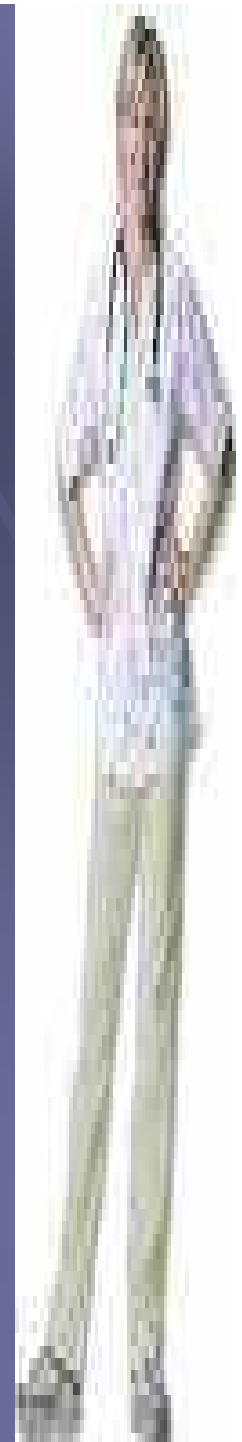
# What is Stigma?

Stigma is the use of negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness. It is about disrespect and keeps mental illness in the closet. Stigma is a barrier and discourages individuals and their families from getting the help they need. It closes minds and fuels discrimination. Many say that living with the stigma is worse than living with the illness itself.



## Why does stigma surround mental illness?

We all have an idea of what someone with a mental illness is like, but most of our views and interpretations have been distorted through strongly held social beliefs. The media, as a reflection of society, has done much to sustain a distorted view of mental illness. Television or movie characters who are aggressive, dangerous and unpredictable can have their behavior attributed to a mental illness. Mental illness also has not received the sensitive media coverage that other illnesses have been given. We are surrounded by stereotypes, popular movies talk about killers who are "psychos," and news coverage of mental illness only when it related to violence. We also often hear the casual use of terms like "lunatic" or "crazy," along with jokes about the mentally ill. These representations and the use of discriminatory language distort the public's view and reinforce inaccuracies about mental illness.



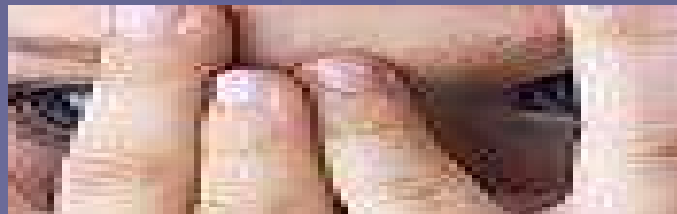
# What are the effects of stigma?

If you became physically ill, you would go to a doctor. Once you got better you would expect to get on with life as usual. Life, however, does not always fit back into place for people diagnosed with a mental illness. Everyone has the right to fully participate in his or her community, but individuals struggling to overcome a mental illness can find themselves facing a constant series of rejections and exclusions. ■

Due to stigma, the typical reaction encountered by someone with a mental illness (and his or her family members) is fear and rejection. Some have been denied adequate housing, loans, health insurance and jobs due to their history of mental illness. Due to the stigma associated with the illness, many people have found that they lose their self-esteem and have difficulty making friends. The stigma attached to mental illness is so pervasive that people who suspect that they might be mentally ill are unwilling to seek help for fear of what others may think. Spouses may be reluctant to define their partners as mentally ill, while families may delay seeking help for their child because of their fears and shame. ■

## Consequences of stigma

- \* For someone with mental illness, the consequences of stigma can be devastating — in some cases, worse than the illness itself
- \* Some people with mental illness don't seek treatment for fear of being given a label — a label that's almost impossible to ever shed. They believe that once family and friends find out about their illness, they'll be scorned. They may try to hide their symptoms and not stick to treatment regimens.
- \* Some people with mental illness become socially isolated, locked out of their community by the shame and embarrassment that stigma triggers. Stigma also leads to social distancing, in which people refuse to rent rooms to someone with a mental illness, don't want them as neighbors or co-workers, and won't befriend them. Some people with mental illness have even been subjected to physical violence and verbal abuse.





# Consequences of stigma

- \*People with mental illness face discrimination in the workplace, even though the Americans with Disabilities Act outlaws it. They may lose their job, be the subject of gossip by coworkers and get passed over for promotions. ■
- \*And in many cases, health insurance coverage of treatment for mental illness is inadequate and far more limited than that of physical illnesses, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. ■



# Ten things you can do to fight stigma

## 1. LEARN MORE ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

To the extent that you are better informed about mental illness, you will be better able to evaluate and resist the inaccurate negative stereotypes.

## 2. LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED MENTAL ILLNESS

These individuals can describe what they find stigmatizing, how stigma affects their lives and how they would like to be viewed and treated.

## 3. WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

Most of us, including mental health professionals and consumers, use terms and expressions related to mental illness that may perpetuate stigma.

