

Let's Talk: Mental Health Stigma

Presenter: Erica Hanlon, Clinical Counselor

Hi everybody, my name is Erica. Let's talk about mental health stigma. So, a lot of times when we turn on the news these days, you hear about crimes that are happening, violent crimes I think especially and the news casters are always talking about, oh those people have mental health issues. So what happens is that for a lot of us, we're scared of the idea of mental health issues. We feel like those people are violent, or, you know, that's some stranger's problem, or that mental health issues can be contagious. But what we know about mental health is that people who have mental health issues are less likely to engage in violent crimes and they're much more likely to be victimized by violence from others. What we also know about mental health issues is that one out of five American adults is diagnosed with a mental health issue each year. That's about 42.5 million Americans. So when you think about it, one out of five adults, there's a good chance that somebody you know, love, care about has a mental health issue. So while it might be easy to think that, you know what, this is somebody else's problem, it's not. It's either a problem that has affected you personally, or it has affected somebody you care about personally.

Visual Cue: Be aware of mental health myths

So, even though mental health issues are pretty common, there's still a lot of really bad information out there about mental health and mental health concerns. So for example some common myths include that mental health issues are uncommon which we've already talked about. Also that people create their own mental health issues because maybe they have some weakness of character or you know what, they just need to like, think about the world a little bit differently. And another myth is that mental health issues are difficult to treat.

Visual Cue: The impact of mental health stigma

So what's the impact of all of this bad information circulating out there around mental health issues? Well, a lot of times when you put it all together, it adds up to mental health stigma which can be a huge problem for people, because it means that people who have mental health issues may experience shame in addition to their mental health problem. Take somebody for example who has depression and now they have the added shame of feeling depressed and we also know that people tend to not seek mental health treatment that could help them feel better because they're so ashamed of their mental health issue. So we've got people who could seek treatment and they could feel better and they don't because of mental health stigma, and that means that they're suffering in silence for really no good reason.

Visual Cue: What can you do to help?

The good news is that there are things that you can do to help combat stigma. One of the best things you can do is learn about mental health and mental health related issues. You can go to

sites like the campaign to change direction and learn about the five signs that somebody may be emotionally suffering and you can find out how you can step in and offer support to somebody. Another thing you can do is watch your language. Make sure that when you talk about mental health related issues, or you're talking about a person who has a mental health issue, that you're using respectful language. So try to table popular terms like crazy, loco, and those kinds of stigmatizing labeling kinds of words. What we wanna use instead is what we call person first language, where we say instead of she's bipolar, 'cause we're saying that she's, you know, identified by her disorder. Instead of saying that we say she has bipolar disorder. It's person first language. She's still a person first and foremost. She just happens to be a person with a mental health issue. And then once you learn about mental health issues and mental health stigma, share that information with other people.

Visual Cue: Learn more about mental health stigma

If you wanna learn more about what you can do to help reduce mental health stigma, I encourage you to go to sites like stamp out sigma and the campaign to change direction.

Visual Cue:

- Stamp Out Stigma website: stampoutstigma.com

- The Campaign to Change Direction website: changedirection.org

Visual Cue: Resources For Living

Source: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/sr170-mental-illness-state-estimates-2014/sr170-mental-illness-state-estimates-2014/sr170-mental-illness-state-estimates-2014.htm>

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44.27.324.1-RFL (3/17)