

# Turning stigma into support



We've come a long way from days when "crazy" and "nuts" were words often used to describe people with mental health issues. Yet we still have a way to go in getting past stigma around mental illness.

## Why is there stigma?

There's often stigma — or shame — around mental health issues. Why?

- Mental health disorders can be hard to understand and even frightening.
- When we know, meet or hear of someone with an emotional problem, we may worry it can happen to us.
- We may not know how to react and respond to someone with a mental health issue.

## Putting shame behind us

Mental health matters are not someone else's worry. They're a concern for all of us. Each year, almost one out of every five Americans suffers from a mental health disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Considering those statistics, stigma and shame are just a waste of time. But what if we put our energy into accepting and treating mental illness like any other health problem?

<sup>1</sup>Bekiempis, Victoria. [Nearly 1 in 5 Americans suffers from mental illness each year](#). Accessed March 2018.

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## How you can make a difference

Here are some ways to help change thoughts and feelings around mental health:

- **Learn more.** You can watch topical TV shows, read, and even attend live or online workshops to become more informed.
- **Fear less.** Keep in mind that many mental health disorders can be treated and managed. Medicines, counseling and lifestyle changes are just three ways people can cope and heal.
- **Get involved.** Join a support group or non-profit that promotes emotional well-being. Donate your time or money. Get closer to the issues in order to be part of the solution.
- **Take the pledge.** Visit [changedirection.org](https://www.changedirection.org) to learn the signs of mental health distress. Read about ways to help someone who's in emotional pain. Take the pledge to become more aware and proactive in the campaign for mental well-being.