## 4. MONITOR MEDIA AND REPORT STIGMATIZING MATERIAL

To any number of organizations. Protest such material by contacting the people--authors, editors, movie producers, advertisers--responsible for the material.

## 5. RESPOND TO STIGMATIZING MATERIAL IN THE MEDIA

Write, call or e-mail stigmatizers yourself, expressing your concerns and providing more accurate information that they can use.

## 6. SPEAK UP ABOUT STIGMA

When someone you know misuses a psychiatric term (such as schizophrenia), let them know and educate them about the correct meaning. When someone disparages a person with mental illness, tells a joke that ridicules mental illness, or make disrespectful comments about mental illness, let them know that it is hurtful and that you find such comments offensive and unacceptable.

## 7. TALK OPENLY ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

Don't be afraid to let others know of your mental illness or the mental illness of a loved one. The more mental illness remain hidden the more people continue to believe that it is a shameful thing to be concealed.

## 8. DEMAND CHANGE FROM YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

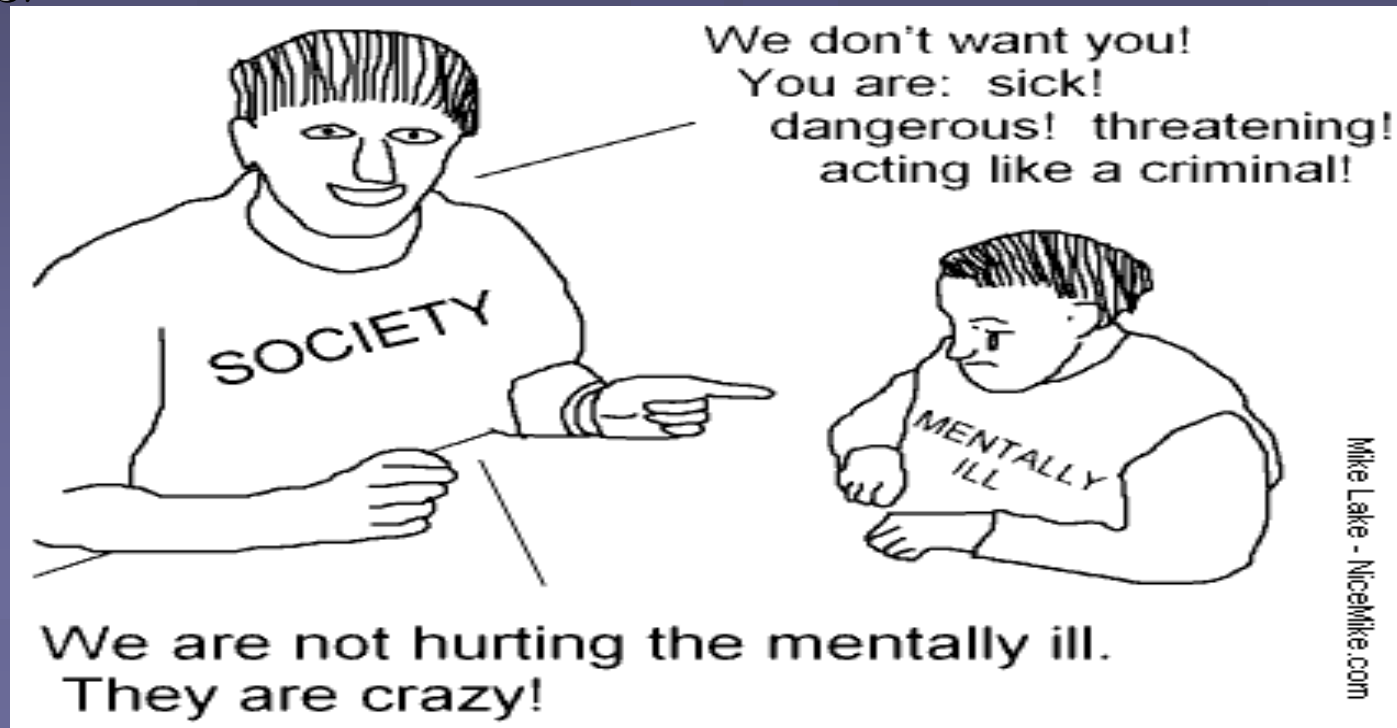
Policies that perpetuate stigma can be changed if enough people let their elected representatives know that they want such change.

## 9. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT FIGHT STIGMA

Join, volunteer, donate money. The influence and effectiveness of the organizations fighting mental illness stigma depend, to some extent, on membership size and finances. They also rely heavily on the effort and passion of their volunteer members. You can make a contribution through them.

## 10. CONTRIBUTE TO RESEARCH RELATED TO MENTAL ILLNESS AND STIGMA

To the extent that mental illness can be understood and treated, stigma will be reduced. When we can be confident that mental illness can be treated quickly and effectively, it will be less frightening. When we know how stigma is perpetuated and better still, changed, we will be better able to assist those with mental illnesses to deal with it. Research will help us learn these things.



# Reference;

[www.CMHA\\_wrb.on.ca](http://www.CMHA_wrb.on.ca)

(Mental health information  
“understanding stigma & mental  
health issues”)



Thank you